

FINANCIAL TIMES

# how to spend it

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**IN THE HOT SEAT**  
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# travelista

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

→ This is the year **BRAZIL** hots up for the 2014 FIFA World Cup, with suites being primed in anticipation of the futebol event of the century. For those who want to dip out of the fever, there's a new 10-day walking trip among the flat-topped mountains from adventure specialist **Exodus** ([www.exodus.co.uk](http://www.exodus.co.uk)). This expert in set-departure, group-focused trips delivers bang-for-your-buck in off-the-beaten-track territory that has been carefully researched by Exodus professionals. Its

new Brazil trip – for a minimum of five and maximum of 16 people – is focused on the wild Chapada Diamantina region accessed through the northeast colonial capital of Salvador. The first departure is April 4 (from £2,899 per person, including flights, based on two people sharing).

→ Since the crowds left **CAPE TOWN**, a host city of the 2010 FIFA World Cup, not many new hotels have opened. Which is what makes **Cape View Clifton** ([www.capeviewclifton.co.za](http://www.capeviewclifton.co.za); from R4,200, about £257) a welcome arrival. The sun-soaked interiors of this B&B tucked into the cliff-face above the Clifton beaches have a pale, stealth-wealth patina, but the greatest luxury is the Atlantic Ocean views from all seven rooms. There's a deck for hanging poolside, while the two- and three-bedroom suites have kitchens and balconies with Jacuzzis. For those seeking more service, there's boutique hotel **Kensington Place** ([www.kensingtonplace.co.za](http://www.kensingtonplace.co.za); from about £217), a Cape Town classic newly emerged from a nip-and-tuck (rooms one and eight are the ones to book for views of Table Mountain). Those with even bigger budgets (and who are disinclined to share a pool) should check in with Deborah Calmeyer, whose travel

outfitter **Roar Africa** ([www.roarafrika.com](http://www.roarafrika.com)) provides exclusive access to a number of South African villas. An end-to-end Calmeyer-organised trip (from about \$10,000 per person) ensures you'll get the right guides, drivers and tables – including dinner at Luke Dale-Roberts's **Pot Luck Club** ([www.thepotluckclub.co.za](http://www.thepotluckclub.co.za)), which last year relocated to the sixth floor of Woodstock's old Biscuit Mill. → An Indian summer in January has an enduring appeal, along with a New Year detox at the country's smartest new destination spa, **Vana, Malsi Estate**, in Dehradun ([www.vanaretreats.com](http://www.vanaretreats.com); minimum three-night, full-board stay from £250 per night). Wellness programmes are dominated by Ayurveda – the most committed can do a rigorous



Above: the Chapada Diamantina region, northeast Brazil. Below: the main building of La Bamba de Areco estancia, outside Buenos Aires



Above: the lobby of Le Grand Bellevue, Gstaad







Above: the pool at the Cape View Clifton, Cape Town. Below: the Sibton Park library at Wilderness Reserve, Suffolk

claims around a 75 per cent chance of seeing leopard during a three-night stay in the surrounding Aravalli hills, as well as flamingos. It's like Africa in India: leather and canvas safari tents, open-top 4x4 jeeps and semi-pro cameras provided for guests during the course of their stay. You leave with a memory stick uploaded with your images.

→ Wilderness conservation is a hot ticket in travel – and it's catching on in **ENGLAND**, where Foxtons' founder Jon Hunt has pieced together 4,500 acres

in Suffolk to make up a new-age country estate, **Wilderness Reserve**

([www.wildernessreserve.com](http://www.wildernessreserve.com)). Hunt, a keen environmentalist, has ripped out fencing, planted over 800,000 trees, returned arable to parkland, removed steel barns and pylons and put in lakes and meadows. He has also done up a number of houses on the estate that are available to rent, from Sibton Park (sleeping 24 from £4,000 per night) to the electricity-free Hex (from £200 per night).

→ In Patagonia, **ARGENTINA**, the Lagos Marmol family have slightly more land to play with: 100,000 acres on the Chilean border, where they've opened up their family ranch, **Caballadas** ([www.caballadas.com](http://www.caballadas.com); all inclusive, five-night stay from \$3,250 per person; the family house sleeps up to 20 in 10 rooms, with a minimum of four per booking). The alternative, which is a 90-minute drive from Buenos Aires, is **La Bamba de Areco** ([www.labambadeareco.com](http://www.labambadeareco.com); full-board from £361) – one of the oldest estancias in Argentina, now an 11-room hotel, which has undergone an elegant, under-the-radar renovation.

→ Once **GSTAAD** could have claimed the same old-money pedigree – before the

Noughties' influx of Russian cash changed the Swiss ski resort's tenor. Redressing this reputation is **Le Grand Bellevue** ([www.bellevue-gstaad.ch](http://www.bellevue-gstaad.ch); half-board from SFr924, about £627), a 100-year-old, 57-room palace hotel that has been recast over the past 12 months with new interiors and a 2,500sq m Bamford Spa. The result is more cosy-contemporary (hot orange, bird-print wallpaper and blue velvets) than look-at-me flashy, with the convivial spirit of a Soho House or Lime Wood. ✦



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Above: Isabel Lagos Marmol at her family's Caballadas ranch, Patagonia, Argentina