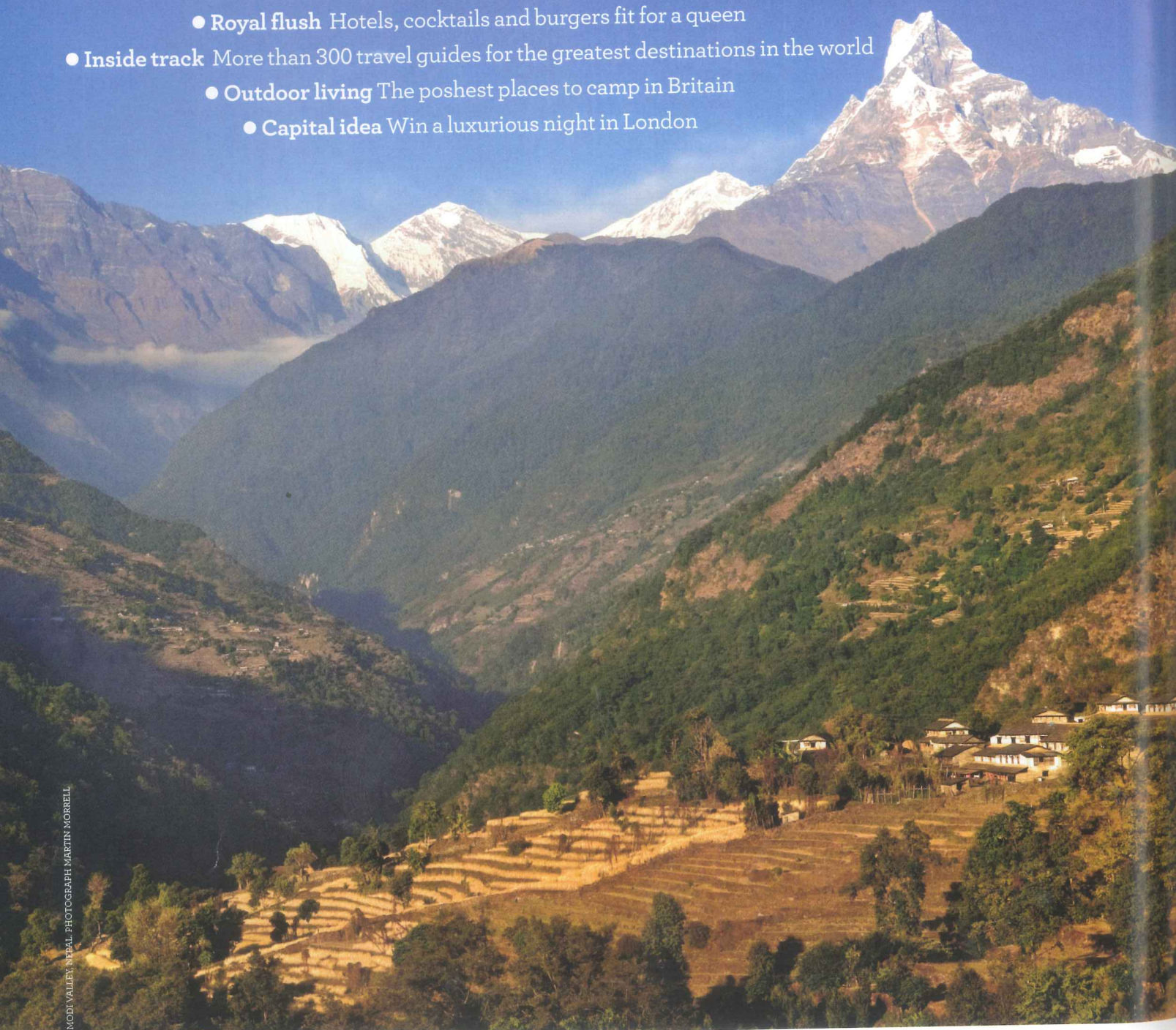


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The experts

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1 Does it have a conservation element?

When nature is your main selling point, it would be foolish not to care for it. So safari camps, 'nature resorts' and dive lodges worth their salt minimise their impact on the environment. The best of them go several steps further and work to improve the health of ecosystems, conserving endangered species by protecting their habitat.

