Tripping the light

JOURNEYS ALONG THE TEA HORSE ROAD / ADVENTURES IN KITESURFING
ONE-OF-A-KIND WILDLIFE / A SHORT STORY BY TIM LOTT / FOOD TRENDS
BRIGHT STARS OF MAURITIUS / THE SEARCH FOR SHANGRI-LA
Travel vicariously on these action-packed escapades, and embark on lower-gear adventures as we tour China’s under-the-radar Tea Horse Road (page 16) and dip into innovative spa treatments with an ancient past (page 46). We also present fiction by award-winning novelist Tim Lott (page 74), and invite honest views from food critics (page 33) and the fitness-why? (page 29). If you prefer your dream destinations to not only be exhilarating, but feel ridiculously comfortable too, you’ll be happy to hear we also signpost you to beds from heaven and barista-made coffee, just how you like it.

From Mauritius and Réunion to China and the UAE, we salute experiences and stays that serve a bouillabaisse of French, Chinese, Creole, Italian, French and English tastes. But what’s the underlying theme of all these stories? I’ll wager I can tell you in one word: ‘wow’.

STORYTELLING

... is an art form we’ve loved, since the beginning of time. Philosophers and farmers, explorers and kings have all traded tales and images across the centuries. Now it’s our turn. Here, we celebrate life in its many forms, flavours and cultures, introduce you to enlightening characters, and open eyes to colourful new lands. Join us as we gawp in awe from the air at Réunion’s mystical topography (page 42), and kite-surf with photographer Mark Read off Mauritius’ wind-lashed southern shores (page 20).

As a writer, a former editor of British Airways’ High Life magazine and an aficionado of all things luxe, Scott has toured the world with rock stars and supermodels. Sometimes he didn’t even have to carry their bags.

Scott Manson

Editor-in-chief of boutique hotel guides Mr & Mrs Smith, Juliet is instinctive about what makes escapes stylist. Her features appear everywhere from Condé Nast Traveller to The Independent, but truth be, she loves nothing more than evangelising about her globetrotting in real time through Twitter and Instagram.

JULIET KINSMAN

Contributors

An accolade-laden documentary and portrait photographer, Mark has been to the world’s extremities. From working with Chukchi reindeer herders in Siberia at -53ºC to tracking desert elephants with the San Bushmen of the Kalahari, he’s chalked up visits to nearly half the countries on Earth. He can’t wait to see the rest.

Mark Read

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Thank you

NICK BOULAS

Nick’s work as an award-winning writer has taken him to more than 90 countries for The Guardian, Washington Post and The National. Nick’s most memorable adventures include taking a dip at the edge of Victoria Falls, camping overnight in Antarctica and being charged at by a 200kg silverback gorilla in Uganda.

N O R M A L S

N I C O L A F O R M B Y

Nicol’s favourite evening in?
‘Grazing ba.com with a glass of wine. Partner of food critic AA Gill, she’s happier walking through Terminal 5 with their small twins than she’s ever been in a playground.

Next excuse to use her passport?
Visiting Suzhou Village near Shanghai, the recently opened sibling of Biester Village.

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S C O T T M A N S O N

As a writer, a former editor of British Airways’ High Life magazine and an aficionado of all things luxe, Scott has toured the world with rock stars and supermodels. Sometimes he didn’t even have to carry their bags.

M A R K R E A D

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A N N A B E L L E T H O R P E

Having been a travel scribe for 15 years, Annabelle has written for The Telegraph, National Geographic Traveller and many more, on topics ranging from the Caribbean’s swankiest hotels to road trips in the Middle East. She’s happiest when ruffling through Marrakech’s souks or sipping sundowners on a rooftop bar – the Ides in Brooklyn is her current favourite.

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Where to stay, what to do, and a few of the many reasons to go LUX®
On these fertile lands sugar cane has flourished since the 18th century, and until the 1970s, sugar made up Mauritius' entire economy. For a hit of this sweet crop's role in history, visit L'Aventure du Sucre in Pamplemousses, one of the oldest neighbourhoods on the island. In St Louis, on Réunion, try Sucrerie du Gol, an old refinery. You can't miss admiring the dense fields of these tropical grasses – they still make up most of the postcard-ready landscape.
WILD INDIAN OCEAN WILDLIFE

IT’S NOT JUST EUROPEANS THAT MIGRATE TO THE SOUTHERN HEMISPHERE TO GET SOME SUN WHEN IT’S WINTER BACK HOME, SAYS JULIET KINSMAN. THERE ARE ALSO FEATHERED CHARACTERS THAT FAVOUR THE FLORA-FILLED ISLANDS OF THE INDIAN OCEAN – AND A LOT OF THEM YOU WON’T SEE ANYWHERE ELSE.

1 / MAURITIUS KESTREL
Brought back from the brink of extinction, there were only four of these diminutive birds of prey living in the wild a few decades ago. Head into the forest and you may well lay eyes on these brown-speckled blighters that can now live to a lonely age of 15.

2 / ECHO PARAKEET
This yellow-eyed red-and-black-beaked character is one of the world’s rarest parrots. Distinct from its olive-toned Asian and African cousins, these bright sparks are a lurid emerald colour. To recognise their squawks, listen out for their ‘kik kik’ sounds and in-flight high-pitched cries of ‘Kaark! Kaark!’.

3 / PAILLE-EN-CUL
See these magnificent white- or red-tailed tropicbirds in flight and their long thin tail feathers are unmistakable. Also known as paille-en-queue, their wingspan can reach almost 100cm and ‘Kee-kee-krrrt-krrt-krrt’ is their telltale screech.

4 / TAMBALACOQUE TREE
While you’ll see a lot of references to the dodo in Mauritius, it’s definitely not coming back. What remains – just about – is the dodo tree, the silver-trunked tambalacoque, which you can see at the gardens in Pamplemousses in north Mauritius, known as Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam Botanical Garden.

5 / HIGHLAND TAMARIND
Since so much of Réunion is inaccessible and underdeveloped, unique endemic plants flourish high in its biodiverse volcanic peaks. This particular shrub (known as acacia heterophylla if you prefer it in Latin) is remarkable for flowering at such lofty altitudes.

6 / ANGRAECUM CADETII
Named after botanist Théobien Cadet, this ridiculously rare orchid (only found on Mauritius and Réunion) is all the more enigmatic due to its quirky method of pollination. This is carried out very specifically via crickets rather than the usual bees, wasps, ants, butterflies and beetles. Why? It’s the only mini-beast whose tongue is long enough to reach the orchid’s nectar.
Creatures great and small

**ANNABELLE THORPE**

**IS WOWED BY THE WILDLIFE.**

It was the flying fish that started it. Before we arrived in Mauritius, I’d given little thought to what wildlife we might see; after all, the island’s most well-known inhabitant has much in common with Monty Python’s parrot. It is deceased. As dead as the – well – it is the proverbial dodo.

So on our first night, gliding across the inky waters of Grand Baie on an evening dinner cruise, we were gazing up at the stars rather than giving much thought as to what might be beneath us. After supper, we perched on the side of the boat and dangled our feet into the cool, clear water. It was beautifully calm; suddenly something broke the surface. ‘Is that a flying fish?’ I asked my partner, Mark. Just as he began to say how unlikely that would be, he let out a surprised ‘ow’. A flying fish had just hit him in the foot.

From then on, we were besieged by wildlife. When we drove up to the Grand Bassin Lake the telephone wires were dotted with Mauritian flying foxes hanging upside down, wings wrapped around their fat, furry bodies, sleeping in the sunshine. In the evenings, as we sat on our hotel balcony near the village of Chamarel, they ushered in the dusk, swooping across the lilac sky, silhouetters straight out of a Marvel comic. When we left the room at night, land snails the size of my palm were scaling the external walls, emitting a low, wet rustle as they inched their way upwards.

At the beautiful Botanical Garden at Pamplemousses it was the giant tortoises that mesmerised; huge armour-plated beasts with faces as lined as septuagenarian sunbathers, exuding a world-weariness that can only be perfected after decades of dragging yourself around at a pace that makes the land snails look like Grand Prix contenders.

Even meals were punctuated by glimpses and sightings of exotic little critters. Dinner conversation ground to a halt whenever Mark became hypnotted by the gekkos skittering up and down the walls, and I lost count of the amount of breakfast omelettes that went cold as he watched weaver birds dart in and out of their coconut-shaped nests hanging from the fronds of a palm tree. And when it rained we were simply astonished by coconut-shaped nests hanging from the fronds of a palm tree. And when it rained we were simply astonished by the volume of the tree frogs – a chirruping chorus so deafening that any cicada in the vicinity simply crossed its legs and gave up. The only downside of all this wildlife is that any cicada in the vicinity simply crossed its legs and gave up. The only downside of all this wildlife was the holiday snaps we came home with. Instead of beaches, we have bats, instead of sunsets, we have snails. If only we had one of a dodo. Now that really would have been something.

I loved fishing with my dad. He’d row a small wooden boat, precariously through the bullrushes, out into a huge dam of black water underneath the hillside, a mountain that looks like a lion’s head looming over the Natal Midlands. I recall the trout always creating ripples as they bobbed up for the sunrise flies of the early morning. Our skinny fibreglass rods would stall twine and imposter flies made from coloured feathers, and we’d sit quietly, waiting for a bite. We’d drink sweet, milky tea from a flask and munch early launch sandwiches baked by my mum. I was five, maybe six years old. I’d peer over the side for brown water snakes and Dad would tell me about the crested coots paddling past to their floating nests. We’d follow the swooping fish eagles through his heavy binoculars. It was so peaceful and safe just being there with him. Suddenly the line would whizz and a glistening, rainbow trout would leap up out of the water, 20 feet away: I can still feel the excitement coursing through me and hear the flurry of instructions ‘don’t lose it’, ‘keep the tip down while you reel in’, ‘let it fight’, ‘guess how many pounds’. Dad would flip out his foldable net and land the flapping fish, carefully remove the hook and bang it on its head. We’d then plot how to cook it – open fire, butter.

As a parent, there are so many experiences you want to recreate for your children, so when we went to Mauritius I became obsessed with my small son hooking a fish. A kind man in the dive shop at LUX* Belle Mare agreed to slowly put-put up and down with mini rods cast. Fishing at sea is more hectic, but luckily within moments my boy was proudly reeling in a spiky-backed reef fish. The look of achievement – his beaming face was touching – but it all seemed a bit easy.

