

# BAZAAR

EDITED BY CATHERINE FAIRWEATHER

## ESCAPE



## Into the Wild

Adventure into dramatic spaces and ancient traditions in the glorious open acres of northern Kenya. **Plus:** the exotic colour of Rajasthan; and the sexiest hotel rooms you'll never want to leave

*STREAM WEAVER*  
Boniface, co-owner of Lemarti's Camp,  
at the Ewaso Ng'iro River in Kenya

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PHOTOGRAPH: DON MCCULLIN

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# Under African Skies

With its untouched landscapes and majestic wildlife, northern Kenya transports travellers to the vibrant heart of the continent.

**CATHERINE FAIRWEATHER** travels to Lemarti's Camp, a beautiful tented riverside retreat, to enjoy the ancient rituals and traditions of the Samburu people and experience nature at its purest

**PHOTOGRAPHS BY DON McCULLIN**



*Sundowners under a thorn tree, with warriors from the Samburu tribe*

I pick my way through hyena droppings and past startled hyrax, to a *kopje*, like the knuckles and finger of a fist bunched up above the semi-arid Laikipia plateau of northern Kenya. In the distance, I hear the yelps of our children kicking a ball on the 'pitch' – a dried-out river bed with doum-palms for goalposts manned by our host, Lemarti.

I've left the warrior guide behind to make a call from under the acacia at the kopje's summit, the one spot here where mobile-phone reception is promised (but not guaranteed). The number is never dialled; the view from the top catches me off guard. Dust motes are caught in the afternoon light and cast a shimmering veil over this primordial landscape. It is a rare moment of stillness in a whirling-dervish world.

I can just make out Lemarti's tented camp camouflaged by the ancient fig-trees below, beside the brown waters of the Ewaso Ng'iro River, which, glossy as caramel, disappear into the heart of the Great Rift Valley beyond. It is good to have decided to stay put for five days, resisting the compulsion to move from lodge to lodge. It allows the rhythm of the bush to get under your skin.

Lemarti's is a different kind of camp for East Africa; it is a cultural and spiritual adventure as much as a wildlife experience. Instead of the usual formulaic safari-lodge agenda – the early-morning wake-up and set game-drives where the thrill of seeing wild animals is somewhat diluted by the fact of being surrounded by half a dozen other trucks and endless clicking cameras – here, it's just you and your own private barefoot Samburu warrior with his spear at the ready, willing to walk you into the bush whenever. Wade across the river, and there are the 48,000 private acres of the Mpala conservation reserve for you to explore. We spent one morning in a jeep playing cat-and-mouse with a leopard in the long savannah grass, and following a pack of wild dogs rare enough to get the juices flowing for even the most hardened Africa hands. We hung out with a tribe of elephants beside the lake,



*A canvas and wood tented suite at Lemarti's Camp. Opposite: a deck at the camp under an ancient fig-tree on the banks on the Ewaso Ng'iro River*

until hunger got the better of us, and we left to unwrap a picnic by a waterhole, where the splashing of mating hippos was so raucous, we almost felt we had to avert our eyes.

While you may have to work a bit harder to find your game here, it feels like you are discovering Africa and the secrets of the bush for yourself. There are no walkie-talkies broadcasting the spectacle of a lion kill, no patrolling askari or guards with guns sitting astride their four-wheel-drives, no men in shorts telling tall stories by the *boma* later. It is simply Lemarti or his best friend Boniface and a dozen warrior friends, resplendent in their beads and red shuka cloaks, gently introducing you to the customs and rituals of their land, quietly strumming their *jamunge* and singing mournful tribal ballads to the sky.

Without any compulsion to tick off the Big Five from our must-see list, some of us slept till noon, cocooned in the fur-swaddled comfort of our giant beds. These are hewn, like the rest of the furniture, from the polished cedarwood of washed-up dhows. No wonder solitude-hungry stars such as Uma Thurman

and Daniel Craig are drawn to the peaceful cradle of this romantic and lyrical retreat.

You can while away hours (and what a luxury that is) floating down the river on an inner tube, bake like lizards on the sun-soaked riverine boulders, wallow in your copper bathtubs open to the stars and, with every stroke of the masseuse's hand, feel the stress drip off by degrees. Lanterns hang

**Lanterns hang from every branch (there is no electricity); cushions, swings and hammocks strung over the water invite you to linger**

from every branch (there is no electricity); cushions, swings and hammocks strung over the water invite you to linger. Wreathed with the scent of queen-of-the-night, visited by paradise flycatchers trailing their feathers like Twenties flapper girls dressed up in boas, Lemarti's Camp has to be the most sensual place on earth. Lemarti, one of eight children, became a guide in his teens, and met Anna

Trzebinski, his fashion-designer bride, on a trek in 2002. Once their private bolthole, the camp was an escape from the tongue-wagging that followed the tragic murder of Anna's first husband, artist Tonio Trzebinski; it grew organically from its love-nest roots.