In the Matthews Range in **northern Kenya**, elephants were poached almost to oblivion in the 1980s. Persuading local communities that wildlife tourism was a better business than poaching reduced the slaughter (though, regrettably, it is now rising again). Safari camps such as Sarara (www.sararacamp.com) provide income for the local Samburu people and try to help populations of elephant and Grevy's zebra to recover.

In the **Seychelles**, the private Frigate, Cousine and North islands are as well known for conservation work as for boutique lodges. All three have programmes to eradicate invasive species, plant indigenous trees and provide a habitat for critically endangered endemic birds such as the magpie robin and Seychelles white-eye. You can book a trip to the Seychelles through Audley Travel (www.audleytravel.com); the company is a member of the Association of Independent Tour Operators (www.aito.co.uk), which is committed to sustainable tourism.

In the Raja Ampat archipelago of **Indonesia**, Misool Eco Resort (www.misoolcoresort.com) has established a 1,220-square-kilometre protected marine area, in consultation with the local community. Such zones act as nurseries for fish, providing marine life for scuba divers and improved catches for local fishermen. In cooperation ➤

Samburu guides at Sarara Camp, northern Kenya

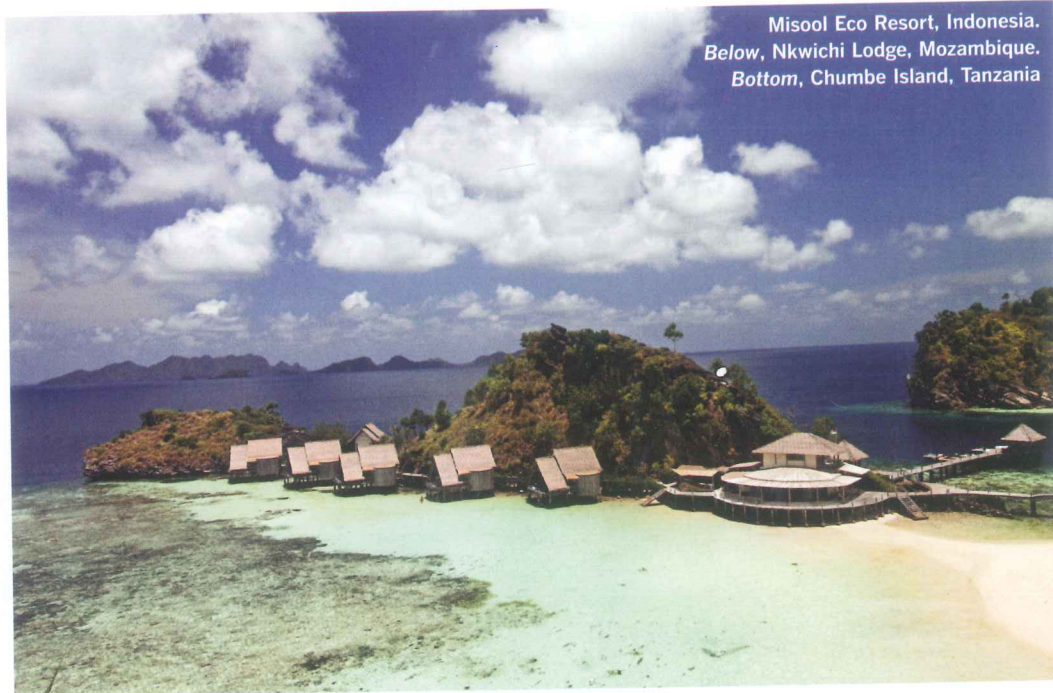


AGENDA GREEN CREDENTIALS

IF YOU BELIEVE IN
SUSTAINABLE TOURISM,
THESE ARE THE **SIX**
QUESTIONS YOU
SHOULD ASK ABOUT
YOUR NEXT HOLIDAY

Sustainable tourism and its close relative, responsible tourism, have gone from the margin to the mainstream: even luxury lodges now trumpet their green credentials, so nobody need pack a hair shirt in their luggage. But the issues involved have become more complex, and the problem of 'greenwash' has grown. Tour operators and hotels which take sustainability seriously should have a written statement of their policy; beyond that, establishing their good faith involves asking the right questions, formulated here by Paul Miles, who also offers suggestions on where to go and with whom

PHOTOGRAPH AXIOM/PAUL MILES



Misool Eco Resort, Indonesia.
Below, Nkwichi Lodge, Mozambique.
Bottom, Chumbe Island, Tanzania

➤ with the provincial government, the resort has also established a shark and manta-ray protection area. Seven nights cost from €1,900, including accommodation, meals, soft drinks and transfers to/from Sorong airport, a six-hour flight from Jakarta.

