



View out to sea from the terrace, CV Villas, Corfu



Cocoa Island in the Maldives

Travel with the wow factor

CASTAWAY

There is something about being marooned on a paradise isle that speaks to *Crusoe* in all of us. William Drew seeks out the best island retreats around

First, we fly by Airbus A380 to the other side of the world along with 500 fellow passengers, then take an internal flight with a mere 100 for company, then a 10-seater Cessna to a small but busy holiday island. Finally, we board a luxurious motor launch, alone but for the crisply uniformed skipper, for the half-hour boat trip to our secret island hideaway.

Mooring up on the tropical rainforest outcrop of Bedarra – 4km off Australia’s Queensland coast, but a million miles from our harried daily existence – we breathe in the sense of solitude and revel in having left the world and all those other tourists behind.

Whether you go to quite such lengths in order to make good your temporary escape from reality, the appeal of islands remains deep-rooted in our psyche. In the era of the 24-hour BlackBerry, separation is at more of a premium than ever. Islands provide that other space – both physical and mental – that’s increasingly difficult to locate on the map of life. It’s no coincidence that many of the most captivating holiday destinations are divided from the mainland and, by dint of that, from the mainstream

– or why owning an island has long seemed the ultimate luxury.

“The attraction of an island is the promise of isolation – a word derived from *isola*, the Italian for island,” says Ben Donald, co-author of *The Book of Islands*. “Islands should ideally be approached by boat, or, at a pinch, by plane or helicopter, which can provide a wonderful overview of a scattered archipelago – the Bahamas dotted in turquoise seas, for example.”

The Caribbean, of course, offers up classic resort gems such as Antigua’s Carlisle Bay and Mustique’s exclusive villas. But there is a smattering of lesser known islands in the vicinity that are also worth investigating: Colombia’s Providencia, for example, or Vieques, off Puerto Rico, which has a bay that is bioluminescent at night.

Europe, too, has an extraordinary array of island life – from the Balearics’ party vibe to the Aegean’s ancient, sun-drenched terraces to the romantic, windswept beauty of Scotland’s Western Isles. By contrast, if you head to East Africa and look beyond glamorous Lamu, you’ll encounter a fresh take on barefoot luxury at Zanzibar’s Kilindi (see opposite) or on the wildlife-rich isle of Vamizi, which belongs to a resurgent Mozambique.

Drift further into the Indian Ocean to find paradises such as Cocoa Island in the Maldives, or the breathtaking beaches of Frégate and Cousine in the Seychelles. However, to explore an area few others have yet reached, go further east still, to the western rim of the Pacific Ocean – and the Philippines. Tom Marchant, of luxury adventure travel company Black Tomato (020-7426 9888; blacktomato.co.uk), says, “On Bohol, Boracay and Palawan, you’ll find the finest white sand beaches, top-visibility diving and the most idyllic desert-island escapes in the world.”

But this was the year when even the super-rich kept an eye out for a bargain. “Why charter a boat for a week’s cruise round the Dodecanese for 50 grand when you can get one for ten?” quipped one London filmmaker, who opted for a Turkish *gulet* (wooden sailing boat) from SCIC Sailing (scicsailing.eu; 020-8510 9292). A quick ring-around elicits other tempting deals. Seasons in Style (01244 202000; seasonsinstyle.com) has seven nights’ full board for the price of five at the iconic Cocoa Island resort, including flights with British Airways and speedboat transfers, for £2,775, based on two

sharing, until quote *The Travel* (020- co.uk) is of for the price Antigua from Lawrence resident of heady allure mere know little world us with an i It’s an intoxic

THE TROPICAL BEDARRA. Cocooned in rainforest paradise such that you worked up the trickiest deal from the sun extensive work room or the on your own lounge in your or on the ground. It is a week comprising Each suite built in which it discreet, design and shower