

BLUE SKY *thinking*

Few destinations conjure up an image of sun-kissed paradise quite like the Indian Ocean – and as the world opens up, there's myriad new places to stay. Blossom Green rounds up the very best



L'ESCALE



L'ESCALE



MANGO HOUSE

SEYCHELLES

At the eastern corner of the Somali Sea, the Seychelles is a dreamy mélange of Treasure Island meets luxury, baked in African sun – and a flurry of hot new hotels on Mahé is making it better still: paradisiacal beach break, sorted. Blown in on the trade winds last January, sun-dappled **L'Escale** is found resplendent on the east coast in a plum spot that lays claim to a slice of the marina. The moniker plays on the French for 'stopover', but you'll want to carve out more time for this one. With 25 modern guest rooms with nautical undertones conceived by Winch Design, who are known for their work on super yachts, mountain or ocean views are a given from rooms, the lovely pool area and restaurant. Close to the capital, Victoria, the botanical gardens and Morne National Park are excellent additional ports of call. *Doubles from £419. lescaleresort.com*

A five-minute wander from the national park, sustainable **Story Seychelles** ebbs from the glorious sugar-sand stretch of Beau Vallon (one of the only beaches swimmable year-round) on to a house reef stretching some 50m into the ocean. Enveloped by emerald-tinted gardens, 100 spacious suites and villas – some with pools bedecked with cabanas – marry a boutique approach to hospitality with natural interiors and Creole architectural notes. Seven restaurants range from classic Creole, barbecue and fresh seafood at alfresco Eden to fusion flavours and live bands at Trader Vic's and lagoon-side teppanyaki courtesy of Seyshima. The team can organise day trips to the 19th-century Sir Selwyn Selwyn-Clarke Market (yes, that's its name) so you can unravel the ingredients for yourself. *Doubles from £373. story-seychelles.com*

Flanked by ribbons of sand and tropical glory on Mahé's south-western shores, **Mango House** is the most recent arrival. The one-time home of Italian photographer Gian Paolo Barbieri, it's a luxurious set-up featuring 41 sea-saluting rooms and beach-house villas. Both the design and ingredients on the menu take lead from Seychellois and Creole culture, all wrapped up in one evocative modern package. It's perfectly poised for exploring the nearby art communities, rainforests, golf clubs and ocean adventures, though with two pools, a spa and five dining options guests could hardly want for more. *Doubles from £595. hilton.com*

A breathtaking canvas is revealed at **Anantara Maia Seychelles**. Part of a complete rebrand of a well-established resort, it sits amid 12 hectares of fragrant gardens between granite rocks and the porcelain sand of Anse Louis Beach. Designed by the iconic Bill Bensley and Lek Bunnag, 30 secluded hosted villas unfurl along the hillside and beach line, combining rustic hammered copper and wood panelling with elegant soft furnishings, and offering panoramic views from private pools. Punctuate proceedings by discovering the archipelago with trips to Praslin and La Digue for nature galore. *Doubles from £1,456. anantara.com* —————>





KAGI SPA ISLAND

MALDIVES

If infinite blues top your wishlist, this evergreen island nation is ready and waiting with a hotel scene that's been gathering pace. First in our roll call of reverie is **Kagi Spa Island** on the North Malé Atoll. Along with endless aquatic action, the immersive 50-villa resort has wellbeing at its core with cutting-edge Baani Spa. A wide range of dining options – from the Pacific Rim to Italy – rounds things off. *Villas from £825. kagimaldives.com*

Island hopping to the atoll tip, **Jumeirah Olhahali Island** channels Fifties-Miami glamour with 67 deco-esque villas featuring a pool and roof terrace for unbridled lagoon views. From submarine tours to outdoor cinema, halcyon days will be standard. *Villas from £1,375. jumeirah.com*

Nearby, 95-villa **Kuda Villingili** comes with great surf, one of the country's longest pools and some serious chic. Honing covetable West Coast mid-century modernism into Maldivian foundations along with gourmet cuisine and a roster of activities, this adult's playground ticks all the boxes. *Villas from £628. kudavillingili.com*

JUMEIRAH OLHAHALI



KUDA VILLINGILI



NALADHU



KUDA VILLINGILI

Prefer low-key? Boutique beauty **Naladhu** revealed a sleek redesign last year courtesy of New York designer Yuji Yamazaki. Enveloped by greenery, the 20 bright and breezy 'houses' evoke a colonial aesthetic, with outdoor spaces reconfigured to maximise downtime. On the food front, there are no rules: guests decide what, where and when. Castaways only need apply. *Houses from £1,402. naladhu.com*

Heading to the northerly atolls, those looking to carve out their own holiday idyll can seek out playful **Siyam World's** 'have-it-all' attitude. Stretching 54ha and with one of the region's broadest offerings, there are 19 room categories, a 6km house reef, a dozen restaurants, plus an A-Z of activities including a floating water park. *Villas from £704. sunsiyam.com*



SIYAM WORLD



LUX* LE MORNE

MAURITIUS

Famed for its sunsets, spices, seafood and soft sands, it's little wonder Mark Twain claimed 'heaven was copied after Mauritius'. Languishing on the northern shore at the rippling water's edge, **Lux* Grand Baie** launched at the end of 2021, joining the group's three other island properties as its flagship. A modernist space on the most delicious of Mauritian beaches, it's been shaped by architect Jean-François Adam and inspired by the sailing boats that crisscross its waters. Characterised by voluminous communal areas, interiors across the resort (totalling 114 suites and villas) provide style in spades, spearheaded by design maestro Kelly Hoppen to channel the feel of a style-maker's tropical outpost. By day, pootle over to the neighbouring town, explore markets and waterfalls, bask at elevated beach club Bisou's infinity pool or take to the ocean. Three restaurants ensure you'll be well fed afterwards. *Doubles from £434.*

