

# canvas chic

Love the outdoors but love your creature comforts too?  
Go 'glamping' with **FIONA CAULFIELD.**



Camping has had an image makeover. Staying in tents was once the domain of adventure seekers prepared to rough it in exchange for pristine wilderness. But with the advent of glamorous camping – 'glamping' – musty sleeping bags, tinned food and bucket baths are things of the past. Style in the wild means fine linen, gourmet menus and spa baths, all enjoyed in the world's most amazing locations. The best luxury camps rival brick and mortar hotels, offering splendid landscapes and pampering. Here are some of the best camps, some classic, some new.

## **KENYA LEMARTI'S CAMP**

Opened in 2007, it offers an authentic and stylish African experience. The camp is located on the Laikipia Plateau, one of the last frontiers of virgin wilderness and home to the majestic Samburu people.

The Samburu own the camp land. The camp itself was built and is managed by a local Samburu guide, Loyapan Lemarti, and his Kenya-based fashion designer wife, Anna Trzebinski. They met on safari (he was her guide) and married, and created their dream camp in a grove of palms under a centenary fig tree.

The tents, set on platforms by the Ewaso Nyiru River, are stitched from locally loomed cotton. The camp has an earthy elegance – sofas covered in toffee creme suede, sheepskin rugs, the overall natural tone enhanced by colourful soft furnishings designed by Anna and made by local artisans. There is no electricity; so evenings are spent in the light of candles and brass lanterns. One of the few departures from Samburu tradition is the food – guests enjoy mushroom risotto or roast chicken with creamy bread sauce and cranberry jelly.

One of the best things about this camp is the chance to experience the African bush as seen through the eyes of Lemarti's people, the Samburu. For the Rites of Passage walking safari, local tribesmen take you into the wilderness to connect with the land and view the wildlife in the area, ranging from baboons to elephants. There are no jeep safaris, nor searching for animals, so this is not an intense wildlife viewing experience. Expect the unexpected here: Join in the wedding celebrations of a local warrior or witness a traditional dance performance in the bush.

**PRICE** Tents are from US\$750 per person per night inclusive of all meals, drinks and activities.

**GETTING THERE** A 90-minute charter flight from Nairobi costs about US\$1,000 depending on the group size and plane size.  
[www.lemartiscamp.com](http://www.lemartiscamp.com)

## **MALDIVES BANYAN TREE MADIVARU**

Located on the North Ari Atoll, this tented property, launched in 2007, is one of the most luxurious in the world. The coral island of Madivaru, graced with pristine white beaches and palm trees, skirts an idyllic lagoon. The retreat, accessible only by seaplane or boat, is the first tented camp in the archipelago.

Each of the six canopied villas comes with private plunge pools. The villas feature timber flooring, handcrafted wooden furniture and >>



THIS PAGE: Banyan Tree Madivaru, Maldives, shows you how to live the high life in a tent. OPPOSITE PAGE: Lemarti's Camp brings the African experience to life in inimitable style.





THIS PAGE: Wake up to the splendour of Uluru at Longitude 131° in Australia. OPPOSITE PAGE: Clayoquot Wilderness Resort in Canada offers the tempting combination of the great outdoors and gourmet meals.

luxurious interlinked tents making up the living room, bedroom and bathroom. Each villa has a spa area for in-villa treatments.

The outdoor deck of the restaurant Boa Keyo is the perfect place to end the day. Overlooking the waters of the Indian Ocean, you can spot dolphins and rays.

The resort offers a 24/7 island host, who can make your dreams come true, be it a dolphin safari or a sunset cruise on the Madi, a Turkish yacht.

**PRICE** Tents are from US\$2,700 per night per villa including meals and selected beverages.

**GETTING THERE** A 30-minute seaplane trip from Male International Airport costs US\$380 per person return. If you feel like splurging, the resort can arrange an exclusive overnight sail on the Banyan Velaa Turkish gulet boat for US\$3,500 each way.  
 © www.banyantree.com

**INDIA  
THE SERAI, JAISALMER**

The tradition of the tented camp in India started with Emperor Aurangzeb in the middle of the 17th century, who moved his Imperial Court to wherever his army was, creating tented cities at each stop. The British in India continued the tradition and the *shikars* (hunting parties) made use of elaborate tented camps. With centuries of experience, these camps in India are some of the best in the world.

The country's newest, The Serai, soft launched this year, is located just outside the medieval fort city of Jaisalmer in Rajasthan's Thar Desert. All of the 21 stylish tents are built on a base of local yellow sandstone and decorated with locally made artefacts. The air-conditioned tents comprise drawing rooms and spacious bedrooms with

ensuite baths. The verandas offer panoramic views, and the camp has a tented spa and a swimming pool inspired by the ancient step wells (reached by descending a series of steps) of Rajasthan.

From here, one can tour the 12th-century Jaisalmer Fort or take a camel safari to nearby villages and be back at camp for a sundowner on the sand dunes.