Although the land was gifted to them, and is managed by the neighbouring Kojia community, and the camp remains Lemarti's domain, Trzebinski's incredible artistic and perfectionist eye informs the seductive aesthetic of the place. There is not one detail that jars, from the way delicious salads and risottos are presented at table, to the finer points of the decor: the hand-stitched tents; the towel-lined *kikoi* for bathing; tables that are a tableau of iridescent beetles and showcases for sculptural bleached skeletons. Everything is commissioned or made to Trzebinski's design in her Nairobi studio.

But while it's obviously a romantic retreat, the place is a paradise camp for children too. Our lot quickly went native: dressed in kikois and armed with mini-machetes, they were off tracking dik-dik and learning how to aim with arrow and bow. Sometimes they

them as they sat beside the warriors' kids threading beads onto ceremonial necklaces worn across the chest like their hero Lemarti. Perhaps surprisingly, these most proud of alpha males made the most watchful of child-minders – one especially, named Toisan, who slept across the doorway of their 'dorm' and delighted them by spearing a cobra.

On the night of the feast and slaughter, the boys were initiated as members of the tribe, and didn't balk at the ritual of drinking the warm blood – these 10-year-olds who would turn their nose up at rare beef at home. And then they pogo-danced with the best of them – the warrior leaping and chanting in celebration into the night, long after we had gone to bed. It wasn't something that had been staged for us, and it felt like a privilege to be part of something that took us so close to the heartbeat of Africa. And to quote from the camp's postcard: 'One's destination is never a place, but a new way of seeing things' (Henry Miller). □

Just as this story was going to press, news of the terrible drought in Kenya and the Horn of Africa became clear. Bazaar is a supporter of the charity FilmAid International, which is working in the region to bring education and hope to refugees. For more information, visit [www.filmaid.org](http://www.filmaid.org).



## BAZAAR'S NEED TO KNOW

### Lemarti's Camp

is made up of five tented units, each with its own open-air bathroom. The nomadic camp has four tents, plus a mess tent. A percentage of the profits from the camp go to the local community ([www.lemartiscamp.com](http://www.lemartiscamp.com)). For more information on **Anna Trzebinski's designs**, email [Studio@anna.trzebinski.biz](mailto:Studio@anna.trzebinski.biz).

### Accommodation and flight details

A 10-night safari, with seven nights at Lemarti's Camp, costs from £7,490 a person all-inclusive, including activities. Flights from London to Nairobi cost from £555 return with Kenya Airways ([www.kenyaairways.com](http://www.kenyaairways.com)). **To book**, contact Journeys By Design (01273 623790; [www.journeysbydesign.com](http://www.journeysbydesign.com)).

## REST OF THE BEST: Africa's new east-coast lodges



### Best for BIG CATS

#### Kicheche Mara, Kenya

This chic, eight-tented camp has recently relocated to a dreamy area deep in the heart of the Mara North Conservancy. Framed by shady fever-trees and with an exquisite stream running from pool to pool, it's the perfect secluded retreat. *A six-night safari costs from £2,600 a person full board, including flights, transfers and activities, with Safari Consultants (01787 888590; [www.safari-consultants.co.uk](http://www.safari-consultants.co.uk)).*



### Best for REJUVENATION

#### Hogmead, Nairobi

This elegant oasis on the border of a giraffe sanctuary and Peter Beard's famous Hog Ranch feels more like a grand home than a boutique hotel, welcoming weary travellers with delicious food, stylish surroundings and a place to relax. *From about £185 a person a night all-inclusive, including shared game drives with the Safari & Conservation Company (+254 71 257 9999; [thesafariandconservationcompany.com](http://thesafariandconservationcompany.com)).*



### Best LUXE HIDEAWAY

#### Sirikoi, Kenya

On the northern slopes of Mount Kenya, this lodge is perfect for those looking to relax. You can simply lie by the pool and watch as animals frequent the waterhole. Delicious food is served by resident Masai cooks, and hosts Willie and Sue Roberts make you feel like you're part of the family. *From about £430 a person a night B&B, with the Safari & Conservation Company (+254 71 257 9999; [thesafariandconservationcompany.com](http://thesafariandconservationcompany.com)).*



### Best for INSPIRATIONAL VIEWS

#### Lamai Serengeti, Tanzania

Set amid the Serengeti's remote Top End (Myles Turner, the park's legendary chief warden, loved this spot), 12 guest tents are split into Main Camp and a smaller lodge, both with plunge pools on the rocks for a refreshing post-safari dip. *A seven-night shared safari costs from about £2,625 a person all-inclusive, including game drives, with the Safari & Conservation Company (+254 71 257 9999; [thesafariandconservationcompany.com](http://thesafariandconservationcompany.com)).*