On the wild south-west coast, at the foot of a mountain monolith, serene sister property **Lux* Le Morne** was reimagined with a bold new look last year too. Rooms at the zero-waste resort have been pared-back to reveal clean neutrals, and come with sundecks and a fully kitted-out tropical bar. The coconut-studded beach, meanwhile, affords views of dolphins frolicking on the horizon. *Doubles from £297. luxresorts.com* —————>



LUX* GRAND BAIE



CONSTANCE
TSARABANJINA



ILHA CALDEIRA



CONSTANCE TSARABANJINA



KUMBURA

ON THE HORIZON...

TOA Hotel & Spa, Zanzibar Modern pick Toa opens on the island's east coast this May, with 86 rooms, eight luxury suites, three pools, buzzy bars and adventure aplenty. toazanzibar.com

Emerald Faarufushi Maldives In June, we'll be turning to a languid slip of the Raa Atoll for sunken pool loungers and barefoot luxury at Emerald's new 80-villa resort. emerald-faarufushi.com

Ilha Caldeira, Mozambique Back in Africa and stealing the show is Banyan Tree's latest propagation, a sustainable sanctuary landing sand-side in December. Set on a private island amid Africa's largest marine reserve and saturated with local colour, 40 ocean-view pool villas evoke a rustic-luxe sentiment. banyantree.com

Capella Maldives Set to hang its hammocks on the recently developed Fari Islands, Capella is our hot ticket for 2023. High design will come courtesy of Kengo Kuma and André Fu, across the 57 pool villas and mansions – a knockout spa and exciting culinary offering make it all the more tempting. capellahotels.com

SRI LANKA

The whisper of swaying palms and the chirrup of bulbuls and barbets provide an evocative backdrop to any stay on the Teardrop Isle. Carved into the jungle close to Weligama, **Malabar Hill** combines modern hospitality with a sense of heritage. Opened at the end of last year, it comprises 14 luxurious pool villas that rise from the hillside. While simple in structure, expect a well-dressed haven (all soft neutrals and Rajesthani furnishings) with sweeping vistas, a 35m pool, spa, open-air bar and restaurant offering local cuisine. Trips to game reserves, river cruises and cultural excursions can be arranged in house. *Villas from £341. malabarhillsrilanka.com*

Similarly pitched amid Habaraduwa's paddy fields near Galle, Eden Villa's latest, **Kumbura**, is spot on for a multi-gen getaway. A stone driveway curves to reveal an inviting, airy four-bed villa that wraps around a central pool. Immersed in nature – peacocks, monkeys and buffaloes all call the paddies home – and fully staffed with an on-site cook, it makes for a tranquil, authentic escape. *Sleeps 8, from £277 (2-night minimum). edenvillas.com*

Meanwhile, contemporary **Harding Boutique Hotel Ahangama**, framed by palm groves on the south coast, is poised to set a new benchmark for island lodgings. Behind the tall wood-and-concreted facade are six elegant suites with terraces and indoor-outdoor showers. A rooftop restaurant and oceanfront pool complete the picture. *Doubles from £146. hardingboutiquehotels.com*

MADAGASCAR

News of the revamp of **Constance Tsarabanjina** will be welcomed by those seeking to combine the thrill of a nature-led break with all the trappings of a luxury resort. A Robinson Crusoe-like speck of a private island sitting north-west of the mainland (and an hour ahead so as to take advantage of the sun), 25 thatched villas stretch along three powdery beaches. Malagasy tradition bleeds through rustic-chic design and field-fresh cuisine, and diving, sailing and bird-watching (frigatebirds are commonplace) are on hand. *Doubles from £443, including meals. constancehotels.com*

ZANZIBAR

For off-grid relaxation, look no further than unpretentious family-run **Kizikula**, apricating amid dense greenery on the island's rugged southern shore. Evoking the homeliness of a very stylish friend's place, with just nine suites, sustainability and a considered approach to the community are hallmarks, and in design terms one- or two-storey residences strike a balance between clever use of raw material (think local coral limestone, concrete, wood) and luxurious comfort to form a cosy iteration of tropical modernism. A rooftop terrace, ample pool overlooking the water and generous lounge areas cover the communal spaces, and the culinary offering is driven by an on-site farm. *Doubles from £131. kizikula.com*

MOZAMBIQUE

This ocean-lapped paradise has been making serious waves in the hotel world of late. First came designer digs **Sussurro** (see our safari feature, p85), followed by lauded off-shore marvel **Kisawa** with its sublime interiors and innovative build methods. Pushed back from July 2021 but coming in hot pursuit is laid-back **Azura Marlin Beach** on the opposite side of Benguerra Island, sprawling across 1km of brilliant-white sand. Its 10 villas unveil local materials, clean lines and coastal colourways, but the real magnet will be the opportunity for adventure: from ocean safaris along surrounding reefs to whale-watching and deep-sea fishing, you'll be covered. *Doubles from around £878, including meals. azura-retreats.com* □

MALABAR HILL



HOTPROPERTIES

MALABAR HILL



Photos by Constance Hotels and Resorts; Grant Pitcher; Jean-Bernard Adoue; Studio J