



8 → **CAP MAISON, ST. LUCIA**

Going Nowhere Fast

Fans of *The Bachelor* saw Cap Maison as the site of some key episodes this year. But even without those 15 minutes of fame, this barely two-year-old hotel on St. Lucia's northwest coast would have caught the attention of travelers looking for something quieter and more charming than an over-the-top four-star fantasy. This is the choice for the couple who prefers a hammock nap to a volcano hike. The hotel tops a cliff overlooking a private beach. The string of terracotta-roofed villas with simple white interiors gets a jolt of color from island art. Spanish-style fountains and courtyards abound, nods to the resort's past as a colonial era sugar plantation. Cap Maison's signature attraction is a wooden deck built atop a huge rock surrounded by crashing waves. Reached by a wooden staircase, this platform is equipped with a zip line that delivers sandwiches, champagne, and the occasional engagement ring in a basket. Morning yoga classes also take place there, accompanied by the sounds of the sea. When guests do decide to venture out, the hotel offers its 46-foot Sea Ray motor launch, the *Cap Maison I*, for sunset jaunts and a chance to gape at the extreme yachts cruising nearby. *From \$435/night; 888/765-4985; capmaison.com*

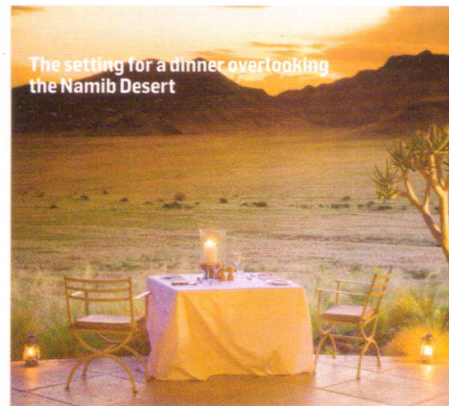
[GREAT FINDS]

"When traveling in India, every splurge is worth it. Many people go to the subcontinent for a travel bargain and spend their vacations on second-class trains, eating street food, and sleeping on floors for dollars a day. Travel in India is exhausting, physically and emotionally. You really appreciate the luxury you can afford at the same price as standard travel in other destinations. For my honeymoon, my wife and I hired a houseboat to glide through the backwaters of Kerala, and it was worth every penny. We escaped the traffic and congestion of the highways and spent the night on the cool waters with a chef onboard who would cook the fish he caught in the river."

—Eben Freeman, mixologist and director of bar operations for the Altamarea Group in New York

"On our last trip we stayed at Angorichina Station, a working sheep station in South Australia that's about 300 miles north of Adelaide. Ian Fargher was our station host, and he and his wife, Di, treat guests like family. The homestead is a strangely civilized place where farm animals roam around like pets, including a gentle old horse that steals bread from the table, and Annie, a black merino sheep with attitude who will charge at your legs but is really just bluffing. Unfortunately, we'd just missed a big rodeo, and the sheep shearing had happened about a month before. But we didn't lack for entertainment."

—Katrina Garnett, founder and CEO of MyLittleSwans, a travel planning website for families



The setting for a dinner overlooking the Namib Desert

8 → **SOSSUSVLEI DESERT LODGE, NAMIBIA**

Sheltering Skies

Safari junkies who graduate from tamer excursions head for the Sossusvlei Desert Lodge, operated by &Beyond, in Namibia's vast Namib Desert. Amid the stark surroundings, the lodge's 10 villas are eminently welcoming: Each has a fireplace and an outdoor shower with a view. No amount of wilderness experience can prepare one for a safari ride in this arid land. It's most dramatic at sunset, when wildlife is silhouetted against massive red dunes, or under night skies so expansive and clear that one might finally grasp the meaning of infinity. *From \$470/night a person, all-inclusive; 888/882-3742; andbeyondafrica.com*

Y **CHATEAU COUTET, FRANCE**

Bottle Bravado

It's not original to heap praise on Château Coutet, the sweet wine producer in the Barsac area of Bordeaux: Noted oenophile Thomas Jefferson singled it out way back in 1787. But the latest offering, Château Coutet 2007, practically leaps from the glass. Besides providing an explosion of pineapple, clove, and honey flavors, it has the racy acidity and freshness that are cornerstones of a good barsac, letting it age for decades. Indeed Barsac is home to that most elusive prey: the splurge bottle that for \$63 seems like a bargain. *33/55-627-1546; chateaucoutet.com*

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