### Best for RHINO-SPOTTING

#### Solio Lodge, Kenya

Midway between Mount Kenya and the Aberdare National Parks, this is Africa's most successful private breeding reserve, a sanctuary for hundreds of black and white rhinos. The lodge's five luxurious guest cottages provide the ultimate in safari chic. *From about £440 a person a night full board, including activities and transfers, with the Safari Collection ([www.thesafaricollection.com](http://www.thesafaricollection.com)).*

GABRIELE HACKWORTHY AND BRLAN JACKMAN



# Bazaars' perfect weekend

## SEXY SUITES

Indulge in the sensual delights of hotel bedrooms you won't want to leave for days

### Blakes LONDON

Sometimes you can't beat an original. Blakes, where the concept of the boutique hotel was invented, is more decadent, more luxurious and sexier than ever after its recent multimillion-pound, six-month revamp by Anouska Hempel (including discreetly integrated Bang & Olufsen technology in all the rooms). Secreted away on a quiet residential street off Fulham Road, it still tops the list of places worth escaping to for a weekend tryst. The fact that rock stars, royalty and A-list actors regularly stay here only adds to the frisson. The mood is set as soon as you step into the

darkened lobby, where a pair of lovebirds chirrup gaily in their wrought-iron cage. You might want to slip downstairs for an amuse-bouche in the Chinese Room and Bar, reminiscent of a subterranean opium den, full of soft, cushiony, whispery corners. The menu is pretty sensual too – Japanese-inspired, with lots of wet, slippery, slurpy little dishes made for sharing. That's if you have managed to winkle yourself out of your supersize mattress and not fallen for the excellent 24-hour room service delivered bedside on a tray. If you had to choose a room, the Cardinal (above) is the most opulent of the 10 suites. It would be

difficult to find a setting more conducive to wild abandon than this. The flushed shades of red and gold, the velvety drapes and swags, the regal motifs – it's all so lushly operatic. And nothing says 'come hither' more persuasively than the canopied four-poster bed standing tall in the centre of the room. Blakes scented candles are placed around to aid the seduction process, curtains are heavy to keep out the daylight and external street sounds, and time stands still as the outside world slips further away inside this padded, opulent hideaway. AJESH PATALAY From £774 a night for the Cardinal Suite (020 7370 6701; [www.blakeshotels.com](http://www.blakeshotels.com)).

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**BED MASTERS**  
The Napoleone Suite at Residenza Napoleone III, Rome. Above, from left: a suite at Hotel Particulier, Paris. A room at Prestonfield, Edinburgh. Opposite: the Cardinal Suite at Blakes, London



### Hotel Particulier PARIS

A secret treasure in the arty *quartier* of Montmartre, this is the most intimate of hotels, whose bedrooms are so inspiring and so gorgeous you won't want to leave your pillow. Some of the suites have mouthpieces connecting you to other corners of the room, where you can whisper sweet nothings to your lover; others (book *Vitrine*) have suggestive displays of blown glass. There are steam rooms, a Jacuzzi, and trays of soup, cheese and wine served until midnight. Add saucy-uniformed maids for the ultimate in *oooh là là*. From about £355 a suite a night (+33 1 53 41 81 40; [www.hotel-particulier-montmartre.com](http://www.hotel-particulier-montmartre.com)).

### Prestonfield EDINBURGH

This is a fabulous bolthole in moody Edinburgh, but within its own private garden estate with Highland cattle and peacocks wandering past the window and views over Arthur's Seat. Not that you will notice in your glamorously dissolute cocoon, behind velvet drapes and with silvered mirrors, a leather studded chaise longue and chinoiserie galore. Some rooms feature sleigh beds festooned with ostrich feathers and gilded chariot baths big enough for two. From £295 a room a night B&B, including newspapers and a bottle of champagne (0131 225 7800; [www.prestonfield.com](http://www.prestonfield.com)).

### Residenza Napoleone III ROME

The Residenza's Napoleone Suite takes up the *piano nobile* of the Palazzo Ruspoli, within strolling distance of the Spanish Steps. It's the grandest lie-in you'll ever enjoy – a room, if ever there was one, for a proposal, make-up or anniversary. The canopied bed comes with a pillow menu, and behind the 500-year-old oils there is a cinema screen, dressing room and bathroom. Alternatively, if you don't mind sleeping cosy, book the double suite on the top floor, with a vast and sensational rooftop view of Rome to make up for the Lilliputian bed. CATHERINE FAIRWEATHER From about £550 a room a night B&B, including fruit and Chianti (+39 34 7733 7098; [www.residenza-napoleone.com](http://www.residenza-napoleone.com)). □

## Weekend ESSENTIALS



£425, Jimmy Choo

£495 each, Aspinal of London

£57, Fendi

Bra, £296; knickers, £193, both Wacoal Dia

PHOTOGRAPH: JAMES MENAUGHT. SEE STOCKISTS FOR DETAILS

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