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how to spend it

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LUCIA VAN DER POST'S GREAT BIG AFRICAN ADVENTURE

travelista

Frequent flyer Claire Wrathall **fast-tracks international intelligence on where to be and what to see.**

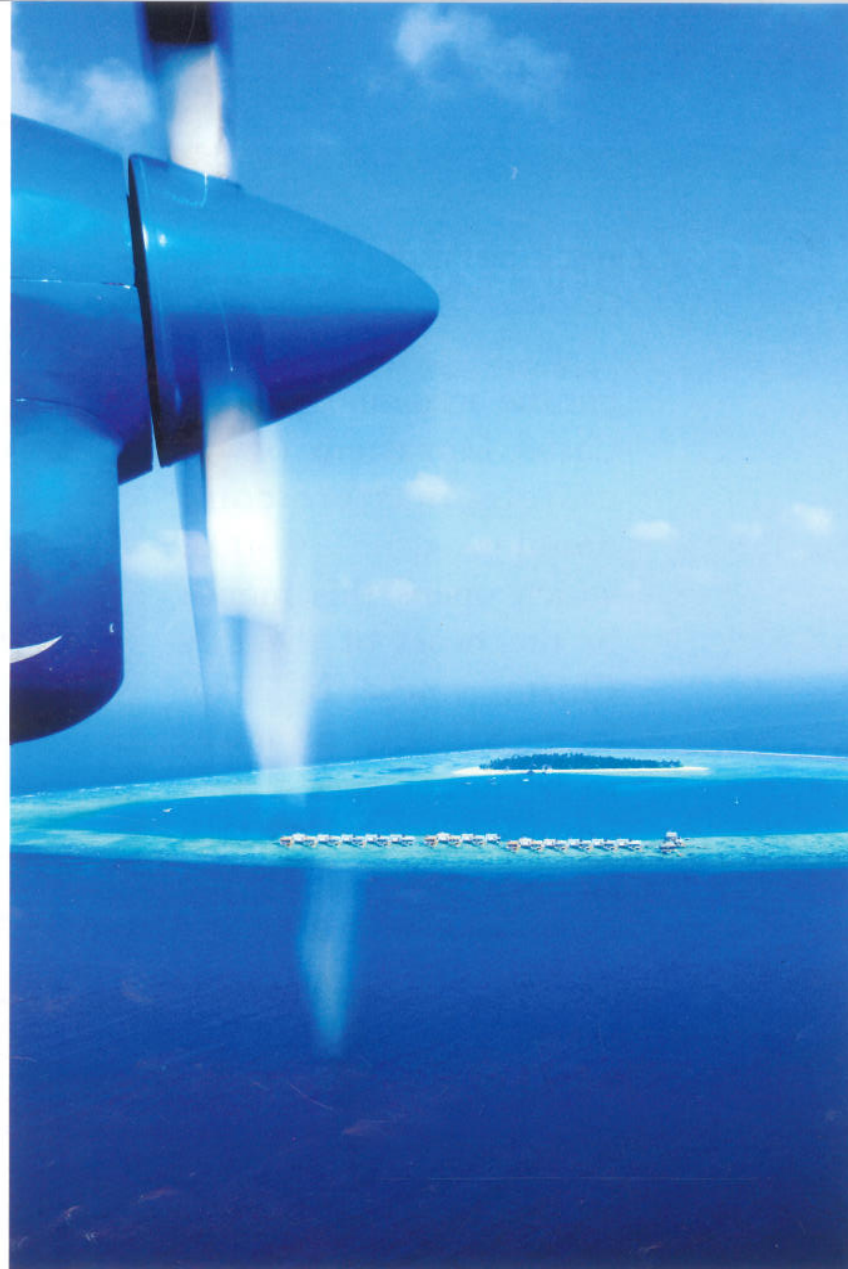
In Gary Shteyngart's terrific satirical novel *Absurdistan*, a hotel general manager confesses that he deliberately writes its literature in pidgin English because it charms guests. So it may be that Le Caméléon (www.lecameleonhotel.com; doubles from \$226), the first upscale boutique hotel to open on **COSTA RICA'S** fabled Caribbean coast, hired a slick US advertising agency to position it as somewhere to "whim you on a voyage" by offering "an entirely new notion of vogue vacationing in an eco-trendy site, which will become your favourite place away from home". Either way, the hotel is appealing for anyone weary of the chintzy florals so many Costa Rican hoteliers opt to furnish their hotels with. Here the 23

rooms and suites are modern, minimalist and bright white, while its location between the beach and the rainforest (hence the "jungle massage deck"), close to the small town of Puerto Viejo and 10km from the Gandoca-Manzanillo Wildlife Refuge, makes it more alluring still.

Tasteful aesthetics also abound at the Chiawa Camp (www.chiawa.com) in **ZAMBIA**, which has celebrated its 20th anniversary with a wholesale refurbishment. A pioneer of tourism in the Lower Zambezi National Park, where it is one of the few places to offer waterborne safaris using custom-built motorised pontoons, its set-up is not so different from the one at Kenya's Mara Plains. It's now a place of spacious, insect-proof, teak-floored tents that stand on wooden decks and have split-level decks at the front and en-suite bathrooms complete with ball-and-claw slipper

baths. Audley Travel (www.audleytravel.com) offers a nine-night package from £4,741.

For those who prefer proximity to nature of a more piscine kind, Angsana Velavaru (www.angsana.com; doubles from \$325) in the **MALDIVES** is not just the first hotel I've come across to have its own "marine lab", which organises coral planting, reef cleaning and marine biology classes, but the first resort in the archipelago with 34 spacious freestanding floating villas. They're anchored 1km offshore, close to the island of Angsana Velavaru in the South Nilandhe Atoll, and each has a hammock suspended over the water. Tropical Locations (www.tropical-locations.com) is offering seven nights from £2,089 >>



Above: Angsana Velavaru in the Maldives has 34 freestanding villas. Below: enjoy the man-made beach at the The Grove in Chandler's Cross.



Above: contemporary white chic presides at Le Caméléon on Costa Rica's Caribbean coast.



