

VINTYFAR

ON TRAVEL

*"If you can't find it here,
it doesn't exist"*
—IRIS APFEL

CUBA

NICHOLAS SHAKESPEARE IS
OUR MAN *in* HAVANA

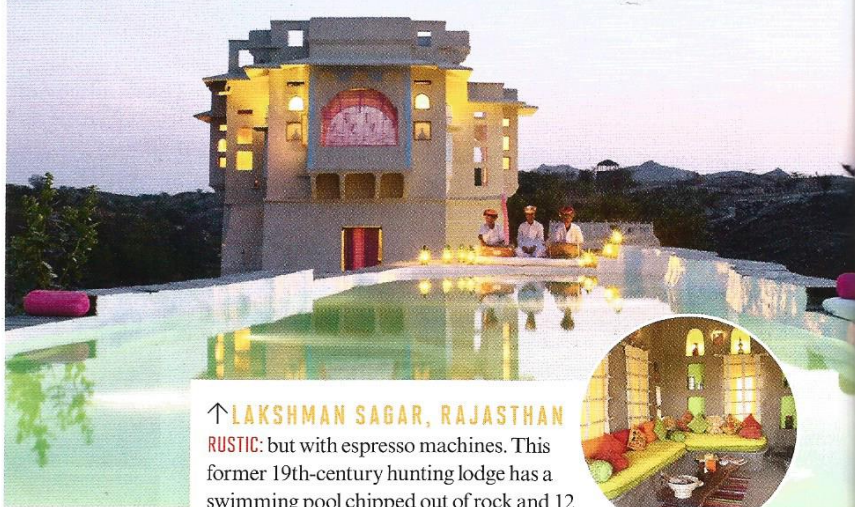
SRI LANKA

GONE FISHING *and* OTHER STORIES

By ALICE B-B

↓ **VIVANTA BY TAJ, COORG**

ADVENTURE: walk on the wild side through 180 acres of rainforest at Vivanta and you might just see a python swallowing a sambur, horns and all. Eco-spectacular, 4,000 ft above sea level in the Western Ghats, Vivanta has the lowest carbon footprint in Indian five stars; not a tree was cut during the seven years it took locals to build the villas in natural clearings with materials sourced nearby. The wooden pillars are from old Coorg houses; water is bottled from the estate's springs; a river runs through the spa; even the wood is polished with organic wax. At night glow-in-the-dark luna moths flit over one's private pool. In the lee of the mountains, it's even monsoon-friendly: the main pool just steams gently; beyond it, rice plantations and waterways meander into the distance. Another Eden.



↑ **LAKSHMAN SAGAR, RAJASTHAN**

RUSTIC: but with espresso machines. This former 19th-century hunting lodge has a swimming pool chipped out of rock and 12 glorious villas, with their own plunge pools and little wine bars, overlooking a lake. There's no menu: the chef cooks what you like from the farm; his family give cooking classes; breakfast might be in the fields, homemade and served by the local women. Here be blissful inactivity (it's very important to have breathers when travelling through India), village life, massages with mustard oil, local liquor and tobacco tastings (whoah!), and the rural chic of oil cans as flower vases and table legs made of gypsy bangles.



THE BEST
NEW INDIAN GEMS
By VICTORIA MATHER

↓ **AHILYA-BY-THE-SEA, GOA**

BEACH BABE: the much-loved Ahilya Fort, Maheshwar, is opening a seaside retreat in Goa, where hitherto there has been no totally satisfactory small hotel. Family-run (Ahilya is owned by Prince Shivaji Rao (Richard) Holkar), it will consist of three traditional wooden villas right on the water with all the Ahilya dynamics of flowing wine, mouth-watering food and adorable service present and correct. As at the fort, all will be inclusive. Every reason for those who'd given up on Goa to get Goa-ing again.



→ **RAJMAHAL PALACE, JAIPUR**

PIZZAZZ: a colour explosion from designer Adil Ahmed, creative director of the fab Goodearth, revamps this Mughal/colonial/Art Deco palace. It's the new gem from Jaisal and Anjali Singh, the best boutique-hotel owners in India, with the style to grasp luxury and give it a good shake of mischief: velvets, wallpapers of parrots, roses and floating umbrellas, twinkly chandeliers. The Maharani Suite is like a 1930s Odeon cinema, yet tea on the lawn is pure colonial. Jaipur needed this.



→ **JAMTARA WILDERNESS CAMP, PENCH**

SAFARI: the first Indian camp to have a star bed. Sleep outside, stars above, tiger and leopard below (maybe), owls at the end of the bed, a klaxon by your side in case a sloth bear comes to munch you. Jamtara is on the little-visited Madhya Pradesh side of the Pench National Park, so there are few other visitors. Owner Amit Sankhala, whose grandfather helped Indira Gandhi set up Project Tiger, has used wooden floors from Gujarati shipbreakers' yards and antique desks from India's Supreme Court. All properties can be booked through Greaves Travel (greavesindia.co.uk), which tailor-makes itineraries, including flights on BA.



CHRIS CALDICOTT (VIVANTA BY TAJ)