

SPECIAL REPORT: LIFE-CHANGING TRIPS THAT HELP THE WORLD

Condé Nast Traveler

WIN!
A \$25,000
DREAM
TRIP
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TRUTH IN TRAVEL

MAY 2008

INTRODUCING

QUICK TRIPS

3 PERFECT DAYS
IN AUSTIN,
PALM SPRINGS,
MINNEAPOLIS,
AND MORE

2008 HOT LIST WORLD'S TOP NEW 136 hotels*

105 Restaurants

76 Spas

28 Nightclubs

*including 36 under \$250

ULTIMATE
HAWAII
STEP-BY-STEP
ITINERARY

BRAZIL'S
SECRET BEACHES

SYDNEY NOW!
WHERE TO STAY,
EAT, SHOP, PLAY



tion of tents, the camp is now an ensemble of stone, glass, and wood structures that draw on solar power and mountain water. Each of the four cottages, furnished with a spare yet pampering luxe, is sited for privacy and a knockout view that can also be enjoyed from a private terrace with a fire pit. During the chilly evenings, wood stoves warm the cottages, hot water bottles are tucked into the beds, and solar lanterns and candles are lit. There is no Internet or cell phone access, no TV or morning newspaper—only the occasional sound of bells, either from passing goats or a temple on a neighboring hilltop. But

there is a well-chosen library in the lounge, and family-style meals are accompanied in the evening with fine wine. A day hike brings you rare views of Nanda Devi, one of the world's highest mountains, or you can swim beneath a waterfall of pure Himalayan water. **When to go:** The views of the mountains are crystal clear in November; from mid-March to mid-April, the slopes blaze with rhododendrons, and in April, the stars shine most brilliantly. **Which room to book:** The cottage dubbed Gola has the most expansive view (91-11-4173-4788; shaktihimalaya.com; doubles, \$3,216 for three nights). 🍷

INDONESIA

Bambu Indah, Bali

Recent years have seen the opening in Bali of several small resorts comprising Indonesian farmhouses relocated to quiet settings, yet none of them has quite the panache of this choice collection assembled by Canadian jewelry magnate John Hardy and his wife, Cynthia. The four hand-carved wooden houses transported from Java, each more than 100 years old, are set amid rice fields on the Sayan Ridge, an ethereal Eden near Ubud. The furnishings are a harmonious blend of exquisite pieces the Hardys have collected on their journeys: deep-dyed handloomed rugs from Tibet, massive teak cupboards from Java, graceful baskets from Borneo, rawhide benches from Ethiopia. The unpretentious dinner service is simply the best Balinese cooking to be found at an international hotel here. Adventure and cultural activities are well organized, and traditional Balinese massage can be scheduled in rooms. Caveat: A key ele-

ment of the charm of antique Java houses is their rough-hewn construction, with cracks and knotholes; as a result, the passing conversations of people outside are clearly audible in the room. Not recommended for honeymooners. **When to go:** June through September, for breezes and blue skies. **Which room to book:** Outlying Kuno House has a small private pavilion next to it, at the foot of a winding brick stairway (62-361-975124; bambuindah.com; doubles, \$250–\$350). 🍷 🍷

The Calyx, Bali

Hugging the craggy southwestern coastline of the Bukit Peninsula, this group of four whitewashed two-bedroom clifftop villas maximizes the view with floor-to-ceiling glass walls in minimalist, high-ceilinged bedrooms. Clearly the point is to absorb the ocean scenery: Each villa comes with plenty of outdoor cushions, plush daybeds, and a plunge pool, while mighty showers, sunken baths, and dual volcanic-stone sinks fill the spacious bathrooms of these modern thatched-roof houses. The main 65-foot infinity pool overlooks famed surfer beach Dreamland, and the manicured grounds are dotted with works from the Bali-based glass artist Seiki Torige. The eager young staff would do well to improve their English skills, but on-call butlers keep trying until they exceed expectations, whether arranging a tour to nearby Uluwatu Temple or serving an Indonesian feast on a villa's Japanese-style tatsu table. Spa Ray's two treatment suites have unobstructed water views, and generous time slots allow for prolonged outdoor showers on cantilevered wooden decks. **When to go:** June through September, for breezes and blue skies.

Which room to book: All four villas have equally attractive vistas (62-361-8470958; thecalyx.com; two-bedroom villas, \$1,500). 🍷 🍷 🍷 🍷 🍷 🍷

Ritz-Carlton Jakarta, Pacific Place, Jakarta

Just two years after opening a gleaming tower in this hyperkinetic capital ("Hot List," May 2006), Ritz-Carlton has launched a second hotel, this one with a streamlined contemporary style—and a novel approach to service. The Ritz-Carlton Jakarta, Pacific Place, a stroll from the Jakarta stock exchange and major financial headquarters, takes the popular executive-class club concept and throws out the rest of the hotel, creat-

ing a small swish property smack in the middle of a new skyscraper. Its 62 rooms are all loaded with the extras usually associated with premium club floors: complimentary buffets, local phone service, Wi-Fi, even clothes pressing on arrival. One could grow fat and merry hanging around the Club Lounge, enjoying its superb skyline view over breakfast, lunch, high tea, cocktails, or a nightcap buffet. Sports facilities, shared with residences occupying much of the rest of the tower, are on a par with the city's best private clubs, and include a big pool and tennis on a spacious eighth-floor roof garden. The service is prompt and friendly, and a range of specialty butlers offer expert guidance on everything from batik to traditional Javanese herbal medicine. **When to go:** June through September are the cooler, drier months. **Which room to book:** The Mayfair Spa suite, No. 2112, has a private Jacuzzi and sauna (62-21-2550-1888; ritzcarlton.com; doubles, \$268). 🍷 🍷 🍷 🍷 🍷 🍷

IRELAND

Solis Lough Eske Castle, County Donegal

Many castles have been spoiled by bland hotel makeovers, so it is a relief to find that the new luxury brand Solis has done a stylish upgrade of this magnificent building, which dates from the fifteenth century and is surrounded by 43 woodland acres. The atmosphere is informal (you park your car, but a doorman will help with luggage) and the interiors lavish without being intimidating. A high number of friendly Irish staff are on hand to offer swift assistance. Most of the hotel's 96 rooms and suites are in a fine new addition to the rear of the hotel, enjoying views of quiet gardens. Rooms are large but done in oatmeal hues and dark wood with huge beds, thick carpets, and coffee-table books illustrating the fast-disappearing culture of the Gaeltacht; one can enjoy reading these while drinking organic Brazilian coffee. Despite a few early teething problems—room thermostats were set too high, and the food in the restaurant failed to match its sumptuous surroundings—there is still much to look forward to here. The wonderfully atmospheric Gallery Bar, with its soaring ceilings, and the comfortable reading rooms are reason enough for a visit. **When to go:** The snug interiors and spa make a delicious escape from the howling wind and rain of winter, but go in summer to take full advantage of outdoor

KEY TO SYMBOLS

🍷 = Bar/lounge 🏖️ = Beach 📶 = Free Wi-Fi 🏊 = Gym 🏊 = Pool 🍷 = Spa 🍷 = Hot Spa 2008 🕒 = 24-hour room service 🔥 = Hot 🔥 = Hotter 🔥 = Hottest