



Condé Nast Traveller

September 2014



THE EXPERTS... ADVICE



Q My father has always wanted to go on safari, and now that he has retired, he is determined to take us all – including his two grandchildren – to South Africa. Any suggestions?

A The multi-generational holiday is on the rise, with everyone rushing to accommodate large family groups in private digs, and safari lodges are no exception. The rightly acclaimed Singita Sabi Sand (www.singita.com) has opened Castleton, above, a mini-lodge with its own spa, tennis courts, rolling lawn and swimming pool. It sleeps 12 in six knockout cottages (two of which are inter-linking). Another recent addition is Lebo Private Reserve (www.leboprivatereserve.com), which has a massive, meandering villa designed by star architects Silvio Rech and Lesley Carstens (responsible for North Island in Seychelles and Chinzombo in Zambia). The emphasis here is on enjoying the wilderness – quad-biking, horse-riding and fishing rather than just going on game drives. Both these options require very roomy pockets, but if you are looking for something a tiny bit easier on



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the bank balance, consider Samara Private Game Reserve (www.samara.co.za) in the beautiful Eastern Cape, a cheetah sanctuary with two stunning family villas: super-slick Manor House and rustic Mountain Retreat. Or nearby Kwandwe Private Game Reserve (www.kwandwe.com) on the Great Fish River is fully stocked with the Big Five and has a great double act: modern Melton Manor and traditional Uplands Homestead.

Q I am looking for a spa hotel in Florence to take my daughter for her 18th birthday, somewhere we can dip into the culture but also enjoy treatments together. Where can you recommend?

A The Continentale is one of the peachiest spots in the city, beside the Ponte Vecchio with views of the Arno River and within easy reach of the sightseeing big hitters: the Uffizi, Duomo and Bargello. And the hotel, all honeyed woods and white-on-white with a feel of Fifties glamour, has added a tiny but wonderful Daniela Steiner spa in the crypt-like basement. It's just what you need when you've run the gauntlet of the Uffizi's 45 rooms or taken the steep walk up to San Miniato al Monte church. Like the rest of the hotel, it's low-key and relaxed, with sepulchral white candles, walls and furnishings. The ingredients in the spa products are pure – berries, honey, butters, even gold dust – and freshly prepared for each guest. There's a short but well-edited list of facials, scrubs and massages delivered with care and thoroughness. Try the signature Sublime Feet, a tribute to shoe designer Salvatore Ferragamo whose family own the hotel: it's two hours of primping, priming and polishing. Kiker Holidays (www.kikerholidays.com) offers three nights at the Continentale from £779 per person, including flights, transfers and breakfast.



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Q I am planning a holiday to Greece and have heard the food can be a bit hit-and-miss. Which island can I visit to try it at its best?

A Symi in the Dodecanese is packed with amazing places to eat. Being only 50 minutes by catamaran from Rhodes, it gets an influx of day-trippers for a few hours in the afternoon, but is blissfully quiet the rest of the time. Right on the water's edge, Tholos (about £40 for two) serves sweet, garlicky Symi prawns (so small and delicate you eat them shell and all), sticky-savoury octopus braised in ouzo, as rich as a Sunday roast, and lip-smacking taramasalata with a lively hit of dill and black sesame seeds. At Trawler taverna (about £30), locals crowd under the awnings close to the waterfront for grilled bream, Greek salad loaded with slabs of feta, and chilled glasses of Fix beer. Those brave enough to order the 'young marrow balls' are rewarded with a pile of crunchy, golden-brown courgette fritters that everyone else will want to steal. Further along the harbour, Pantelis (about £30) is another traditional spot where a highlight is lightly battered chunks of cod with a tongue-tingling sauce of garlic, olive oil, breadcrumbs and puréed potato. For something completely different, try Muses (about £60), Symi's most daring restaurant: this is the place for beetroot carpaccio with mustard flowers or fish tartare with strawberry and ginger oil.



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