Later that day as we walked down the beach, a local boy, knee-deep in the sea with his dad, was skewering worms onto bent wire hooks attached to bamboo sticks. Their synchronicity and banter implied they had done this every evening for the few years since the lad had learned to walk. Silvery fillets – their supper – slithered about in their grass-weave basket. My son was transfixed. Unprompted, the boy offered his stick and string. They stood silently side by side, waiting for a nibble as the sun set. My dad would have liked that.
I'm a fire starter... Sègo dance, Mauritius
Jean-Christophe L'Omelette, better known as Maser, performs with his maestros on the beach at LUX* Le Morne. Maser's troops of 20 fire spinners, drummers, dancers and acrobats from the island have been together performing for four years.
Q. Describe your design style.
A. I’m a purist – I love harmony in my spaces. My design is about the balance of all you need and what you sense. Light is a magic ingredient, and it helps balance the harmony of mood. Space is so important too – as Chinese calligraphists say, it is not the calligraphy itself that’s important, it is the area around the characters that matters most.

Q. Favourite colour?
A. Taupe – I have always loved it, and I like the way it goes with every colour under the sun, which is why it plays such a strong role in the story at LUX*

Q. Treasured possessions?
A. A picture of my dad who passed away many years ago – it is one of the only ones I have of him and he just looks unbelievably happy and content with life. The photo was taken when I was 14 on a family holiday in Sicily. I also have a large art collection – all of my pieces are special to me, and each artwork has a different meaning.

Q. How do you relax?
A. On weekends, I love to spend time with my partner and my children, either tucked up on the sofa watching movies or relaxing at my country home. Obviously when the weather is great we love spending time outdoors – barbecues and tennis – anything to escape the grind of day-to-day life.

Q. Packing essentials?
A. I always travel with music on my iPhone; at the moment I’m loving Pixie Lott and Pharrell Williams. Classics from the likes of Marvin Gaye are always a good listen for a long journey. I also love jazz and the blues – I find it so soothing. Plus I need my Nike running shoes, as I jog wherever I go.

Q. Much-loved souvenir?
A. I bought some wonderful beige and bright orange table mats from the sellers on the beach in Mauritius. I adore them and use them every summer when we eat in the garden at my home in London.

Q. Favourite cocktail?
A. A caipirinha. [Cachaça, sugar and lots of fresh, muddled lime.]

Q. If you could be anywhere right now...
A. It would be with my toes in the soft sand at LUX*Belle Mare. A perfect holiday for me is one spent in the sun, with white beaches and blue sea all around, taking boat rides and spending time with my partner, John Gardiner.

Q. When are you happiest?
A. When I’m with my family – they are the most important part of my life, so holidaying with them is very special. We always take a big trip together at Christmas to make sure we get lots of quality time together.

Wondering if that’s her on the sun lounger next to you? A newspaper journalist once said that if it weren’t for her nose, Kelly would be the spitting image of Cate Blanchett. She told them, ‘You’re the second person to say that! The other was Josh Hartnett [the actor]. I saw him with Sienna [Miller, her former stepdaughter] and they were having a bit of a whisper, so I said, “What are you talking about?” He said, “You are so beautiful. You remind me of Cate Blanchett.” I was in love with him immediately.”

Kelly Hoppen
Interior designer

Award-winning British designer Kelly Hoppen, MBE, is The Personality Behind the Fresh, Sophisticated Interiors of LUX* Belle Mare. Here Juliet Kinsman asks the star of the BBC’s ‘Dragon’s Den’ Series About Her Lighter, Brighter Interiors and What Matters Most in Her Approach to Life.
Welcome to the Tea Horse Road

LURED TO THE SILK ROAD OF THE SOUTH, NICK BOULOS TRAVELS THE ANCIENT TRADE ROUTE THAT SPANS SOUTHWEST CHINA, TIBET, BHUTAN AND BURMA, IN SEARCH OF THE FINEST BREWS GOING...

Illustration by Dave Williams
The pale green tea tumbled slowly from the spout of the chipped teapot. Working methodically, Xiaoyun Huang poured cup after cup, stirring each gently and brushing away the excess leaves. ‘The taste changes with each serving,’ she said. ‘Pu-erh tea is like red wine. The older, the better.’ Stacked high on the surrounding shelves of this small teahouse in the heart of Lijiang were hundreds of varieties – some more than 20 years old that sell for upwards of US$1,600 a box.

Tea has been big business in this corner of southwest China for centuries. It started during the Tang Dynasty when – according to local lore – Princess Wencheng married a Tibetan king and began married life with a supply of tea. As its popularity grew, trade flourished along the 2,000km stretch that separates the tea-producing province of Yunnan from Tibet – a route that soon became known as the Tea Horse Road.

Charming Lijiang was founded on tea. Amid the Old Town’s streams and willow trees stood the main square. Red paper lanterns hung from the rafters of temples.

In days gone by, this space was a lively market and rest area for those travelling along the Tea Horse Road. Horses grazed on grass strewn across the cobbled ground. But this patch of the People’s Republic is about much more than tea. The surrounding mountains and valleys blend exceptional natural beauty with intriguing customs and ancient legends.

Beyond the impressive Tiger Leaping Gorge – which slices through the murky and frothing Jinsha River and is named after a big cat that supposedly escaped hunters by jumping across the chasm – is the blink-and-you’ll-miss-it town of Baisha.

Home to the Naxi people, one of the few remaining to still use a pictorial alphabet, Baisha offers a glimpse of a culture that is struggling for survival. ‘Nobody will speak our language in 100 years,’ said restaurateur Lee Bowie, mournfully.

As is customary in the Naxi community, the women were hard at work while the men practised calligraphy and played cards. ‘The men do the important jobs. We plan the buildings, but the women build them,’ joked Lee, looking over his shoulder to make sure his wife was out of earshot.

Down the road, sat under the shade of a leafy cherry tree, was a group of old Naxi ladies enjoying a break from harvesting the fields. They chatted and laughed over an intense game not dissimilar to dominoes, all the while sipping from tiny cups of the finest green tea in the land. And what else would you expect?
Kitesurfing is 80% kite skills, 20% board handling, and to watch, it's 100% spectacular. But don't let the rock 'n' roll appearance put you off, it's only dangerous if you don't know what you're doing – or try to take on the wrong wave...

Kitesailing – as it was known in the beginning – has come a long way since it was born in Maui in the 1990s. Evgeny Novozheev, who runs Pryde Club, declares this spot in Mauritius the best in the world for the surprisingly accessible daredevil sport; most travel guides will also tell you it's up there with Hawaii. The Russian surfer should know: he holds the world record for crossing the Bering Strait's 97km from Chukotka to Alaska in a mere seven hours. His wife, Irina, is no slouch on that surf either according to our photographer Mark Read. After watching Novozheev and friends, it sounds as though the sport is reliant on harnessing the power between water, the waves, the wind and approaching it all, ahem, as one would tantric sex... Maybe that's just our interpretation.

Whatever the season, here off Le Morne's southwestern coastline, windy conditions are as enticing to learners as to watersports enthusiasts in search of an adrenaline-fuelled challenge. This 5km² patch of Indian Ocean plays host to every kitesurfing variant: beginners and freestylers hit the big, shallow, flat lagoon, then move onto wave riding and giving the starter reef a go. The more intrepid venture out to Manawa, where the breaks are big but safe. The most famous wave of all – the one that brings the most thrill-seeking boarders to Le Morne – is One-Eye, and it's definitely reserved for those with real chutzpah. Here, the steep, hollow, fast-moving wave crashes into a shallow coral reef. Exciting. Although you may want to check the small print on your insurance policy before you give that one a go...
Recently, it has become increasingly obvious that if I’m actually going to go out and do something, I need to get away. Here’s why: every morning, while taking the dog on the 10-minute trudge around the patch of park that has become the Official Designated Walking Route, I see them. The joggers. The Fit Folk. The people who care so much about wellbeing that they’re happy to submit themselves to a 7am pre-work run. Some of them even look happy. ‘I should probably do that’, I think. Then I think about the fact I’ll probably need some sort of special shoes and that’s when that I realise it: I can’t be bothered.

There’s the bike in the shed, ridden once (accidently, into a cars-only tunnel, as the seat slowly sank into the frame and I plunged into a 60mph death race with a Mazda). There’s the tradition of the Sunday morning run, which I can only call ‘a tradition’ because it happened twice (and I can only call a ‘run’ because I walked so hard I had to have a lie down). There’s the trial day at the gym, never followed up on (to be honest, I was only in it for the free tuck sack). There’s not much else.

I know I ought to be fitter. Not because I need to be stronger or more ripped or because I’m anxious that my unhealthy lifestyle and apathetic dog-walking routine will shave off years of my life (OK, maybe a bit). It’s because exercise and wellbeing activities take you away from the everyday grind for a while. They create an inviolable, ring-fenced period when you’re alone with yourself – whether you’re maintaining a yoga position or running a marathon. My life is alternately consumed by the rigours of work and clawed away at by the demands of two children under five (adorable, love them to pieces, often wish they weren’t there), and sometimes it’s good to be taken away from that, to be forcibly given time to think. Anyone with a job and/or kids will recognise that moment, when you find yourself off the hamster wheel for a few stolen seconds, is a precious revelation.

The physical benefits of exercise get all the press, but the mental benefits are just as important, possibly more. Some of my most treasured memories are centred on the much-needed break from the everyday provided by that sunset yoga session in Thailand, that Balinese massage or that Mauritian meditation class which – whether or not it successfully realigned my chakras – certainly left me feeling more rooted to the Earth and ready to face another week of toddlers and spreadsheets.

The truth is I exercise better on holiday (or, more accurately, I exercise on holiday). Suspended from everyday stresses by sheer geography, it’s easier to steal those seconds of serenity. As I watch those joggers pass by, I grasp something else: I may not be able to break completely from the demands of routine right now, but until my next opportunity to run along the beach at sunrise or stretch those long-neglected muscles on a yoga mat, there is something I can be bothered to do that will enliven and energise my day. I can try a different dog-walking route.
Back to front

At LUX*, the gastronomic goal is to create as much as possible right in front of you. Corporate Chef Walter Lanfranchi has travelled the world to find the freshest ideas from the most forward-thinking bars and restaurants. Starting with an all-new LUX* Belle Mare, he aims to elevate the whole dining experience. Here is some of what he has cooked up for our seeing-is-believing open kitchens.

