

THE SPEAR'S
500
2017

“The only experience of its kind in the Aravalli Range”

THE
SPEAR'S 500
TRAVEL GUIDE 2017
INCLUDING AVIATION AND YACHTS

IN THE HOUSE OF THE
LAI CONQUITADOR
Hugh Thomson discovers a new
hotel in a Peruvian palace.

VIVA VELAA!
Elizabeth Hurley's love letter to her
favourite private island and her take
on nearby Cheval Blanc Bandheli.

QUEEN OF THE
MEDITERRANEAN
William Cash takes a spring break
at Cyprus's Anassa resort.

JANINE DI GIOVANNI • JASON COWLEY • RORY ROFF

slopes of Mount Kenya and the Aberdare Mountains, this opulent lodge opened in 2010, and it remains the sole guest accommodation on the Solio Game Reserve. It is home to Kenya's most successful private rhino-breeding project, and it's not uncommon for guests to see up to 40 of these endangered animals at a time. The experience promises to be as vast as it is exclusive, with up to 7,690 hectares (19,000 acres) of conservancy land and a further 18,210 hectares (45,000 acres) of ranch land at guests' disposal.

Five stylish and contemporary cottages each have private sun decks and panoramic views of the nearby hills and Mount Kenya in the distance. Off camp, an action-packed selection of activities includes night and day game drives, horse riding, mountain biking and helicopter rides to nearby Mount Kenya for hilltop picnic breakfasts, plus trout fishing in the Aberdare National Park. Back at the lodge, guests can relax with the aid of the camp's massage therapists and their expert treatments.

INDIA

CHHATRA SAGAR
CAMP
RAJASTHAN

An ancient cornerstone of local life, tents were the only luxury to be found on faraway Rajput war campaigns centuries ago. These 'homes away from home' evolved into the kind of 'mobile mini-palaces' that Chhatra Sagar Camp offers its guests today.

Some 480 kilometres (300 miles) southwest of New Delhi — and 120 kilometres (75 miles) from the nearest airport, Jodhpur — Chhatra Sagar sits on the old estate of the late Thakur Chhatra Singh of Nimaj, a powerful late nineteenth-century noble of the desert kingdom of Marwar. By the early twentieth century, Chhatra Sagar had developed into a lush

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The Lodge at Feline Fields

green oasis, where sporting parties, high tea and exotic dinners were a regular feature for Nimaj's visiting dignitaries — a tradition that continues today, albeit for paying guests, thanks to Thakur Chhatra Singh's great-grandchildren.

The camp's eleven spacious guest tents overlook the lake to the east, with private sitting areas offering panoramic views. Permanent construction has been deliberately minimised, retaining what the camp calls its natural, 'big-sky appeal'.

JAWAI
LEOPARD CAMP
RAJASTHAN

Set in the untamed wilderness of Rajasthan, between the old kingdoms of Jodhpur and Udaipur, Jawai Leopard Camp offers guests the only experience of its kind in the ancient Aravalli Range. Eight luxurious tented suites are appointed with traditional crafts and canvas, steel and leather accoutrements, each with a private deck with unobstructed views of the surrounding landscape: craggy hills, grasslands and winding sandy riverbeds where leopards roam free. (There's Wi-Fi and air conditioning, too, of course.)

The camp's attentive and

flexible staff tend to every need, and they even offer state-of-the-art cameras and his-and-hers binoculars to enhance the guests' sightseeing experience.

LATIN AMERICA

GALAPAGOS
SAFARI CAMP
GALAPAGOS
ISLANDS

Half-Ecuadorian, half-English, Stephanie Bonham-Carter fell into the travel industry after studying literature: she worked for years doing country reports, travelling all over the world. She met her husband Michael Mestag while living in Spain; then, during a romantic holiday to the Galapagos Islands, they fell in love with the place. Stephanie and her husband swiftly bought a property with a view over the ocean on Santa Cruz Island and set up camp to cater for nine people. Galapagos Safari was a lifestyle choice rather than a business decision. 'The location is spectacular,' says Bonham-Carter. 'It's one of those corners of the world where you forget there is civilisation. You see nothing but nature from the camp, and this nature is very evocative.' Traditionally, the Galapagos Islands are explored by cruise

ship, but Bonham-Carter and family allow their visitors — which comprise young couples, multigenerational families and VIPs — to enjoy a more personalised on-land experience. 'We design our guests' experiences according to what they want. We have a lot of heart, and that's what sets us apart,' she explains. 'We take things personally, and it makes a difference.' Bonham-Carter's Galapagos Safari Camp is very much a family affair: 'Both of my children were born on-site; it was the first water birth on the Galapagos Islands. It was extraordinary to set a record while making a family in such sacred surroundings.'

MASHPI LODGE
ECUADOR

At 900 metres (2,950 feet) above sea level, amid the dramatic verdant hills and waterfalls of the Ecuadorian cloud forest, is the luxury cocoon of Mashpi Lodge.

Through its tall glass windows, guests enjoy panoramic views of the surrounding forests and mountains. This environment plays host to a vast array of plants and animals, from ferns and bromeliads to orchids (some newly discovered), and from monkeys and peccaries to puma, plus 500 species of birds, including at least 36 endemic species.

Built with the latest sustainable construction methods, the property is 'designed to blend perfectly with its natural environs', according to its mission statement. Not just about the outdoors, Mashpi Lodge features contemporary and minimalist decor, mixing warm earth tones and bright hues, clean lines with the angular, 'amid the cloud and tropical forests, a unique natural world just steps away, ideal for discovery, exploration, contemplation and relaxation.'