

travelista

Wander woman **Sophy Roberts** fast-tracks international intelligence on where to be and what to see.

When Claus Sendlinger launched Design Hotels (www.designhotels.com) in 1993 – a one-stop booking agency for contemporary, individualistic hotels from Bali to LA – he didn't just group together like-minded properties under a single URL, he also accelerated the entire boutique-hotel trend. The Steve Jobs of the hospitality world, Sendlinger is pushing the boundaries again, this time with a temporary “pop-up” camp made up of 99 rustic cabanas on a 900m stretch of Caribbean sand in **MEXICO**. Until May 5, Tulum's **Papaya Playa** (www.papayaplayaproject.com; oceanfront casitas from \$445) sees a bunch of Sendlinger's best industry contacts – a mix of mavericks in food, music, design and wellness – create the equivalent of a guerrilla Comme des Garçons store on a Caribbean beach. If it works in retail, then why not with hotels, is Sendlinger's line of thinking. Partners include Emilio Heredia, owner of the existing Papaya Playa beach bungalow resort, while the clay-oven pizzas and other specialities are from the crew behind Kater Holzig restaurant in Berlin. There's also organic food-to-go courtesy of Copenhagen's 42°RAW, and a full-service spa incorporating Mayan shamanism. For more beach chic of the Etro-and-Havaianas variety, try a new small hotel, **Etnia Clube de Mar** (www.etniacubedemar.com.br; suites from \$541), in Bahia, **BRAZIL**, close to the hip village of Trancoso. If this waterfront address is anything like



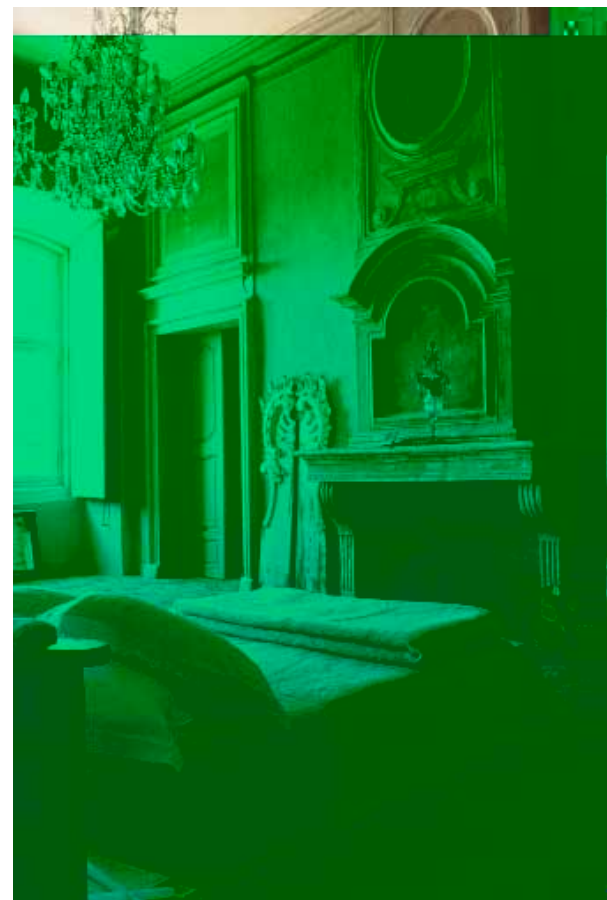
Above: Il Cocceto in the Val d'Orcia, Tuscany.

the original Pousada Etnia, which has the village location, then reckon on impeccable food and loveable owner-hosts (ex-fashion industry) who share “the scene” with guests.

It's all very different in sentiment (and budget) to one of **Cedric Reversade's** (www.cedricreversade.com) rarefied European villas, where complete privacy is all. For the upcoming season this French super-agent adds newly renovated **Château de Fées** (€18,500 per week) to his already polished **PROVENCE** inventory. The 16th-century castle is “stylish, sober, kind of Axel Vervoordt”, says Reversade, who once ran a concierge service and knows exactly how to deliver staff (chefs, butlers, maids) to match the Wi-Fi, underfloor heating systems and world-class art collection. Last summer, Reversade arranged a holiday for sculptor



Above: Papaya Playa at Tulum, Mexico. Below: the 16th-century Château de Fées in Provence.





Above: Kyambura Gorge Lodge, Uganda. Below: Tropic Air is hosting a helicopter safari to the Congo region with Roberts Safaris.

with a kitchen vegetable garden and 17m-long pool. Guests have access to a cellar hand-picked by Franchetti (charged on a per-bottle basis), which includes vintage Brunellos, Supertuscans and Franchetti's own 1995 Tenuta di Trinoro.

There's quite a different proposition in the **REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO**, where two small camps, known collectively as **Odzala** (www.odzala-kokoua.com; from \$4,500 per person for three nights), will open this spring in the world's second-largest tropical forest. The elevated rooms give a view of forest canopy, but what visitors come to see are the lowland gorillas. Meanwhile, **Roberts Safaris** (www.robertssafaris.com) has just announced a helicopter safari with Kenya-based **Tropic Air** (www.tropicairkenya.com) that will venture into the neighbouring **DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO**, an area that has lately been making headlines as a result of political unrest – not that this will stop intrepid travellers. Wilderness pioneer Willie Roberts will lead the inaugural trip this month (from \$100,000 for nine nights), with two nights in the Virunga National Park and a night on Nyiragongo, which boasts the largest liquid lake of lava on the planet. The safari also stops in **UGANDA**, where Praveen Moman, the visionary conservationist behind Volcanoes Safaris, recently opened a new contemporary-style eco-lodge, **Kyambura Gorge Lodge** (www.volcanoessafaris.com; from \$400 per person per night), in the western part of the



country. Here, chimpanzees are the lure.

For those who prefer the notion of Shere Khan, take note of a new jungle lodge from Encounters Asia; **Jamtara Wilderness**, (www.encountersasia.com; \$250 per person per night) is located in Pench, a remote region of Madhya Pradesh in **INDIA**, where Rudyard Kipling was inspired to write *The Jungle Book*. It is an area well known to the lodge's owner, Amit Sankhala, whose grandfather founded Project Tiger with Indira Gandhi.



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Anish Kapoor to **ITALY**'s Val d'Orcia, which continues to offer some of the best villas in Europe. New to this region in 2012 is **Il Cocceto** (www.cocceto.com; €8,500 per week), a house designed by Roman Ilaria Miani (who already has a clutch of exquisite rentals in the vicinity). Owned by local winemaker Andrea Franchetti, this six-bedroom rustic home on the rolling Tenuta di Trinoro estate is set in 200 hectares of forested land,



Above: a room at Etnia Clube de Mar in Bahia, Brazil.