Mushroom wall

‘I love mushrooms. But it can be difficult to cultivate or source the highest-quality ‘shrooms on an island – so we decided to grow them ourselves! Our mushroom wall will flaunt a variety of fungi on rotation; what we grow here can be chosen like a lobster from a tank, plucked and cooked in front of you. Pretty impressive when it’s offered from a buffet restaurant.’

Jasper oven

‘When I visited Barcelona, I noticed every restaurant with a Michelin star uses these intense indoor barbecues. Even with a buffet concept, we strive to avoid any charring – so we have sourced exciting new equipment such as this industry-celebrated charcoal grill oven. The Jasper provides the kind of speed needed to cook delicious meats in quantity, and at the same time deliver superior quality thanks to its cunning design and special cooking style.’

Iced coffee on tap

‘Frozen coffee is nothing new, but it’s usually done quite boringly, and it ends up tasting more like iced water than coffee. We skip the actual ice and employ a clever method that allows us to serve iced coffee as though pulling a pint. That is to say, straight out of a beer tap – the look is very much like a stout, but the taste is incredible. So if you want to savour the very best iced coffee, you know where we are.’

Bakery

‘Nothing beats a freshly made baguette or focaccia – or any kind of bread straight out of an oven that is visible right there. Everyone loves the smell and the crunchy crust, either eating it with a few drops of extra-virgin olive oil, butter or home-made jams. It’s the same with a just-baked croissant – the only problem is that you can’t stop eating them when they’re like this. I just need to think about our still-warm pains au chocolat or chocolate-chip cookies and I’m salivating...’

Butchery

‘We want to offer something unique that you would normally have to seek out from a dedicated steakhouse or top-end destination restaurant. All the meat in our specialist restaurants is dry aged in-house for at least 20 days, and up to 40, then roasted in our rotisserie or cooked in the Jasper. As chefs, we endeavour to use the most sophisticated techniques available out there.’
There’s an undeniable thrill about booking into a new hotel, a little frisson of pure pleasure. For some, it’s the room: stroking the high-threadcount linens, checking out the toilets, peering into the minibar. Others can’t wait to hit the restaurant, especially in five-star resorts and city-centre grandes dames, where the pleasure of haute cuisine is enhanced by the joy of knowing that your beautifully sprung bed is but an elevator ride away.

But for me, the biggest thrill awaits first thing in the morning. I’m an unashamed, total sucker for the hotel breakfast. I’ve done the lot: buffets that stretch for miles in Vegas super-casino hotels like the Wynn, where you can have everything from strok and eggs to sushi. (Dazzled, we asked our server if people took advantage of the all-in largesse: ‘Do they ever,’ he sighed, ‘we had a table of guys in here last week who stayed for over five hours!’) There was the chic Napa Valley lodge who laid on the most outrageously delicious home-made croissants and muffins, waffles and cookies, baked freshly in-house every morning. Oh, and champagne. I started every day in a carb-induced coma. I’ve done the tiny B&B in trapped-in-aspic British seaside towns with their home-cooked breakfasts of vividly hued organic eggs, local sausages and fruit compotes picked from the trees in the landlady’s garden, and the slithery charms of congee in China.

Some are memorable for less sybaritic reasons. In an exquisitely beautiful, traditional hanok inn in Seoul, after frying like frankfurters all night on our futons due to some violent underfloor heating, I’ve never longed for breakfast more. We were given some gritty, bitter and thick green tea, a bowl of wilted mugwort and a small petrified corvina fish that looked as thought it had been recently dug up. Everyone else was having pastries, coffee and freshly squeezed juice. The management had got wind of the fact that I was writing about Korean food, hence the ‘special’ treatment. Um, thank you.

Of course, as with every seasoned traveller, it’s tricky not to allow a touch of jadedness to set in when breakfast doesn’t live up to anticipation. The sigh of ennui at a parade of curling cheese slices and gently sweating ham, the All-Bran decanted into Tupperware, the curious melancholy of the serve-yourself cappuccino machine. So all hail those hotels that get breakfast right. We crave it so it comes out looking like a good pint of Guinness. (Take a bow, LUX Belle Mare.) The day seems brighter after enjoying a meal of home-made nitrogen ice cream. Details are important.’

Marina O’Loughlin is the award-winning restaurant critic for The Guardian and a travel columnist for Olive magazine. She’s been voted one of the UK’s 500 most influential people by The Sunday Times.
Happiness is... ICI ice cream made with island-grown ingredients and original flavours from popcorn to pistachio, all dolloped into waffle cones made right in front of your eyes (or a punnet with a wooden scoop if you prefer). All from an old-fashioned parlour right by the beach.

ICI’S EXOTIC FLAVOURS INCLUDE PINEAPPLE AND CHILLI
This year, Mia Milk Ltd’s 600 Jersey cows, just under 40 employees and two daily milkings will produce over a million litres of delicious, fresh, calcium-rich white goodness. And that means less imported, powdered and long-life milk for all islanders. The combination of the breed of cow and what they eat means higher-quality taste and better nutritional value with more minerals and more proteins that are easier for us humans to digest. No wonder Agreenculture Holdings dares to declare that their farm supplies the very best milk.

‘The mission of Mia is to ensure milk for everyone,’ says Eric Sérits, president of Avenport Investment, which manages the dairy farm. ‘The main challenges have been that we are an island where most of the agricultural land is covered in sugar cane and that there is no indigenous production of the feed for livestock.

My desire to invest in the dairy industry in Mauritius is in response to a belief in the need for a secure source of nutrition – and that the private sector must be the driving force in this fight. Milk is an essential component of our diet, and it is our duty to safeguard and protect our source of supply for future generations.’

We’ll drink to that. (In fact, we do – Café LUX® coffee in Mauritius is made with Mia’s delicious fresh milk.)
From Mia with love...

For 40 years, Somdeo was one of the only milkmen on Mauritius, making his deliveries by bike in the wee small hours every day. After seven years in retirement, Somdeo returned to his round especially to give his former customers a taste of the quality of Mia’s fresh milk.
Be careful using filters or retouching your photos – it’s a bit like make-up, a light touch can enhance your work, any heavier and it looks cheap.

Shoot into the sun, the light is your plaything: bounce it back and love the softness that it produces.

Forget the clichéd golden hour, the real magic happens just after the sun has set. Embrace the blue zone. The French call this ‘entre chien et loup’ – ‘between dog and wolf’. Those poets.

Go analogue for a day – learn how to control your camera, and stop it controlling you.

When having your photo taken, never stand on the outside of a group shot – the wide lens makes your head look twice as fat as it is. Fight for the flattering middle spot.

If you want to take a portrait always ask politely first – that ‘I’m shooting reportage’ look only works if you’re Robert Capa. Strong portraiture comes from the relationship with photographer and sitter.

Eight out of 10 people will say yes, and those two out of 10 who don’t wouldn’t have made good subjects anyway.

Photography loves a trier – making it up for sunrise almost certainly rewards you with better photographs than sunset, and there’s nothing more cosy than a post-shoot, post-brekkie snooze in the hammock.

And finally… Ignore all the above; there are no rules.

Caffeine stimulates the nervous system, which also helps accelerate the breakdown of body fat. Bonus.

‘Strong coffee, much strong coffee, is what awakens me. Coffee gives me warmth, waking, unusual force and a pain that is not without very great pleasure. I would rather suffer than be senseless.’

NAPOLEON

**Reasons to love coffee…**

**Aromatherapy**

The smell of beans being roasted encourages joyful feelings. Fact.

Don’t just listen to us: medical research in Korea has proven this.

The scent of coffee saw a significant change in the brain proteins linked to stress.

And inhale…

Stats fact: more than 1,600,000,000 cups are drunk every day worldwide.

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**LUX* Flavours**

The brown stuff is the second most popular drink after water.

**LUX* Tips**

The first webcam was invented at the University of Cambridge to let people know if the coffee pot was full or not.

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**CAFE LUX**‘S BLEND OF BEANS IS 45% GUATEMALAN, 45% BRAZILIAN, 10% ETHIOPIAN

**LUX* Blend of beans is 45% Guatemalan, 45% Brazilian, 10% Ethiopian**

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**Caffeine stimulates the nervous system, which also helps accelerate the breakdown of body fat. Bonus.**

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**Disclaimer required?**

Sure, for every study that declares one fact, you may find another that says the contrary – but hey, we love the taste of coffee, and we’re happy to find any excuse to sip our home blends to the max. Not sleeping well, always feel stressed or getting edgy? We’re not doctors, but it sounds as though you might be enjoying too much of this good stuff. And who could blame you?
LES HAUTS

NICK BOULOS HIKES INTO VOLCANIC HEART OF REUNION ISLAND WHERE MANY OF THE VILLAGES IN ITS THREE CIRQUES ARE INACCESSIBLE BY ROAD AND MOST ARE ONLY VISIBLE TO VISITORS BY HELICOPTER...

Photography by Serge Gélabert

LUX JOURNEYS
The rocky road weaved deep into the crumpled landscape and out of sight. It sliced through the wide and orchid-filled valley, passing lonely waterfalls until vanishing into the jagged peaks that tickled the clouds. This wasn’t the Indian Ocean experience I was expecting. Wild, dramatic, rugged and laced with more than 1,000km of walking trails, it was clear that the tiny volcanic island of Réunion – a French territory just 200km from Mauritius – offered an alternative kind of paradise.

‘Réunion is a place of great adventure and discovery,’ said hiking guide Christophe as we ventured into the island’s interior, a wilderness dominated by vast cirques formed millions of years ago by collapsing volcanoes and pointy peaks that resembled witches’ hats.

Our destination was Cayenne, a sleepy hamlet home to just 20 people whose weekly groceries are delivered by helicopter. Reggae music streamed from open windows, as did distracting aromas of spicy Creole cooking. More adventures awaited at sea level. We gazed down at coral reefs from our transparent kayaks, strolled along black-sand beaches fringed with breadfruit trees and toured saint-monikered coastal towns.

