



The pool at Villa Greda in Arraial d'Ajuda.



Babe Paley beside the pool at Round Hill, her villa in Jamaica, 1959. Right: a scarlet macaw.



Trident Castle.



A sign for surf school in Costa Rica.

THE BEST

INSIDER BRAZIL

Don't attempt to bung Rio, the Amazon, Iguazu and the beach into 10 days. The country is huge and flights long and uncomfortable. Go chic-19th-century and go to Casa Turquesa in Paraty, a Brazilian mini-Burano accessible from Rio or São Paulo, with coloured houses, restaurants, boutiques and art galleries along the car-free cobbled streets. Architect Renato Tavolara converted the old colonial townhouse on the harbour pier into nine adorable rooms. (dehouche.com)

THE BEST Renaissance

Just when you thought the Caribbean was over, kicked into touch by the Indian Ocean, Jamaica stages a comeback. San Antonio, playground of Errol Flynn, now has a scene of music, food and glamorous hotels. Björk, Snoop Dogg and the late Amy Winehouse have used the recording studio at Geejam Hotel; the Jolly Boys, local

WINTER SUN

By VICTORIA MATHER

heroes, play live mento at Mike's Supper Club; the Trident Castle has eight pretty bedrooms—just take the whole thing for a party—and the Trident Hotel has 13 Jamaican-Georgian studio villas with pools and a cool Japanese mixologist in the Time Bar. Or drink at the Bush Bar in the rainforest or the Roof Club on West Street, where Sinatra and the Rat Pack hung out. And the Blue Lagoon Restaurant and Villas opens this autumn. (dialaflight.com)



THE BEST PENTHOUSE

Tasmania is where the smart money is going in Australia since MONA, the ultimate art hotel, opened. Tassie is Oz's little gem, a miniature food, wine and art paradise, and Hobart is the hip port. High above the city buzz is a new eyrie from Avalon, who have superb modernist mountain and beach retreats.

Avalon City Retreat is a glass omnipod with iPods, swung on top of a nine-storey building, with 360-degree views, swanky kitchens packed with goodies, two double bedrooms with jersey-knit sheets, cashmere throws, a deck, barbie and table for 10—have a ball. Not for the halt or lame, as there's a final 24 steps from the lift.

Far below the ferry chugs to MONA. And, yes, it includes WiFi, but no maid service, so you'll need to pick up your own socks. (avalonretreats.com.au)

THE BEST BOAT

After Rajasthan, the next stop is southern India. Romance is sailing the backwaters of Kerala—until you get bitten by mozzies on a rubbish boat. The Lotus is a new teak uber-eco-boat that uses no plastic and discharges no waste. Picture large double bedrooms with delicious bathrooms, dreamy sheets, air-con, yoga and sundeck from which to see the languorous fishing and local canal lifestyle. (greavesindia.com)



Serving drinks on the Lotus.

THE BEST Curry

Is the one you cook yourself in Sri Lanka, which is the top spot, along with Burma, for winter adventure. Stay at Amangalla in Galle and you go with the chef to the morning markets to buy fish, meat, fruit and vegetables and gorge on street food. Then cook up a killer curry in a beautiful outdoor kitchen in a paddy field. James Jayasundera is the Sri Lanka specialist who knows everyone, what you should do and where you must go. (ampersandtravel.com)



Lalitha Piedasa, a chef at Amangalla.



Avalon City Retreat. Inset, above left: a 1958 travel guide.

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