



LONG HAUL

AFRICA

If the thought of camping out in the African savannah with children in tow seems too stressful, a string of private houses across Zambia allows families to explore the country's stunning scenery and teeming wildlife without having to go near a tent-peg. Luangwa Safari House, Chongwe River House and Nyika House each have four bedrooms, a dining area, outside deck, private guide and host. **Zambian Private Houses, Aardvark Safaris (01980 849160, www.aardvarksafaris.com)**

AUSTRALIA

Slick new eco-resort The Byron at Byron has combined a perfect setting in the virgin rainforests of Australia's east coast (yet only 20 minutes from Ballina airport) with amazing food and an array of spa treatments. The 92 bedrooms are linked to the yoga centre, restaurant, spa and pool via elegant decked walkways, so there's an ever-present sense of the exotic. Then, when you want a bit more adventure, deserted beaches are minutes away. **The Byron at Byron, 77-97 Broken Head Road, Suffolk Park via Byron Bay, Australia (00 61 1 300 554 362, www.thebyronatbyron.com.au)**

ASIA

The celebrated Sri Lankan architect Geoffrey Bawa built some of the island's greatest hotels — from

tropical hideaways to converted colonial beachside bungalows. His first building was his own home, Lunuganga.

Since his death, the building and its contents have been restored and converted into an exclusive four-room boutique hotel available from December to April — the rest of the year it's an artists' retreat.

Lunuganga, Bentota, Sri Lanka (00 94 11 23 96 666, www.srilankainstyle.com)

CARIBBEAN

If you've always dreamed of enjoying the sophistication of St Barts but been put off by the prices, head for Kù (above), the new all-suite resort in Anguilla. From £75 per night, you'll get a minimalist suite with ocean views, sitting room, dining room and kitchen. The resort has a small spa,

Rant

A pitfall of staying in posh hotels is hidden charges at every turn. Until cheap international internet phone companies such as Vonage, become more commonplace, get a SIM card for your mobile from www.textbay.com, which will only charge local rates. Also beware that, in the US, a simple request from front desk can result in an outrageous 22 per cent service charge.

boutique, freshwater pool, restaurant serving French-Caribbean cuisine and the island's longest beach bar.

Kù, Shoal Bay East, Anguilla, British West Indies (01306 747733, www.kuoni.co.uk)

SOUTH AMERICA

The estancia-style El Colibri, in the heart of Argentina, has eight lavishly-furnished rooms, its own stable of 45 polo ponies and 12 criollo horses on which to canter around 170 hectares of farmland. The owners can also arrange classes in the art of asado — the celebrated Argentinian barbecue — there's a go-carting track for the children and tango dancers at night. **Catalina, Córdoba, Argentina (00 54 35 254 658 88, www.estanciaelcolibri.com)**

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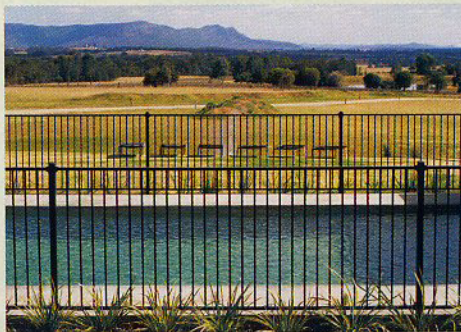
Tonic that refreshes...

If you take a fancy to anything you find in Nici and Tom Stanford's new Hunter Valley hotel you can buy it to take home. **Rachael Oakes-Ash reports**

Mix two cashed-up urbanites with 24 acres of bush in Australia's Hunter Valley wine region and you have Tonic, the latest stylemeister retreat (right), a couple of hours' drive north of Sydney.

This is a chintz-free zone, meaning those with a penchant for fine wine and an allergy to dried flowers in wicker baskets can rest in peace.

There are no pesky hosts looking to chat, since the owners, Nici and Tom Stanford, feel that luxury at Tonic is all



TANYA ZOUJEV

about privacy. Punch in the entry code and inhale the aroma of roast dinner in the oven with no sight of Nici, who cooked it, or

Tom, who chilled the wine. Polished concrete and steel detailing are the materials of choice for this industrial redesign

of the quintessential Australian retreat. But the hotel concept goes beyond modern architecture, original interiors and a stunning location. Fancy the leather couch? Charge it. Think the retro Tupperware would look good in your kitchen? Buy it. Everything in your Tonic room is for sale.

From AU\$395 per king studio, with breakfast. **Tonic Hotel, Lovedale, Hunter Valley, New South Wales, Australia (00 61 2 4930 9999, www.tonichotel.com.au)**