In the heart of Sainte-Rose stands Notre-Dame-des-Laves, a small church with a big story. As the Piton de la Fournaise volcano rumbled and spewed lava in 1977, Réunion braced itself for the worst. The flow sped towards the town but came to a miraculous stop just a metre from the doors of this unassuming peach-coloured church. You might say it was divine intervention for this heavenly little island with such dramatic geography.
Let's face it, gone are the days when a little gentle pampering and whale music will cut it in a hotel spa. I want bragtable results from my treatments—and at LUX* they kindly pander to that sense of entitlement. (The only whale music you’ll get is if you head out to the Indian Ocean on a boat in the right season—which they can also arrange.) So often, back at home, we wait for symptoms of poor health before we do anything about our wellbeing. We moan to a doc who maybe prescribes pills or a lotion, and then sends us on our way. That’s not the MO with Chinese medicine, which I salute for healing for centuries by looking at individuals’ health holistically—and it’s why I jumped at the chance to try the new treatment, Zhengliao, which outside of the Daoji Clinic in China, is only available at LUX*. Based on a traditional pain-relief treatment, it aims to drain you of toxins, repair your kidneys, balance your qi and regulate your yu (literally meaning ‘stagnation’, it’s the congestion of energy, blood, phlegm, food and water). Who can argue with that? When I saw on the spa menu that it does all this in a couple of hours, I signed up.

Before I dive into the details of this unique treatment, let me set the spa scene. Arriving at LUX* Me spa of LUX* Le Morne, after changing into robe and slippers, you’re gently chaperoned to a deck overlooking plunge pools, and beyond the stunning peak of le Morne itself. A gentle waterfall in the lush inner garden provides the soundtrack, overlaid by a little classical piano music. The scent is distinctly of orange blossom. In front of me a bright yellow weaverbird is skittering along the infinity edge of the pool. I was already feeling rejuvenated, and I hadn’t had my treatment yet.

This is how my two-hour bespoke Zhengliao session rolled. Spoiler alert: it might sound a little wacky and New Age to some of you. Truth is, these methods are ancient, and they work wonders. A gong placed over your abdomen marks the start and the end of the treatment, sending good vibrations—literally. Acupressure points were expertly massaged, and there was cupping. Not as in when you’re on a packed rush-hour train; it’s when glass balls are sucked onto your back through a vacuum, boosting blood flow.

There was a session of burning sage, since this incense-like medicinal herb is said to have a cleansing effect. And, most unusually, there were heated wooden boxes applied in a similar way as hot stones are in massages. Now, how this all works exactly to reduce stress, improve digestion and sleep, you’d have to have me get a degree in TCM (Traditional Chinese Medicine) to explain. But luckily the therapists know the aim of what they’re doing, and if the end result is what a balanced energy system feels like, I’m a convert.

Zhengliao costs from $150 USD for a two-hour treatment; for more information go to luxme.luxresorts.com

Qi (pronounced ‘chee’): Your qi—or chi—is the energy that circulates around your body. In Chinese philosophy, balancing your negative and your positive qi is central to all that is practised from meditation to medicine. As Jeff Butterworth, Chief Spa and Wellness Officers puts it, it’s your life force. (It’s also a creaker of a word to squeeze onto the board for a triple-word score in Scrabble.)
Antioxidant superheroes

ON HOLIDAY, WHO WANTS TO THINK ABOUT DIETING, WHEN INDULGING AND RELAXATION ARE ON THE MENU BUT SURELY GOING HOME HEALTHIER IS ALSO TEMPTING! AN EASY WAY TO EAT YOURSELF HEALTHY IS TO PRIORITIZE ANTIOXIDANTS, WHICH ENCOURAGE DETOXIFICATION AND HELP OUR BODIES REPAIR FROM WITHIN. HERE, JEFF BUTTERWORTH, CHIEF WELLNESS OFFICER OF LUX*, STEERS US TO A RAINBOW OF FLAVOURSOME FOODS WHICH PROMISE SUPERIZED HITS OF VITAMIN C, VITAMIN E AND BETACAROTENE.

Illustration by Christina Brodie

Packing a punch
Chilli powder, paprika, red pepper, cayenne – they should all be on your hit list if you’re boosting those free-radical-fighters. Nuts and seeds, such as pecans, hazelnuts and pistachios, as well as pulses like lentils, soybeans, pinto and black beans, are all on your side. Fresh fruit too: blueberries, elderberries, cranberries, plums, pomegranates and coconuts are all at the front of the parade cheering for great health – best of all – so is dark chocolate.

Team Antioxidant Second Division
Not quite playing for the Premier League, but still worth including in your diet is freshly brewed tea with a squeeze of lemon juice. Plus fresh fruits and veg, of a yellowy nature, such as pineapple, nectarines, bananas, cantaloupes, yellow peppers and sweetcorn...

Good guys
Next time you’re at the salad bar or breakfast buffet it’s definitely worth heaping big portions of these bad boys: almonds, peanuts, strawberries, pears (with their skin on), cherries, apples, fresh figs, dates, lightly steamed asparagus, tenderstem broccoli, broccoli rabe, baked sweet potato in its skin and good ol’ lettuce.

Ultimate winners
Dried herbs and ground spices often relegated to the back of the kitchen cupboard are in fact bursting with the good stuff, including ground cloves, oregano, rosemary, parsley, cinnamon, Szechuan pepper, turmeric, dried vanilla pods, nutmeg. Seriously – go overboard with these good-for-you seasonings.

HEALTHY EATING TIPS FROM OUR RESIDENT NUTRITIONIST MAGALIE PAILLARD

1. Eat colour
As a general rule, the more naturally colourful the food, the more antioxidants.

2. Plate portion perfection
Fill half your plate with fresh vegetables, a quarter with protein (fish, meat, egg, pulses) and a quarter with carbohydrates (grains or starchy vegetables).

3. Take time to eat
Your brain needs 20 minutes to register that you’ve eaten something. Chew slowly and you’ll avoid overeating and ending up uncomfortable. It’s also better for your digestion, which means less bloating. Use smaller plates, start with soup or salads, drink water before a meal, and put your fork and knife down between bites – this will all help control your eating speed.

For more wellness inspiration and information,
goto luxme.luxresorts.com
I can sing a rainbow

Red, and yellow and pink and green, purple and orange and blue — is how the children’s song goes, and it does well to describe the captivating sand dunes at Chamarel. The Seven Coloured Earths – or *Terres des Sept Couleurs* — is the quirky result of the cooling of mineral-rich molten volcanic rock. Sure, you can pick up souvenir test tubes of the multicoloured soil at the site (there is also a small entrance fee for the pleasure), but it’s the real deal we like to gaze at in its full geological glory.
Lida’s talent lies in creating truly unique custom-made creations and, unusually for a designer, she’s proud of not having a signature look. It’s this versatility that has women from far-flung destinations seeking out her skills. ‘When you get dressed in prêt-à-porter it’s not really your taste – when it’s tailor-made, it’s something quite different,’ she smiles. Appreciative of different cultures and skin colours, Lida compares herself to a chameleon in her ability to adapt to individual tastes. ‘Everywhere you put me, I shift style and dress women in whatever they like,’ says Lida. ‘If a client wants to feel as though she has a new skin, I give her that.’ When the producers of Miss India were seeking a new, modern Bollywood style in 2007, Lida was chosen to give the pageant’s superfluous participants a fresh style. A fairy godmother of fashion, she once whipped up a wedding gown at the eleventh hour for a LUX guest who’d accidentally left her frock at home. Two decades back, if you’d told Lida O’Reilly she’d be invited to show her designs at Fashion Weeks around the world from India to Dubai to London, she wouldn’t have believed you. ‘A few years ago, I decided I wanted to do haute couture, and when you’re born in Mauritius, this sounds crazy.’ Today, the designer has a signed thank-you letter from Hillary Clinton framed on her desk and a busy atelier that will soon be producing a line available through her website. With folks flocking from as far as South Africa and the Middle East solely for her special-occasion creations in local jacquard fabrics, Lida sounds anything but daft. Ask her what her inspiration is and she will humbly cite nature. ‘The real star is always Mother Nature’, says Lida who’s based in Curepipe, in the centre of the island. ‘I love nature – and every corner of Mauritius is different. We’re lucky to live here – the more we travel, the more we know this is paradise.’
**FABIEN HALBWACHS**

_The founder of BiteMe! recently won Creative Entrepreneur of the Year – the prize was mentoring from GML’s Arnaud Lagesse. What was the CEO’s most salient business tip? “Work hard, don’t play hard, and believe in your project. And always think positively.”_

It’s one thing having a good idea – what’s tough is making it a reality. With vision, hard work and a very noble mission, Fabien Halbwachs is on track to reach his goal of providing his fellow islanders with affordable healthy-eating alternatives to fast food. After studying accounting and small business in Perth, then a spell living in Melbourne, Fabien returned home to launch his BiteMe! project two years ago, starting with a fresh-sushi delivery service. ‘I wanted to do something healthy, and living in Australia, sushi was everywhere, while there was none in Mauritius.’

One of the reasons the young entrepreneur became self-employed was so that he could work in a kitchen, be a chef and have time to cycle. At least the first two of those worked out for the passionate cyclist – but as Fabien has discovered, the downside of success and running a small business that employs seven people is that he has little time for trail running and mountain biking. His recent BiteMe! Booster crowd-funding campaign invited folks to deposit money in a BiteMe! account in return for a discount on future orders. So it looks like his professional climb is set to reach even greater heights. Next up, his diabetes-battling, superfood-laced BiteMe! in bars are hitting the supermarkets, and his first official sushi restaurant has just opened in Curepipe. But he’s not going to rush things. ‘Talking with Arnaud Lagesse was really interesting,’ says Fabien. ‘He taught me to take my time, and do things right.’ And hopefully that will still leave a little room for some cycling.
**ERIC TRITON**

‘UNITY IS MY MISSION’ – SO SAYS THE BLUESMAN WHO SINGS FROM THE SOUL.

