

VANITY FAIR

MARCH 2014

ON TRAVEL

AFRICA

THE CASE FOR ZIMBABWE

Plus: TOP GUIDES and
SAFARIS FOR KIDS

By GRAHAM BOYNTON and LUCIA VAN DER POST

PERU

IF I CAN, YOU TOUCAN

By STEVE KING

PAPUA NEW GUINEA

MAKING FRIENDS AND
HAVING THEM FOR DINNER

By STANLEY JOHNSON

"One of the gladdest moments in
life is the departure upon a distant
journey into unknown lands."

—RICHARD BURTON



Two views of Vivanta by Taj, Madikeri.



THE BEST Revelation

A bumpy journey up through tropical rain-forest and then, with one giant leap from the limo, behold a panoramic view of unknown India. The new Vivanta by Taj, Madikeri, is in Coorg in the Western Ghats, where the cobras are 15 feet long and there are 1,214 forests. The 270-degree panorama from the lobby embraces

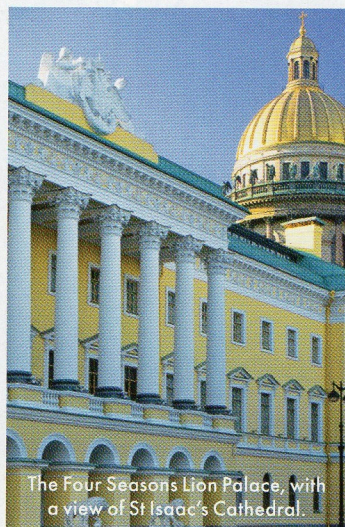
valleys, forest, mountains, wisps of mist and the glow from guest cottages below. It took seven years to build, and not a tree was cut nor a stone turned—this extraordinary eco-resort has one of the lowest carbon footprints on the sub-continent. Coorg is unique: the highest per capita income in India, over 90 per cent literacy and old English-owned coffee plantation estates are preserved. Choose to eat at Nellaki, one of its restaurants specialising in Coorg food, or at a private dinner by the stream in the forest, or at the wonderful, wacky grill by the swimming pool. Hike, cycle, do pottery. Even the clay is local, from riverbeds near Mysore. greavesindia.co.uk

THE BEST LIST

THE BEST SPECIALISTS

This is a mystery wrapped inside an enigma. How has the new Four Seasons Lion Palace in St Petersburg managed to hit the ground running with immaculate smiley service? Not in a ghastly have-a-nice-day way but in a warm, charming and, of course, efficient way.

Russia is notoriously difficult for service, the Russians had a revolution in order never to have to serve anyone again and the word "bolshie" does not begin to describe the legacy of communism. Yet 250 staff already seem like oiled cogs in a mighty machine that is now the best hotel in Russia. The Lion Palace, built in 1820, has been spectacularly restored, the sweeping double marble staircase is so grand you'll feel inadequate without a tiara or white tie in order to descend it. The location is unbeatable: the hotel eyeballs St Isaac's Cathedral



The Four Seasons Lion Palace, with a view of St Isaac's Cathedral.

and is within view of the Hermitage; the bar is the best in Petersburg, with a real (yes, real) fireplace and you can smoke (yes, smoke! That old thing) fat cigars; the Italian restaurant, Percorso, is the best in either Petersburg or Moscow, in a series of adorable panelled rooms, like eating in a Tolstoy novel, with another real (yes, real) fire. The Asian restaurant, Sintoho, fires on all gastronomic

cylinders, but, again, it is the immaculate service that makes it special. The winter garden, with its glass roof, makes other winter gardens look like Amdega conservatories. To take tea there in the winter is to drink Lapsang under a duvet of illuminated snow. Again, unparalleled service: you

go once and on return lovely Ekaterina knows where you like to sit and how you like your eggs. The bedrooms are understated if bland (the lack of Russian art is a weakness), for which anyone who's experienced full-blown Russian bling should be grateful. The fifth-floor rooms have terraces overlooking the city, the Lobanov presidential suite has a colonnaded terrace so big Princess Kitty Obolensky could have held her ball there. Isadore Sharp, the founder of Four Seasons, indubitably the best hotel group in the world, has faith

in shop local: "I believe we can, from the local community anywhere in the world, achieve the same level of service, quality and consistency without compromise if you give individuals the opportunity to become their best self. How you treat people is how they will respond." Respect: that is the key to the Russian door. Four Seasons Moscow opens later this year. steppetravel.co.uk

TICKET TO ACCESSORISE



CASE, £380, BY VICTORINOX



T-SHIRTS, FROM £115, BY EILEEN FISCHER



FEDORA, £130, BY BAMFORD



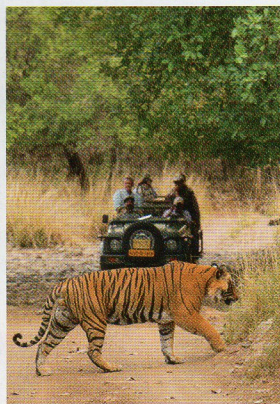
SANDALS, £425, BY MANOLO BLAHNIK



CASES, FROM £400, BY VIVIENNE WESTWOOD



Sherbagh Camp and, right, a tiger in Ranthambore.



