

SNORKEL SAFARIS: Top 20 Places to See Ocean Critters

ISLANDS

DECEMBER 2007

100

ISLANDS
BLUE
LIST

WAYS TO GO AUTHENTIC

OFFBEAT, ECO-CONSCIOUS TRAVEL ADVENTURES

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AMERICA'S
SECRET
\$80 HIDEAWAY
IN PANAMA**

**DRINK UP
A CARIBBEAN
RUM TRAIL**

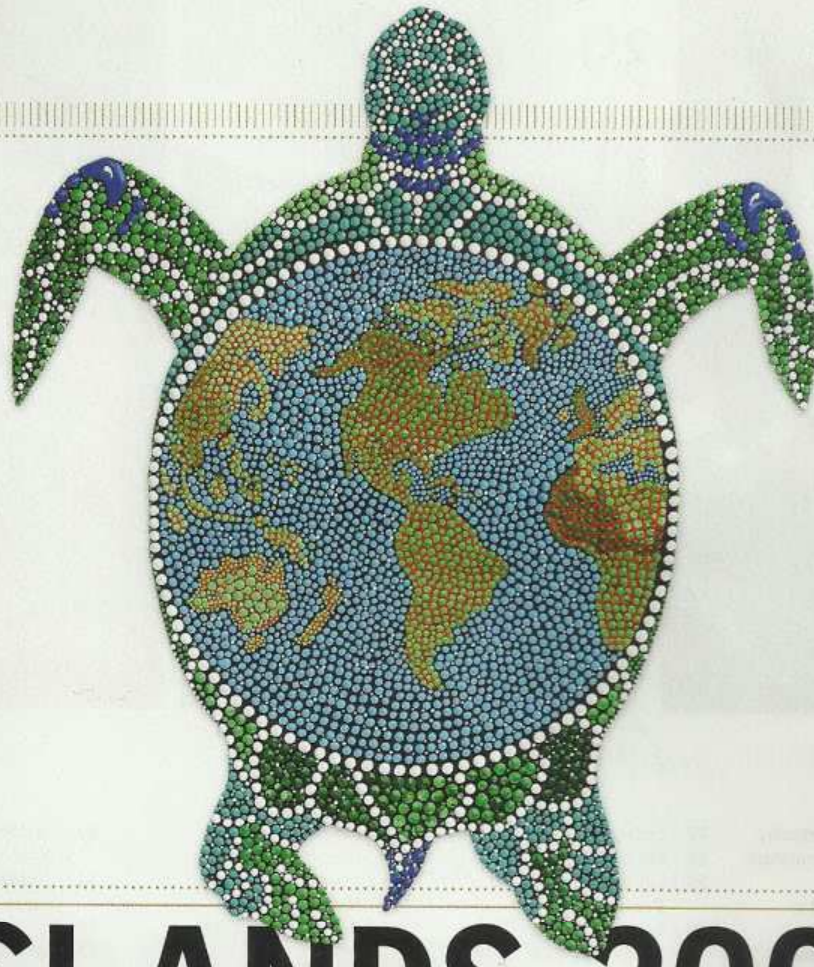
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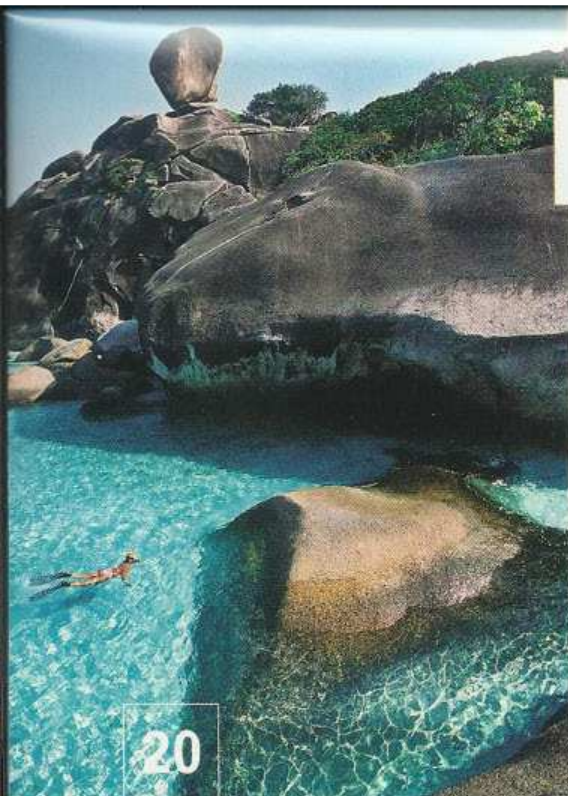


ISLANDS 2007

blue list

We listened to you and then added our own favorites, compiling a list of 100 leaders in responsible tourism who ensure that islands remain environmentally and culturally sound for future generations.