‘I was born a musician,’ says Eric Triton, who was aged just two when he first picked up a guitar. ‘Mauritius was a very musical island back then,’ he explains. ‘TV didn’t exist, so music was important to everyone.’ Eric would listen to Louis Armstrong and John Lee Hooker on the BBC’s jazz and blues radio shows, and by nine he was performing live. At 11 he was keen to go pro. He recalls his mum’s response: ‘No, you need go to school and study English and French and learn to count your money, and if you can do that, then you can travel and be a musician.’

As a teenager, Eric would cut class to strum for folks in the sugar-cane fields, and he got his first paid gigs at weddings and football matches. ‘It was easier then,’ the soul singer recalls, ‘because people were really attached to music. Today it’s different because people watch music, they don’t listen to it – they don’t know the musicians playing, they just notice the dancer or the hit single.’ For a man who’s always written and performed his own songs (with the exception of a few quality covers of Ray Charles, Otis Redding and James Brown), this could be spirit-dampening. Instead of despair, Triton exudes positivity. ‘For me, music is the chance to share messages and make people happy – you know their problems and you can try and make things better.’

The singer, who used to perform in English, now sings in Creole. ‘I realised, ‘Hey – I’m Mauritian, I have my own language, I have to speak it.” And it sounds beautiful. So I started singing the blues in Creole. As someone who may have played truant, he’s big on championing education – ‘some parents don’t even care what their children are learning’. Addressing alcohol abuse is also on his manifesto, and his lyrics remind his audience ‘keep on drinking and your wife will go away’. But there’s no lecturing – just empathy, compassion and inspiration. ‘Art is a way to explain all the terrible things – and get people to stop and think.’

There’s only one pastime that competes with his singing and songwriting: fishing. ‘I have my boat, and when I have nothing to do – although I always have something to do – I go fishing. I just leave my line in the water, and sit and wait for the fish.... I don’t catch many – sometimes only one in three hours – but it’s good for the brain. You learn to be patient and listen to the silence.’ In the absence of a boat, and the time to go fishing, download his 2010 album Blues dan mwa, and the smooth, rich vocals and heart-stirring melodies of tracks such as L’Unité are sure to have the same meditative effect.
Finding Shangri-La

ALEX VON TUNZELMANN TRAVELS TO WESTERN CHINA’S TEA-PRODUCING PROVINCE OF YUNNAN, AND TRACES A THOUSAND YEARS OF HISTORY ALONG THE TRADE ROUTE THAT RUNS THROUGH THE HIMALAYAS TO THE HIGH PLAINS OF TIBET.

The journey we took through the mountains of Sichuan is one of the world’s most unforgettable drives. Here, spectacular natural beauty meets ancient tradition, and ancient tradition meets all the loud, shiny brashness of modern China. The first stretch from the pretty pagodas and bamboo-needle tattoo parlours of Dali ascends languorously into pine-forested slopes. Many staples of the English country garden – rhododendrons, primulas, berberis – were appropriated from China when intrepid 1920s plant hunters first collected the species here. One of these explorers, Frank Kingdon-Ward, achieved international fame when he discovered the blue poppy, which every spring still blooms in startling cerulean across these hills.

Higher up in the hills we reached Lijiang, a Unesco World Heritage site with roots in the Southern Song, Ming and Qing dynasties. Linked by 354 bridges, the town’s intricately carved wooden buildings are beautiful, but delicate. Fault lines trace a dark destiny beneath Lijiang: it has often been destroyed by earthquakes. After the 1996 quake, the Old Town was rebuilt as something between replica and pastiche. These days, it is enthralling for its weirdness. Suited businessmen, drunk on lychee wine, spill out of lantern-lit karaoke bars into the scrupulously clean fake-ancient squares. Flower markets display real blossoms, dyed lurid colours and sprayed with holographic glitter. Recorded music pipes through hidden speakers in plastic rocks, positioned artfully around lily ponds filled with slow-swimming carp. It felt peculiarly reminiscent of an eastern Disneyland: Old China reconstructed for New China’s tastes.

Buddhist prayer flags in Rizhao temple (Da Bao Si) outside Zhongdian.
The Baiwa - descendants of the Di people - consider the white horse the greatest of all gods.
Songzanlin, the largest Tibetan Buddhist monastery in Yuxian.
Among the high peaks of the Himalayas, as they sheer up towards the border with Tibet, is Shangri-La. Once it was known as Zhongdian, but in 2002 the town was renamed after the fictional Himalayan paradise described in James Hilton’s 1933 adventure novel Lost Horizon. The modern Shangri-La has a mostly Tibetan population and abundant riches: the government in Beijing likes to keep these Chinese Tibetans sweet. Again, Old and New China collide, though with more subtlety than in Lijiang. We drank fresh yak-butter tea (complete with clumps of yak hair) in a sawdusted farmhouse. Outside the town is a top-line spa hotel, where expert masseurs rub away the dust and aches of the road.

The temperature fell and the air thinned as we drove up towards Deqin, fine mists swirling dramatically around the peaks and valleys like the tails of Chinese dragons. Buddhist monasteries dot the route, clinging to the sides of 3,000-foot drops. Pygmy goats playfully head-butted our knees as we approached one temple. Monks in low, thatched huts playfully head-butted our knees as we approached one temple. Monks in low, thatched huts

The famous and elusive blue poppy, the prize of the Victorian plant hunters, Latin name, Meconopsis betonicifolia.

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The famous and elusive blue poppy, the prize of the Victorian plant hunters, Latin name, Meconopsis betonicifolia.
Here you are at a wonder of the ancient world. You’ve sweated your way up the slopes of Machu Picchu with a wheezing flock of eager travellers. Clanking canteens and crunching cartilage are briefly silenced as you (and all of your new friends) stop to Instagram the view. Rap from Chile is going for landscape, while Jane who you met on the bus is opting for portrait. It’s thrilling stuff, and we aren’t even onto filters yet. Just imagine how much fun it’s going to be scrolling through all 23 of your groups’ uploads at the picnic stop round the next corner.

Instagram is obviously merely one of the many ways people now have to let everyone else know just what they are up to. It’s not that there’s anything wrong with sharing a stunning view, relaying your nephew’s first words, passing on how well that pulled-pork recipe off that website turned out, or announcing a charity-fundraising effort on the horizon. It’s just that the relentless updating, sharing, comparing and liking can sort of undermine a lot of the stuff you are meant to be doing and claim to be relishing. On top of that, it certainly doesn’t enhance the experience for those sharing the space with you – it’s hard to fully appreciate landmark vistas, concerts, or football matches through a weaving forest of phone-clasping hands.

Espousing a view that people probably go on the internet throughout dinner is getting a little out of control, and that we’re all getting a bit self-involved as the internet takes over. What’s more alarming than the day-to-day social infatuation, is the worrying appearance of an alteration of what it means to enjoy something. Certainly, boasting, and, to a less malevolent extent, the broadcasting of your experiences have always existed to increase the joy some personalities garner from their lives and actions. But have the majority of us (young and old) reached a point at which our joy can only be fully rendered if it’s shared with masses? Imagine heading up Machu Picchu if you had to sign an NDA beforehand. Would you see the point? Would you have made that pulled pork if it wasn’t on Pinterest and wasn’t likely to win you mutual click-love from distant keyboard-tappers? Would you have sold cups of Pimm’s in the drizzle for charity if it wasn’t likely to make all those people you knew at school years ago (but don’t actually) think a bit more of you? One would hope, for the sake of humanity, that the answers to these questions are ‘yes’. You wonder if the more we spend our time sharing our lives with remote others, the less we, and those in our vicinity, get out of each experience.

Monastic silence – there’s something to it, if a little watered down. Those Cistercians would have struggled through their meditations if WhatsApping Brother Paul and Brother Matthew about how awesome the vision was that they saw after raking the gardens. Is it time we chilled a bit and had some selfish introspective fun? Try take pleasure in that real-life view for a minute before snapping away. Close your eyes. I’ll bet you a ton of Instagram credits that what you just recorded to your memory is better than anything you’ve shared on Vine anyway.
Our brain loves an easy life and can all too readily slip into bad habits and negative ways of thinking. Escaping your usual routine wakes your brain and alerts you to different possibilities. So? Be positive. Mix it up.

The rainy brain loves stress. Getting away to a relaxing place helps you to dampen down those repetitive thoughts and worries about work, stuff to with your kids, deadlines and so on. Solution? Chill out.

Science (and logic) tells us that boosting the ratio of positive to negative experiences don’t just feel good, it improves our health. Having more fun experiences (ice cream, splashing in the sea, romance, a cold beer on a hot day…) than hassles (missing the bus, stressful deadlines) boosts wellbeing. Top tip? Have more fun.

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‘Our brains are flexible and malleable, continuously moulded by our own experiences,’ says Dr Elaine Fox, Professor of Experimental Psychology, University of Oxford. ‘This evolving elasticity ensures that each of us has an exquisitely customised brain with its own individualised circuits and connections. What I call the ‘rainy’ brain is a set of circuits, and connections, that tune us in to the negative side of life – what might go wrong rather than what might go right. The ‘sunny’ brain highlights the positive. Both sides of our emotional brain are essential for a balanced and healthy life: the trick is to tip this delicate balance. How to boost your sunny brain and keep your rainy brain in check? Holidays are great for doing just that.

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Elaine Fox is the author of Rainy Brain, Sunny Brain: The New Science of Optimism and Pessimism. (rainybrainsunnybrain.com)

Neuroscience research suggests that mindfulness meditation changes our brain and improves our ability to control our emotions, especially the negative ones. You don’t even need to meditate; just taking time out helps. For starters, turn off your phone and clear your mind.
‘HOLIDAYS ARE A CHANCE FOR YOUR IMAGINATION TO DRIFT ALONG IN THE BREEZE. DESCRIBED BY THE ANCIENT GREEKS AS THE “PATRON GODDESSES OF IDLE FELLOWS”, CLOUDS HAVE A FORMLESS, CHAOTIC BEAUTY THAT ENCOURAGES YOU TO SLOW DOWN,’ SAYS GAVIN PRETOR-PINNET, FOUNDER OF THE CLOUD APPRECIATION SOCIETY.

The Cloudspotter app for the iPhone, priced £1.99 (iTunes), will teach you to distinguish the different formations. With a team of moderators awarding stars when you identify correctly, it turns cloudspotting into a game.