THE BEST *Spotty Sighting*

Jaisal and Anjali Singh are the wildlife-camp commandants of Rajasthan. Deluxe, with delovely wildlife, their Sherbagh Camp in Ranthambore is big-cat central now they have JAWAI Leopard Camp, eight superluxe tents in an area with a high-density of wild leopards. greavesindia.co.uk

THE BEST **MESSAGE** When the Hôtel des Bergues in Geneva reopened in 2005 under

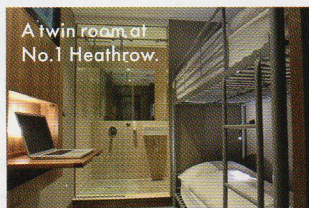
Four Seasons management, it was gorgeous. Yet, like many a beauty, she

flattened over a minor imperfection: no spa. Now Spa Mont Blanc occupies the top

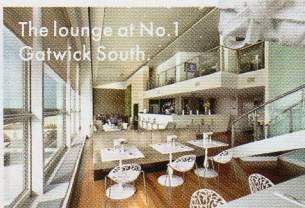
three floors and delivers the best massage in town. fourseasons.com/geneva

THE BEST **WHEEZE**

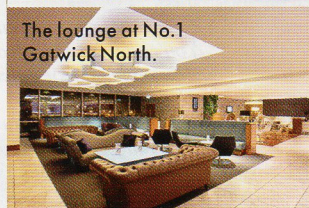
To get through airport hell is to be a No. 1 traveller—a concierge service organising anything your heart desires from driveway to runway: chauffeurs, airport lounges (expanding globally), airside bedrooms in Heathrow Terminal 3 if you're in transit and, so chic, an escort to the door of the aeroplane who'll take your coat as you fly away to the sun and be there with it on your return. From £17.50 to some £125. notraveller.com



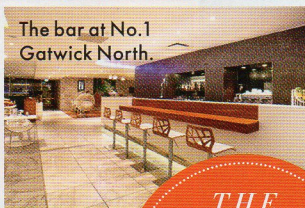
A twin room at No.1 Heathrow.



The lounge at No.1 Gatwick South.



The lounge at No.1 Gatwick North.



The bar at No.1 Gatwick North.

THE BEST *Sunset*

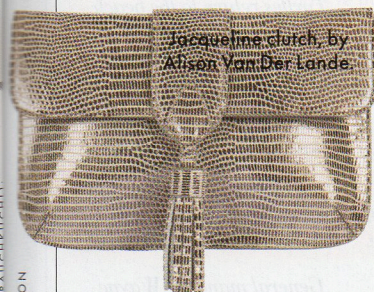
Da Celeste is one of the world's best secret fish restaurants, and as you toy with a little spider crab, shrimp, scallop—all lagoon-fresh—the sun turns rose-pink and slithers into the glassy water, illuminating the rickety fishing shacks that look like structures out of *Mad Max*. Pellestrina island is two streets' width of flaky-painted houses between the lagoon and the Adriatic, and few go there because it is a hell of a journey via bus: a Venetian adventure, making the lobster and wine well-earned. Warning: a private water taxi will cost some €800, which takes the edge off the lobster. daceleste.it



Da Celeste.

THE BEST *Bling*

Abulous snakey silverprint Jacqueline clutch for those red-carpet/beach-at-St Barth's/superyacht moments, by Alison van der Lande, £250. alisonvanderlande.com



Jacqueline clutch, by Alison van der Lande.

TICKET TO ACCESSORISE



WALTON BAG, £850, BY ANYA HINDMARCH

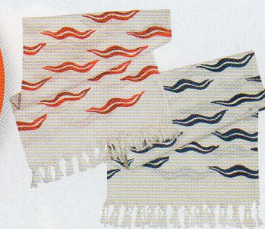


WATCH, £259, BY MICHAEL KORS



VOYAGE D'HERMÈS, £87, BY HERMÈS

THE BEST LIST



HAREMLIQUE BEACH WRAPS, £110, AT WILLIAM & SON



DEEP RELAX BALM, £18, BY AROMATHERAPY ASSOCIATES