COMPILED BY BLUE LIST EDITOR JENNICA PETERSON



the blue list

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Editors note: The numbers corresponding to the Blue List honorees are intended as an index key, not as a ranking.



* RECIPIENT OF AN ISLANDS' GLOBAL SUSTAINABLE TOURISM "BLUE" AWARD

Keep It Hawaiian

Experience aloha-style hospitality thanks in part to the HTA's leadership.

→ DOUGLAS KAHIKINA CHANG IS A CANOE PADDLER. He's raced in the Molokai Hoe, the world championship of outrigger-canoe racing that starts on the shores of Molokai and finishes 41 miles later at Waikiki Beach on Oahu. Chang is also the first Native Hawaiian to chair the **Hawaii Tourism Authority (HTA)**, and he understands the Hawaiian proverb, *pupukahi i holomua*, or "unite in order to progress." In paddling, it's called teamwork, and it's a strategy recently adopted by the HTA.

Established in 1998 as an agency to advocate Hawaii's tourism industry, the HTA manages the Tourism Special Fund, financed by the transient accommodations tax. By funding its own programs, the HTA encourages the preservation of the Hawaiian culture and environment. It also recognizes other organizations and businesses that sponsor cultural events or activities as part of the HTA's Keep It Hawaii program.

"Our focus over the last few years has been bringing balance back to tourism," Chang said. "If there is a balance between the visitor industry and our local communities, we create long-term relationships. That's sustainability."

That's also teamwork.

On the environmental front, the HTA supported the County of Hawaii in a pilot program placing park rangers at Waipio Scenic Overlook on the Big Island; the rangers serve an educational role, pointing out native plants and sharing the sacred history of the area. On Maui, the HTA sponsored the Pacific Whale Foundation in its creation and distribution of an informational brochure on Hawaii's sea turtles, and on Kauai, HTA workers helped Hui o Laka remove invasive plants in Kokee State Park.

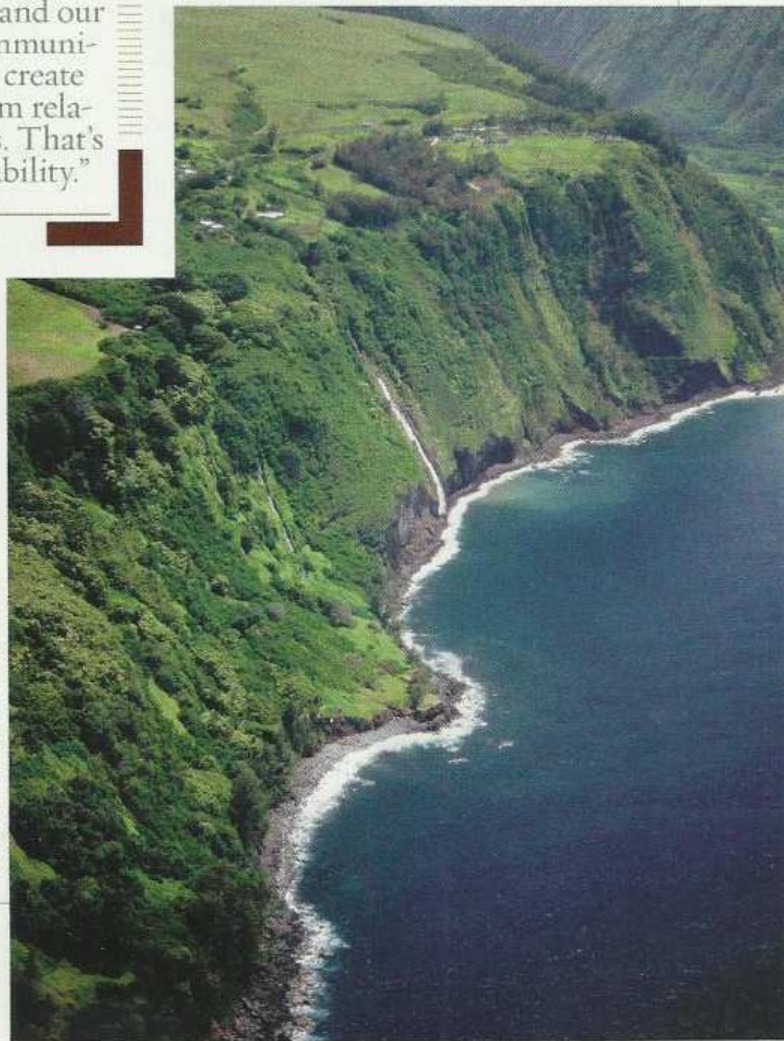
"Authenticity is important to our visitors. They can see right through a fabricated experience," Chang said. "The visitor today wants to feel that they have experienced something. They don't want to be observers anymore; they want to be participants."