‘We pledge to fight “blue-sky thinking” whenever we find it. Life would be dull if we had to look up at cloudless monotonous sky day after day.’
‘Far from being things to complain about, clouds are the most diverse, evocative and poetic aspects of nature.’

‘The aimless activity of cloudspotting is the perfect antidote to the pressures of the modern world.’
'It isn’t him is it? It isn’t. No. Is it him?’

Blake turned his head to look again at the crop of perfect chestnut hair receding from their view. The buffed torso, the swimming trunks that looked as though they had been custom tailored. ‘It’s him.’ ‘It can’t be.’ ‘When you go five-star, you can bump into anyone. That’s half of what you’re paying for.’

Caro put her hand up to her mouth, blocking a squeal. ‘Don’t make a scene.’ “That’s half of what you’re paying for’,” said Blake, taking Caro’s copy of *Middlemarch* from him. ‘This seemed to shock Caro back into life. ‘Blake prefers Jeffrey Archer. He’s a philistine.’ ‘Well, I guess he’d do well in Hollywood.’ The assumption that they knew who he was made explicit.

‘Listen. My name’s Nat. Nathan. I hope you don’t mind me asking Miss... Mrs.’ ‘Caro.’ ‘I’m Blake.’ ‘Caro. Blake. Like I say, I’m pretty dumb about this kind of thing. It would really honour me if you would join for a drink. Maybe this evening? Perhaps raise my horizons a little.’

Blake looked at her. Caro didn’t answer. ‘I mean, if you would rather be alone...’ ‘No,’ said Caro. ‘That would be fine.’

‘They met at 8pm in a quiet part of the hotel bar. Blake had never seen Caro prepare so carefully for a meeting. She’d been spa’d, exfoliated, manicured, had the best facial money could buy. She bought the most expensive dress in the hotel shop and a new pair of shoes, something gold and strappy and seductive.

Nathan Clarke had brought his copy of *Middlemarch* and placed it like a talisman on the table. Three glasses of Chablis removed any trace Caro had of anxiety. She held forth on the Victorian novel, as Nathan Clarke listened, apparently entranced. The Gothic, the author as confidante, the moral imperative, the comic, the realist. The theme of self-delusion in *Middlemarch*. Blake had never seen Caro so alive. She had shed 20 years, and her eyes barely left the movie star’s face. All her love of literature poured out of her, as if it were love for Nathan Clarke himself. For nearly an hour Nathan Clarke listened – nodding, wrinkling his fine brow, muttering ‘that’s interesting!’ or ‘Jeez, I never knew that.’ By the time they had finished yet another round of drinks – Nathan Clarke insisted on paying – they were a warmth between them, a bond, that Blake could not help but acknowledge. They would become friends. Visits to the film set. Coffee evenings at the house in Islington when he was visiting to promote his latest movie.

Caro turned and looked at her. Her eyes were actually rolling in her head.

She dropped her own book, the one she had picked carefully from the bookshelf at home. It was immense - a Victorian classic that Blake had found unreadable when he had studied it at school. Blake bent to pick it up, but before he could, he saw Nathan Clarke stop, bend, and pick it up, shaking his head as he did so, it seemed, in astonishment.

‘Well, would you look at this?’

His voice was dark, treacly. Perfect for voiceovers – cartoon bears or wise magicians.

‘Now who would have thought we would be reading the same book?’

He held out his own copy in his other hand, the pages limp at the edges, presumably from getting too close to the swimming pool.

Caro simply stared. ‘My wife loves Victorian literature. Actually she teaches it. At university.’

Nathan Clarke showed his teeth in a grin that seemed to extend the full width of his face.

‘No kidding? Man, I was always so dumb at school. I love this stuff too. Kind of just discovered it.’

Still Caro didn’t speak. ‘I always thought it was rather dull,’ said Blake, taking

Caro’s copy of *Middlemarch* from him. ‘So this George Eliot. Did he ever write anything else good?’

Caro stopped her glass halfway to her mouth and began laughing – drunkenly, insanely, loudly. She tried to hide the note of disdain but the booze had incapacitated her usual filters. ‘George Eliot isn’t a man! She’s a woman.’

She carried on laughing.

Nathan Clarke stared at her. He didn’t blink. But in a moment, the atmosphere changed. Blake could feel it. Caro could feel it too. She put down her glass, her hand shaking slightly. Her laughter faded, stopped.

Nathan Clarke stood up, as liquid as the Whiskey Sour in front of him.

‘Well, Caro. Gerry. That was fascinating. But I’m getting a little tired. It was cool though. Yeh. Thanks.’

Without another word – without a handshake – he stood, turned his back, and walked away.

He left the copy of *Middlemarch* where he had placed it. Caro picked it up, and examined it in the half-light from the table candle. Inside was his name, written childishly, but doubtless in his own hand. A perfect memento, possibly valuable.

Caro just sat silent for a few seconds. Then she replaced the book, and turned and kissed Blake on the lips, with more passion than she had done for a very long time. ‘Let’s go to bed,’ she said, rising.

Blake, surprised, went to retrieve Nathan Clarke’s signed copy of *Middlemarch*. But Caro shook her head. ‘I guess happy endings just don’t happen anymore,’ said Blake, replacing the book.

‘Yes, they do,’ said Caro. And she led Blake quietly, urgently, back to the hotel room.

Tim Lott has published five novels. He started his career as a journalist, but the publication of the Mauritius-loving Londoner’s 1996 memoirs *The Scent of Dried Roses* swiftly transitioned him into an award-winning author, and his next work, *White City Blue* (1999), won the Whitbread First Novel Award. His most recent book, *Under the Same Stars* (2012), tells the story of two estranged brothers travelling across America in search of their father.
Don’t remain at the destination if you had a destination wedding. Getting married abroad is a wonderful thing, no question. However, unless you exit that destination promptly you’ll get texts, calls and friends knocking on the door of your honeymoon suite, looking to hang out. There’s no greater passion-killer than your best man turning up with a football under one arm and a beer for you in the other.

Do get off social media. Making those heart shapes with your hands, and so on. A Facebook check-in on arrival is acceptable and, hell, but on a trip like this the only sharing you should be doing is a seafood platter and a daiquiri for two.

Don’t book a strictly couples-only resort. Maybe dinner, with one of the couples. You’ll then have to say hello to them every day and before long the husband will be revealing far too much information about the moribund state of his marriage.

Don’t be surprised by her own grand gesture. Your lovely wife will have read a Caitlin Moran tweet or an article in Cosmo, that says she should be doing some sort of empowering striptease for you in the hotel. This may be totally out of character, but for goodness sake go with it.

Do make some sort of romantic gesture. Seems obvious, but many chaps forget the grand gestures in the wake of the love-fest that was the wedding. Some bougainvillea petals picked from the hotel’s garden (with the manager’s consent, just to be safe), and left in a heart shape on the bed before you both pop back for your mid-afternoon ‘nap’ is a winner. (Mind you, housekeeping might get there first with the flowers.)

Do go as soon as possible. Once the big day is over, you need to keep up the momentum. Drop the presents at your house, ignoring the pile of bills on the mat, and get yourself off for the trip of a lifetime. A pre-packed case is a must.

Don’t leave it to the groom. Traditionally, the groom was responsible for the honeymoon. It’s a wonderfully romantic notion of a bride being whisked off to a secret, exotic location, but planning a trip you will both love has to be top of the agenda. He might be after excitement and adventure while you want pure, luxurious relaxation; so make sure you’re both on the same page. Learning to abseil in a Welsh quarry, for example, will see you leap from ‘love’s young dream’ to ‘decree nisi’ with the agility of a mountain goat.

Do pack a fabulous wardrobe. Glow, you’re going to look and feel your best. Make the most of the glamorous setting, stylish bars and upscale restaurants by packing some chic. This isn’t the holiday to slum it in old T-shirts and trainers. And invest time in finding swimwear you feel your sexiest in.

Don’t pack your laptop. ‘Oh look, Johns from accounts has just sent round a hilarious video of a cat chasing a wasp.’ Seriously, this is your honeymoon, your job should mos’ def take a backseat. The only work you should be doing is on your tan.

Don’t choose somewhere to relax. Don’t be that couple bordering on the obsessional until one of you collapses in a flood of tears next to yet another monument. ‘This should definitely be a ‘no news, no shoes’ kind of holiday.

Don’t expect an in-flight upgrade. You can try waving your marriage certificate at the stony-faced lady on the airline check-in desk if you like. You can also try discussing nuclear physics with a dog, for all the good it will do you.
Star ratings are all very well but we do more than tick boxes in the way conventional resorts and hotels do. Traditional classifications may hint at excellent service and first-rate facilities but it’s the surprises, together with the spontaneity and sincerity of our team members that inspires so many of our guests to keep coming back. Since luxury means different things from person to person, we focus on perfecting the priorities, while peppering the environment and your experience with pop-up treats and uplifting moments.
REASONS TO GO LUX*

Beach bento
Simple, fresh lunches served in style. Come mid-morning, our beach boys circulate around the sun loungers and pool decks, handing out menu cards and pencils so guests can book their bento selections. Your Japanese-style boxes are then delivered to the beach with a drink at whichever time you’ve chosen.

LUX® Panama
The iconic, lightweight, brimmed classic light-coloured hats at our beach with a drink at whichever time you’ve chosen. Your Japanese-style boxes are then delivered to the beach with a drink at whichever time you’ve chosen.

Aperitivo
Our belief in celebrating single-minded excellence extends to our new one-drink speciality bar. Serving the finest Aperol spritz in the Indian Ocean is our first focus, but we’ll be changing the tipples we serve every few months. Cin cin!

Phone home
Imagine a fantasy world where a hotel installed a classic red telephone box and then invited you to use it to ring friends and family for free, whenever you fancied. Far-fetched? Dream not, it’s a LUX® reality.

Mamma Aroma
Aromatherapy guru Shirley Page has created a powerful range of essentials oils solely for LUX® Me. Natural island essences, fragrant flowers and health-enhancing spices, all blended using Shirley’s years of clinical wisdom. They not only smell incredible when used in our signature spa treatments, they’re also available as a range of facial products, allowing you to take some of that healing home.

