



# BLACK INK

THE ART OF EXTRAORDINARY LIVING • SPRING/SUMMER 2014

## THE KEY

111 SMALL HOTELS AROUND THE WORLD

Namibia property is right on the Angola border. After a two-hour Cessna flight from Windhoek over the Namib Desert, guests arrive to find eight wood, canvas and thatch villas set among river reeds and thorny albida trees on the banks of the Kunene, all surrounded by an arid lunar landscape of black rock cliffs and apricot-hued sand. (The riverside setting comes at a cost: The camp has twice been washed out by floods.)

The centerpiece of Serra Cafema, however, is the Ozonganda, which features indoor and outdoor dining areas, a sunken lounge, a library and a daybed-lined pool built into a deck. The Honeymoon Villa, closest to the river, has views of the Kunene rapids and giant crocs on the rocks below. Other wildlife is limited to gemsbok, springbok, Hartmann's zebra and desert creatures like the prehistoric plated lizard. The real highlight is the local Himba: Regal and statuesque, they lease the land to Wilderness Safari and open their village to lodge guests, frequently passing through the camp. *Villas start at \$1,400 a person per night; 27-11/807-1800; wilderness-safaris.com.*

## RWANDA

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### VIRUNGA LODGE

◆ ◆ Volcanoes National Park

While Luke Bailes, founder of the Singita brand of African lodges, is busy trying to strike a deal in the Virungas, Uganda-born British Indian Praveen Moman has turned a flat-topped hill just outside Volcanoes National Park—the volcanoes are home to about half of the world's last remaining 880 mountain gorillas—into an ecoresort with possibly the best views on the continent.

On one side are the volcanoes where primatologist Dian Fossey made her home, and on the other side are alpine lakes peppered with pirogues. There are elements of the small, eight-hut property that not everyone will love—the communal dining; the dim, low-energy bulbs—but these drawbacks are easily compensated for with gorilla-trekking

adventures and a terrace looking toward jagged-toothed Mount Sabyinyo, a primal scene of rolling green that punches the air from your lungs. *Rooms start at \$1,260; 866-599-2737; volcanoessafaris.com.*

## THE SEYCHELLES

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### NORTH ISLAND

◆ ◆ North Island

When North Island opened in 2003, the former copra plantation won numerous awards, so regulars were dubious when one besotted client snapped up the island property seven years later. But under the new ownership, the resort hasn't shown a glimmer of new-blood glitz, with the 11 rustic beach villas booked by the kind of couples who like their snorkeling remote and cocktails strong. (William and Kate holed up here for their honeymoon.) Your private butler can arrange anything from dinner on the beach to a diving trip to a movie night for kids. Often described as a Robinson Crusoe retreat, North Island is all about a kind of unimaginable privacy in a paradisiacal land. *Villas start at \$3,950 a person per night; 248-4/293-100; north-island.com.*

## SOUTH AFRICA

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### BABYLONSTOREN

◆ ◆ Franschhoek

It's immediately obvious that owner Karen Roos, former *Elle Decoration* South Africa editor, has impeccable taste. Every aspect of Babylonstoren, housed in an 18th-century manor, from the bath posy to the pieces by Philippe Starck to the artistically presented meals, is a thing of beauty.

The 12 cottages combine historical architectural details, such as thatched roofs and whitewashed gables, with understated furniture, like the Scandinavian chairs. The shop is stocked with gorgeously packaged local produce. The wildly colored fruit-and-flower

## LEGEND

- ◆ City Secret
- ◆ Far-Flung
- ◆ Old-School Understated
- ◆ Food with Rooms
- ◆ Cult Favorite
- ◆ Architectural Gem
- ◆ Owners Worth Knowing
- ◆ Maverick
- ◆ The Art of Well-being
- ◆ New