**PRICE** Tents are from Rs 24,000 to Rs 40,000 (US\$490 to US\$820) per double occupancy per night.

**GETTING THERE** Transfers can be arranged from Jaisalmer Airport (30km away) or Jodhpur Airport (290km away), which has more flights.

© www.the-serai.com

**AUSTRALIA  
LONGITUDE 131°**

This is an old favourite, offering spectacular views of the iconic Uluru or Ayers Rock. Situated on

an isolated sand dune close to the border of the World Heritage-listed Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park, Longitude 131° opened in 2002. Each of the 15 luxury tents pays homage to an early Australian pioneer via a visual narrative (photographs and maps) of his explorations. The tents have colonial-style interiors, with blinds that rise at the flick of a switch, revealing the spectacular moods of Uluru, from sunrise to sunset. Private guides explain the significance of the landscape and can arrange helicopter, Harley-Davidson or camel rides, as well as Aboriginal art workshops and private dune or poolside dinners.

**PRICE** Tents are from A\$1,000 (US\$670) per person per night for a minimum two-night stay.

**GETTING THERE** A complimentary four-wheel-drive transfer service

will pick you up from Ayers Rock Airport (6km away).

© www.longitude131.com.au

**CANADA  
CLAYOQUOT  
WILDERNESS RESORT**

Clayoquot, located on the banks of the Bedwell River in the wilderness on the west coast of Vancouver Island, is inspired by the late

19th-century Great Camps. The eco-resort, which opened in 1997, comprises 20 large canvas guest tents with wooden floors, rustic Adirondack-style beds and nice touches like heirloom china, antique oil lamps and cedar hot tubs. The camp's massive timber cookhouse is always busy preparing gourmet meals.

Clayoquot specialises in remote experiences ranging from day hikes straight out of the camp with a First Nations (Canada's indigenous people) guide to mountain-fed rushing-river kayaking. Riding and fishing are important, as is bear and whale watching. The resort is open from mid-May to end-September.

**PRICE** Tents are from C\$4,750 (US\$3,800) per person for a minimum three-night stay; includes return seaplane airfare from Vancouver, deluxe accommodation, all meals, massage treatment and guided activities.>>





**GETTING THERE** It is an hour's seaplane ride from Vancouver.

© [www.wildretreat.com](http://www.wildretreat.com)

**MONGOLIA  
THREE CAMEL LODGE**

Located in the rugged Gobi Desert and nestled under the Gobi-Altai Mountains on the border of the Gobi Gurvansaikhan National Park, this remote tented camp has 45 felt yurts (traditional nomadic tents) and a majestic main lodge crafted by local artisans without using a single nail.

The yurts exude a rustic charm, with wood-burning stoves and hand-painted wooden beds. The lodge, which opened in 2002, is eco-friendly, using only renewable energy sources such as wind and solar power.

You can hike through the desert, which brims with wildlife like argali (wild sheep), ibex (wild goat) and wolves, go on a camel trek or dig for dinosaur fossils at the legendary Flaming Cliffs with palaeontologists from the Mongolian Academy of Sciences.

**PRICE** Tents are from US\$80 per person per day including meals.

**GETTING THERE** From the Gobi Airport, the lodge is a 30-minute drive by Land Rover.

© [www.threecamellodge.com](http://www.threecamellodge.com)



FROM TOP: The Serai, Jaisalmer makes the most of India's tent experience, which dates back to the Mughal Empire; the rustic charm of Mongolia's Three Camel Lodge.

**INDONESIA  
AMANWANA**

Opened in 1993, this is a spectacular wilderness hideaway on Moyo Island, a nature reserve east of Bali. Set in a secluded cove surrounded by tropical rainforest, the resort looks out over the bay, a protected marine park, and beyond to the Flores Sea. You arrive by seaplane or by boat and are guaranteed complete privacy and luxury.

The 20 tents are the pinnacle of understated luxury, decorated with natural materials and contemporary flair. Hardwood floors, soaring canvas ceilings, king-size beds

draped with muslin canopies, and artworks set the tone.

You can trek directly from your tent into the jungle, which is home to abundant bird and animal life including deer, macaque monkeys, sea eagles and osprey. Marine activities include diving and snorkelling in some of the most pristine reefs in Indonesia. If you want a break from activities, head to the Jungle Cove Spa for treatments under shady tamarind trees. Then have dinner on the beach by the light of a campfire.

**PRICE** Tents are from US\$700 per night plus US\$100 board per person per day; this includes meals, non-alcoholic beverages, laundry, short treks and non-motorised water sports.

**GETTING THERE** Fly from Bali to Moyo Island in a turboprop jet engine seaplane for US\$425 per person each way. Alternatively, fly with Trans Nusa Airlines from Bali to Sumbawa and be transferred by boat to Amanwana. Transfer time is three hours; cost US\$200 per person each way. You can also charter a Cessna Caravan plane (US\$3,500 one way) or a helicopter (US\$6,000 one way).

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