Message in a bottle
Treats at every turn, morning, noon and night? Always, at LUX*. The magic extends to desert-island bottles stuffed with scrolls waiting to be discovered. Complimentary spa treatment? Dinner for two on the beach? We hope you’re observant even more than first meets the eye.

Scrucap
Wine lovers, rejoice. Our exclusive expert-selected South African wines have been strategically bottled to taste their very best for you – chardonnay, Chenin blanc, pinot noir, sauvignon, shiraz and more. Of course, our sommelier has a wealth of other vintages to tempt you, but our own labels have earned a dedicated and enthusiastic following of connoisseurs.

Starry, starry night
Twinkling above is the majesty of the Southern Cross and the Milky Way – simply look up and these constellations make captivating viewing. But at LUX® we never miss the chance to let you make the most of our beguiling environments and, as well as providing an entertaining explanation of all you can see, our in-house astronomer fires up his highest-tech telescope to let guests observe even more than first meets the eye.

Screen on the beach
Beaubaga? Check. Fresh popcorn? Check. Butter and ganache icings, bubble gum, crema variegato, bubble gum, chocolate buttons, sprinkles, sugar more. Of course, our sommelier has a wealth of other vintages to tempt you, but our own labels have earned a dedicated and enthusiastic following of connoisseurs.

Café LUX®
Since we believe that excellent coffee is important and not just a luxury, at the heart of each LUX® resort and hotel is a Café LUX®. Savour barista-prepared organic coffee, which has been freshly roasted and blended on site. Cappuccino? Affogato? You got it (page 40).

LUX® Me
Our integrated philosophy of wellbeing offers a step-by-step path to a healthier way of life. In addition to hosting outdoor classes, our personal trainers specialising in Pilates, yoga and meditation can tailor programmes to your personal goals.

Tread lightly
We can’t always promise clear skies above the Indian Ocean but, with your help, we can work towards a clear conscience. A memorable holiday needn’t cost the earth and, because LUX® cares about the environment, we offset 100% of the carbon emitted at our resorts – one of a number of measures that help us to leave a lighter footprint.

The Sound of LUX®
There’s nothing like the classics. And we’re not talking Julie Andrews. Nor do we mean Mozart or Beethoven. Beautiful, sure, but not imaginative enough for our rendez-vous. LUX® has silenced sombre scores and pan-pipe medleys and our sound architects, Playlister’s Ben Bridgewater and Dan Lywood, have curated just the right tracks. Whether dining by the sea or relaxing in LUX® Me, your aural receptors will be gently washed with top tunes, not drowned with Bacharach or Bach.

Déjeuner sur la mer
A drumroll, please, for the pop-up placemat. At LUX®, you’re invited to dine à deux in unexpected settings: on the sand, in our flower-filled grounds, or beyond. By the time dawn breaks, all trace of your private dinner has gone, the romance of a spontaneous evening now but a treasured memory.

Cake boss
Get creative. At one of our decorating bars, choose from a variety of delicious pre-baked cakes, then get embellishing. Butter and ganache icings, chocolate buttons, sprinkles, sugar flowers and more; this is perfect for kids – large and small – who want to create their own bespoke treats.

Teddy Tennis
LUX® PLAY is always bursting with activities to keep littlies entertained while they meet new friends. Children eight and under especially love our take on knocking a ball about – anyone for Teddy Tennis?

ICI
A holiday without ice cream is like an infinity pool without water. So we’ve created our own brand, ICI (pages 32 and 34), which we serve in hand-waffled cones. Sicilian pistachio zaruata, bubble gum, crème with crunchy hazelnut and an anything-but-average Madagascan vanilla are just a few of our house-made flavours.

CELEBRATIONS

*References may be found in our full-colour brochure or online at luxhotels.com.
Fresh from a $20m investment, LUX* Belle Mare has reopened not only wearing an all-new look, care of interiors doyenne and TV personality Kelly Hoppen (page 14), but also flaunting three showstopping restaurants (page 30), conceived by a foodie dream team. Michelin-starred Vineet Bhatia, global food and beverage guru Patrick John and innovative corporate chef Walter Lanfranchi have combined culinary forces to ensure LUX* Belle Mare is the place to dine in style.

Stephen Woodhams

Double-gold medallist at the Chelsea Flower Show and resident of both London’s Marylebone and Ibiza, Stephen Woodhams has designed gardens in Mallorca, Ibiza, St Tropez and Barbados. Now he has transformed the landscaping at LUX* Belle Mare to create an enchanted paradise on the beach.

Amari by Vineet

Vineet Bhatia was the first Indian chef to be awarded a Michelin star, for his Rasoi restaurant in London’s fashionable Chelsea. Now he brings his inimitable spices to Amari. Refined styling and contemporaryflavours, with tables indoors and out, make this simply the most luxurious curry house on the planet.

Duck Laundry

As much as feast for the eyes as the appetite, the chic Duck Laundry is the top table in Mauritius today, with its contemporary Chineseflavours and pan-Asian preparations. A wood-fired beechnovember and hanging birds feature alongside a sushi, maki and sashimi bar, plus a noodle-making station and a vastspread of dim sum.

Gros Mario

Enter this typical Mauritian tavern and take a historical trip around the island via rum, Creoleflavours and Sega music. LUX* celebrates the culture of each of its destinations – Mauritius is perhaps best known for its cane crops and the rums they produce. Gros Mario presents the world’s widest collection of Mauritian and Réunion rums, spanning all varieties of rhum agrico and rhum industrial. Here, we toast the Creole spirit in every sense.

Café LUX*

LUX* Belle Mare takes coffee culture one step further by hosting its own on-property roasting plant. Whether flat white or FrappéLUX, it’s all now made with Mia milk (page 36), fresh from a new Mauritian dairy – sip, gulp, smile at the latté art.

K Bar

With Ms Hoppen as its muse, K Bar offers its clientele of cherished guests and local scenesters Mauritius’ most elegant environment in which to relax. The stainless-steel tank and shiny draught taps hint at the in-house microbrewery, where B LUX*, a range of craft beers, is exclusively brewed for us by the Flying Dodo Brewing Company. Don’t miss Cuveé LUX*, a characterful beer aged in old whisky barrels and enhanced with a hint of Café LUX*.

Beach Rouge

Our naturally perfect beach has been complemented by chic design. Showcasing pure white sands, accented by ocean blues by day and ruby reds by night, Beach Rouge is the place to go for couldn’t-be-fresher carpaccio, grilled seafood and tunes as chilled as the rosé – plus just enough space to dance your way into the evening.

ICI

The ICI counter is bigger and better than ever – ask for a tour of the ice cream factory at LUX* Belle Mare.
LUX* BELLE MARE, MAURITIUS

Elegant east-coast sweep of beach, pool and perfection

Fresh in feel, look and style, these mod-colonial suites and private thatched villas are dressed with contemporary panache, slap bang in paradise. A statement swimming pool (the island’s largest) at the heart of this five-star resort is overlooked by forward-thinking foodie destination, Mix. Gently buzzing by day, sashaying to Balearic beats by night, Beach Rouge is a restaurant-bar with soul. Expect nothing-is-too-much-trouble service from the skilled baristas in Café LUX to the experts at our Dive Shop (page 40). The spa is a knockout too, but it’s not just a pretty, sweetly scented space; highly qualified therapists want you to leave feeling your best – whether though treatments, yoga or Tai Chi. And we haven’t even mentioned that the coastline feels as white as you’ll ever know.

174 suites, including 60 Junior Suites, 27 Pool Junior Suites, 33 Romantic Junior Suites, 10 Beach View Junior Suites, 7 Honeymoon Suites, The LUX* Suite, 16 Family Suites. Eight restaurants, bars and cafés.

Don’t miss...
- Time on the tranquil brochure-perfect beach.
- Touring the globe via the Asian, European and African flavours of Mix, with many dishes made before your eyes (page 30).
- The world-class spa whether for a little relaxation or for a specialised results-focused LUX* Me programme.
- Flying one of our mono-ethnic ice cream flavours at ICI (page 34).
- Fun times in PLAY for little ones, and Studio 17 for teens.
- Exploring the lagoon by a pirogue, a small traditional flat-bottomed fishing boat.
- Dazzling scuba diving.
- Nature walks and yoga sessions at Domaine de L’Etoile in eastern Mauritius.
- Browsing the market at Centre de Flacq.

In the press
‘Cool, calming spaces punctuated with colour.’
House & Garden

Mauritius
Distance to airport: 45km (1h)

LUX* BELLE MARE, VILLAS

Refined interiors, rustic thatched charm

Your own fully fitted private luxury villa, with a butler on call around the clock, heated pools and landscaped gardens, with all the added perks of a five-star resort. With interior design by Kelly Hoppen (page 15), the bright, elegant and uplifting spaces are soothing and utterly private, with bathrooms alone worth writing home about. Entertain in your villa, or call for a ride to the restaurant – do it all your way. Enjoy your own discreet hideaway or follow the winding path down to the Indian Ocean – knowing that sunloungers are always reserved for you on the beach. At LUX* Belle Mare, we invite you to embrace the best of Mauritius’ natural beauty, without having to surrender your need for independence, sophistication and service. Better than a home from home.

12 private villas, all with private pools and butler service. 8 Ocean Villas, 2 Beachfront Villas, 2 Prestige Villas.

Don’t miss...
- As well as all of the fun and facilities at LUX* Belle Mare? How’s about lunch served by your private butler on a private island? We can arrange an exclusive luxury boat trip, which includes snorkelling, waterfalls and a historic lighthouse.
- Spicing up your stay with an activity such as skydiving – then ease your way back to Earth with an hour-long massage back at your villa.
- There’s no better resort for truly bespoke time: let us tailor a day of LUX* Me treatments to your preferences, starting with a healthy breakfast on your terrace, ending with a soothing petal-sprinkled bath in your sunken tub.

In the press
‘Try an evening of wine tasting, or – even better – take a cooking class with a chef.’
Sunday Times Travel Magazine

Mauritius
Distance to airport: 45km (1h)
LUX* LE MORNE
Soul-stirring romance on the wilder southwest

Don’t miss...
- Just-caught seafood and New World wines at our beach barbecue.
- Sourcing Thai tunes in Nipa, and Creole, Indian and Chinese flavours in the Kitchen.
- Having your photo taken, backdropped by the stunning main pool and the sea beyond.