2 Does the local community really benefit?

Tourism can be very harmful to indigenous communities. An extreme case is the exploitation of members of the Jarawa people in the Andaman Islands, coerced into dancing before tourist cameras with the promise of food – a practice which is currently the subject of a campaign by UK-based charity Tourism Concern. Sometimes, charitable gifts to local people can be of questionable value: a lodge's donation to a school or clinic provides good photo opportunities for guests with the recipients but makes no impact on the causes of poverty. But in **Mozambique**, on the shores of Lake Nyassa (also called Lake Malawi), Nkwichi Lodge works with 16 lakeside communities and represents 20,000 people. With the help of the lodge's development arm, the Manda Wilderness Community Trust, the communities have



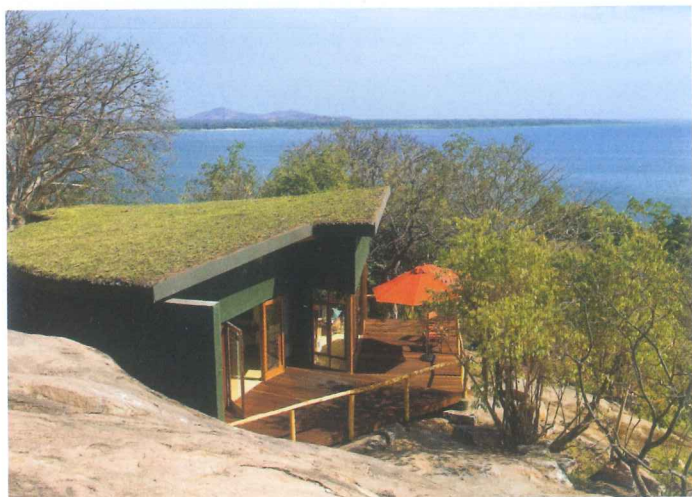
registered their land, formed their own organisation and built 10 schools. Local craft skills such as weaving and woodcarving are being revived by providing a market for the products. More than 50 of the lodge's staff are from local communities. Tribes Travel (01728 685971; www.tribes.co.uk), a leader in responsible tourism, features Nkwichi and other lodges with excellent community initiatives. Nkwichi costs US\$320 per person per night (based on two sharing) including all meals.

3 Are greenhouse-gas emissions minimised?

For the travel business, the elephant in the room is greenhouse-gas emissions from flying. Offsetting, a process in which you donate money usually for renewable-energy projects to – theoretically – balance your emissions, has become popular with tour operators and airlines; but the way it operates is a little bit like asking someone else to stop smoking so you can continue. If you want to fly and pay for your emissions, choose a 'gold standard' offsetter such as www.atmosfair.com or www.thecarbonconsultancy.co.uk. The best way to offset is to minimise emissions at home and to holiday in resorts that use renewable energy and minimise energy consumption through good management and design. At Chumbe Island (www.chumbeisland.com) in **Tanzania**, water is heated by solar power and the airy villas don't need air-con. The resort costs from US\$250 per person per night, including meals and soft drinks.

The lowest-emission option is a holiday that doesn't involve jetting off to a far-flung destination, such as taking a train to Scotland and joining a traditional sailing boat on a voyage around Skye, Rum and the Knoydart peninsula with Wilderness Scotland (www.wildernessscotland.com). Or you might travel by train and ferry to Sweden's west coast, then ➤

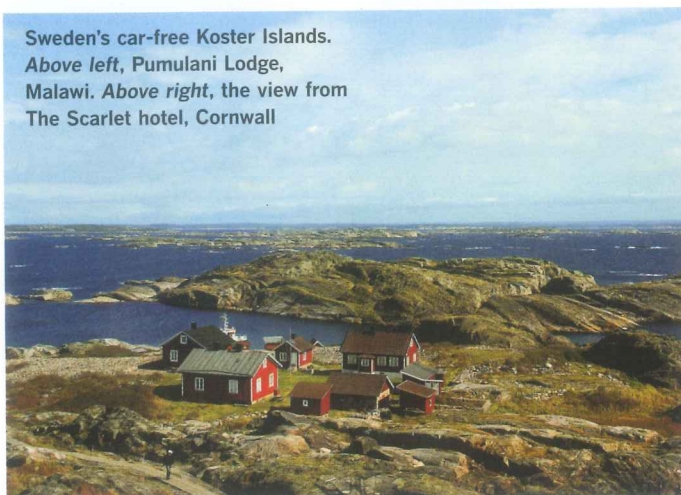
‘Donating money to locals provides photo opportunities for guests but makes no impact on the causes of poverty’