You’ll also love...
- Kitesurfing at one of the world’s host spots for this sport in the world, right on our doorstep (page 20).
- Swimming with dolphins, a short boat ride away.
- Hiking up Le Morne with the island’s only licensed guide, or through Black River Gorges National Park.
- Admiring the natural spectacle that is the Seven Coloured Earths (page 30).
- Golfing at two courses nearby.

In the press
“The bucolic Indian Ocean beach resort is about healthy living, sure, but you won’t be brainwashed by it... Food is omnipresent.” Tatler

149 rooms, including 64 Superior Rooms, 10 Junior Suites, 45 Prestige Junior Suites and 15 Ocean Junior Suites. Seven restaurants, bars and cafés.

Mauritius
Distance to airport: 60km (1h15)

LUX* GRAND GAUBE
All-singing, all-dancing lagoon-hugging resort

Don’t miss...
- Flipping on beanbags under coconut palms and brightly coloured bougainvillea.
- A serving of gateaux piment under the banyan trees at our beach shack.
- A scoop or three from our ice-cream-peddling Mini.
- Swaying to the rhythm of a vivacious Séga performance right on the sand.
- A whirl at beach volleyball.

You’ll also love...
- The bird’s-eye view of the spectacular coral reefs by seaplane.
- Dipping your toes into Grand Baie’s buzzing scene of bars and boutiques.
- A serving of paradise: gourmet spoons of local lamb and lobster.

In the press
“A place for romance and relaxation... Simple luxury where the focus is on extraordinary and tailor-made experiences.” The Telegraph

198 rooms and suites, including 22 Superior Rooms, 104 Ocean Superior Rooms, 46 Deluxe Rooms, 23 Junior Suites, 2 Senior Suites, 1 Emperor Villa. Six restaurants, bars and cafés.

Mauritius
Distance to airport: 76km (1h15)
Adventurers love this far-flung corner of France. And this is the volcanic island’s only five-star beach resort – bang on Réunion’s best stretch of coral-enhanced sands, fringing a reef-sheltered lagoon. Not fussy or formal, these pine trees and plantation-style porched villas beg you to linger long after breakfast, you might find yourself torn about whether to stray further than the sunlounger. As well as showcasing the island’s largest swimming pool, there are power-plate and Pilates classes, tennis, snorkelling and volleyball on tap – plus pétanque too. Naturellement. The French accent is also deliciously evident in the elegant eateries, suited to every mood, from relaxed beachside seafood platter brunches to dressy landmark FHOHEUDWLRQVLQ2UDQJLQH174 sea-facing rooms and suites, 85 Superior Rooms, 63 Deluxe Rooms, 8 Junior Suites, 10 Family Rooms. Five restaurants, bars and cafés.

Don’t miss…
- Lunch à deux in the lovingly labelled herb garden.
- Learning to make zingy Creole curries at Carry’s Bar at La Plage.
- Birdwatching from your balcony (page 8).

You’ll also love…
- An awe-inspiring tour of the pisons and ciposques – best admired from a helicopter.
- Following a speleologist through the lava tunnels or hiking through lush national parks.
- Exploring the UNESCO-approved terrain by a fat, whale-watching and waterfall canyoning – the hotel’s speciality is arranging just the right excursions on land and sea.

In the press
‘An impressive property with direct access to L’Hermitage beach, a 6km strip blessed with a lagoon rich in marine life.’

The Independent

Ile de la Réunion

Distance to Roland Garros Airport: 41km (0h45)
Distance to Pierrefonds Airport: 27km (0h15)

Thatched over-the-water villas jutting out from pure white sands – no wonder it’s so often said that this stylish sanctuary is as soothing as resorts get. Dhigloofandhoo is our private-island paradise in South Ari Atoll, a 25-minute seaplane hop from Male. Life is sweet in our surf and on our turf: the sheltered lagoon provides unbeatable viewings of stingrays, coral fish and dolphins, and the five-star PADI diving centre exhilarates pros and novices alike. On land, follow secret zigzagging pathways through orchid-touting tropical gardens and seek out tennis, swimming pools, spa time and specialist fitness sessions. You won’t have to mosey far to discover one of the many excellent eateries and atmospheric bars. Whether a honeymooning couple or a family of any ages, you’re assured barefoot luxury at its best.

193 pavilions, suites and villas, including 36 Beach Pavilions, 12 Sunset Junior Suites, 43 Beach Villas, 46 Water Villas, 12 Beach Pool Villas, 38 Prestige Water Villas, 8 Family Water Villas, 1 Presidential Villa. Nine restaurants, bars and cafés.

Don’t miss…
- Snorkelling in our house reef amid ridiculously clear waters.
- Touring global cuisine from street food to fine dining.
- Luxuriating in our award-winning spa with views out to sea.

You’ll also love…
- A boat tour of our stunning turquoise lagoon.
- A brush with whale sharks – join our safaris to spyl the world’s largest fish.
- Bike rides and walking tours treat culturally curious visitors to a taste of local life care of coral-stone houses and craft stalls.

In the press
‘The views from the spa cabin – bath through the glass floor, window, and out to sea – are special.’

The Times
Amid luminescent lagoons and creeks, here in Ajman, the smallest of the seven Emirate sheikdoms, this sleek destination resort is a snappy 40 minutes by car from Dubai International Airport and a breezy 10 minutes from Sharjah. Styled by Jean-Michel Gathy, the architect commended for high-end hotels suites, apartments and private villas guarantee contemporary glamour here on the Persian Gulf. Add to the full gamut of state-of-the-art wellness facilities two dazzling kilometres of silky sandy beach, and natural mangroves within reach, plus a year-round sunny climate, and you’re assured Phase 1: 193 pavilions, suites and villas, including 36 Beach Pavilions, 12 Sunset Junior Suites, 45 Beach Villas, 46 Water Villas, 12 Beach Pool Villas, 38 Prestige Water Villas, 3 Family Water Villas, 1 Presidential Villa. Nine restaurants, bars and cafés. Phase 2 (Opening mid 2015). Additional 20 rooms. Don’t miss... - Apart from every five-star hotel amenity? Diving, boating, kitesurfing and everything else that’s fun in the water. - Ticking off the birds you’ve spotted is a double thanks to almost 60 species living in the surrounding forest. You’ll also love... - Strolling a boardwalk that promises you a parade of restaurants, cafés and shops galore. - A whirl in the world-class marina with beach club. - Teeing up at the Jack Niklaus signature 18-hole golf courses.

Don’t miss... - Having a Naxi cooking class. - Sipping world-class brews in our specialist tea room. - Learning about the ancient art of Dongba pictographs. - Indulging in high-performance spa treatments inspired by Chinese medicine. You’ll also love... - Horseback riding through stunning scenery. - Guided hikes for every level of fitness. - Open-air concerts and festivals in Lijiang. - Bike rides to the ancient town of Shuhe.

The Shangri-La region’s age-old traditions and unspoiled landscapes (pages 16–19 and 58–65) are lure enough to this history-steeped area in western China. Now our luxury boutique hotel in the heart of this Unesco World Heritage site gives discerning travellers every reason to visit this extraordinary destination. Our Chamaduo library invites you to absorb more about this fascinating part of the world, while all the expected perks of our hotels make a holiday here as rejuvenating as it is edifying. The opening of LUX* Lijiang marks the start of an exciting new circuit of distinctive stays in the provinces of Yunnan and Szechuan, up towards Tibet, and the completed range of these regional properties is set to provide bespoke experiences that will be collectively known as the LUX* Tea Horse Road. Consider this a taster. 10 rooms, 6 Superior Rooms, 2 Deluxe Rooms, 2 Junior Suites. 1 restaurant, 1 bar, 1 library.

LUX*
LIJIANG
Culture and character along China’s ancient tea trail

LUX*
AL ZORAH
Designer beachside luxury, a short drive from Dubai

Don’t miss...

- Apart from every five-star hotel amenity? Diving, boating, kitesurfing and everything else that’s fun in the water.
- Ticking off the birds you’ve spotted is a double thanks to almost 60 species living in the surrounding forest.

You’ll also love...

- Strolling a boardwalk that promises you a parade of restaurants, cafés and shops galore.
- A whirl in the world-class marina with beach club.
- Teeing up at the Jack Niklaus signature 18-hole golf courses.

10 rooms, 6 Superior Rooms, 2 Deluxe Rooms, 2 Junior Suites. 1 restaurant, 1 bar, 1 library.

Lijiang
Distance to Lijiang: 38km (0h30)

Phase 1: 193 pavilions, suites and villas, including
36 Beach Pavilions, 12 Sunset Junior Suites,
45 Beach Villas, 46 Water Villas, 12 Beach Pool Villas,
38 Prestige Water Villas, 3 Family Water Villas,
1 Presidential Villa. Nine restaurants, bars and cafés.
Phase 2 (Opening mid 2015). Additional 20 rooms.

Don’t miss...

- Apart from every five-star hotel amenity? Diving, boating, kitesurfing and everything else that’s fun in the water.
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You’ll also love...

- Strolling a boardwalk that promises you a parade of restaurants, cafés and shops galore.
- A whirl in the world-class marina with beach club.
- Teeing up at the Jack Niklaus signature 18-hole golf courses.

10 rooms, 6 Superior Rooms, 2 Deluxe Rooms, 2 Junior Suites. 1 restaurant, 1 bar, 1 library.

AL ZORAH
Distance to Dubai: 38km (0h40)

LUX*
AL ZORAH
Designer beachside luxury, a short drive from Dubai

Don’t miss...

- Apart from every five-star hotel amenity? Diving, boating, kitesurfing and everything else that’s fun in the water.
- Ticking off the birds you’ve spotted is a double thanks to almost 60 species living in the surrounding forest.

You’ll also love...

- Strolling a boardwalk that promises you a parade of restaurants, cafés and shops galore.
- A whirl in the world-class marina with beach club.
- Teeing up at the Jack Niklaus signature 18-hole golf courses.

10 rooms, 6 Superior Rooms, 2 Deluxe Rooms, 2 Junior Suites. 1 restaurant, 1 bar, 1 library.

AL ZORAH
Distance to Dubai: 38km (0h40)
LUX® Belle Mare
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LUX® Grand Gaube
Grand Gaube, Mauritius
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