➤ take another ferry to the car-free Koster Islands and stay in a tent. The site www.greentraveller.co.uk is the best place to visit to find low-carbon holidays. Also see the green flight finder at www.cntraveller.com/advice.

4 Are most products locally sourced?

'Local' is a key word in the issue of sustainability. Arguments in favour of locally produced food include freshness and taste, but the sustainability benefit lies in the livelihood it gives to the community and the reduction in the reliance on fossil fuels. On Frégate island in the **Seychelles**, fruits, vegetables and herbs are grown for the restaurant and exported to other islands. Staff even help guests forage for wild food. In the UK, Cote How B&B in the **Lake District** sources all its organic produce locally. The health value of organic is debated, but its production is better for the environment, especially



Sweden's car-free Koster Islands. Above left, Pumulani Lodge, Malawi. Above right, the view from The Scarlet hotel, Cornwall

waterways, and it requires more labour than chemical agriculture, thus creating more jobs. Cote How (www.cotehow.co.uk) costs from £60 per person B&B.

It's not just food and beverages that can be produced locally. Sourcing building materials and furnishings from neighbouring areas is generally far more sustainable than using exogenous products. Misool Eco Resort is

built largely from locally milled driftwood and palm leaves harvested by local people.

5 Is there a waste-management plan?

In an ideal world, there would be no waste: everything would be reused and recycled. But we are talking about holidays, not monastic retreats, so some compromise is inevitable. An

increasing number of companies, among them Andante Travels (www.andantetravels.co.uk), offer clients filtered water in refillable steel water bottles. In the UK, look for hotels that have achieved a gold rating from the Green Tourism Business Scheme, such as The Scarlet in **Cornwall** (www.scarlethotel.co.uk). Its food and beverage suppliers have been persuaded to minimise packaging and all hotel waste is recycled; organic waste (including seaweed from spa treatments) is composted and used in the gardens.

6 What measures are in place to conserve water?

It is wrong that local people should be deprived of water so that tourists can splash in bathtubs the size of swimming pools. Due to climate change and population pressure, water management is important. At Chumbe Island, rainwater is captured from the palm roofs, filtered in a sand-gravel filter and stored in cisterns below each villa. Waste water from washbasins and showers is filtered through gravel and used to water a contained garden, ensuring no chemicals leach into the sea. Reusing 'greywater' is a feature of Robin Pope Safaris in **Zambia** and **Malawi** (www.robinpopesafaris.net). The overall winner of the Responsible Tourism Awards 2011, the company uses greywater for washing floors and flushing loos in its lodges, including the 10-villa Pumulani in Lake Malawi National Park. **T**

WHERE NOT TO GO ON YOUR NEXT HOLIDAY

This resort does not exist, but we have created it from the worst examples of real-world hotel practice

This very large hotel was built and furnished with sophisticated materials imported from far away, whose manufacture was energy-intensive and involved the use of finite resources. To create guest attractions, channels were blasted through the coral reef and lights were installed which disorientate nesting turtles; mangrove forests were cut down to make a sandy beach; and wild animals (parrots, hornbills) were captured and tethered to roosts. The restaurant

serves exotic food and drink, flown or trucked in; none of it is Fairtrade, from sustainable sources or locally grown. Rubbish is disposed of as landfill, and untreated sewage pollutes the local environment. The hotel is air-conditioned throughout; it has to be, because it was not designed with the local climate in mind. All the energy for cooling and heating, and other hotel services, comes from fossil fuels. During the hotel's construction, a sacred site

was destroyed; the water demands of the hotel's golf course and swimming pools have reduced the nearby village's supply to a dirty trickle; and virtually none of the hotel jobs have been given to the local workforce. The guests are probably unaware of all this – blissfully so, given that they are on holiday in a luxury resort. As far as they are concerned, The Last Resort is an ecologically aware hotel: there's a note in the bathroom asking them to reuse towels.