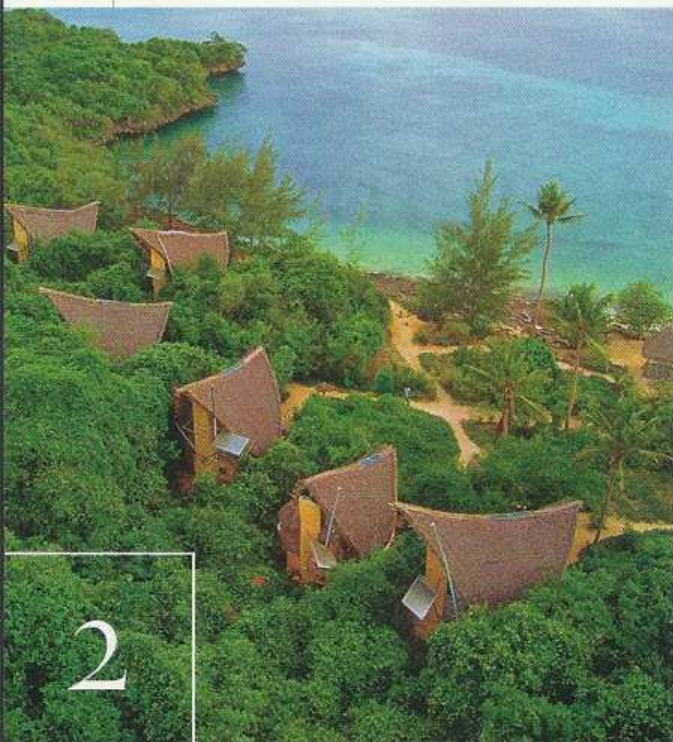
Accordingly, the HTA looks to support events and organizations that directly involve the visitor. For example, at Kauai's Kokee State Park's Banana Poka RoundUp in May, volunteers help pull the non-native banana *poka* vine and then learn how to weave it into baskets. At the Prince Kuhio Celebration held each March on Kauai, visitors witness the Hawaiian arts of quilting, weaving, wood carving and *tapa* making. June's King

Kamehameha Celebration on the Big Island honors Hawaii's first monarch with a parade of floral floats, marching bands and women on horseback wearing elaborately-decorated *pau* skirts. The Aloha Festivals, established in 1946 and held every September, are weeklong celebrations of hula, chanting, crafts, music and food — the only statewide cultural festival in the nation.

Hawaii visitors today can expect to find greater reverence and respect for the culture and environment. That's because the HTA, under the leadership of Chang and together with the local community, is working hard to make another Hawaiian adage hold true: *Ho omoe wai kahi ke kao o*. "Let's all travel together like water flowing in one direction." hawaiitourismauthority.org
— KIM STEUTERMANN ROGERS

"If there is a balance between the visitor industry and our local communities, we create long-term relationships. That's sustainability."





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↑ **Support a Grouper**

Oscar, a 40-inch potato grouper, occupies a shallow cave off Chumbe Island between the Tanzanian coast and Zanzibar. He's chosen a good home, considering that others of his species who live 13 miles down-current constitute 90 percent of the locals' protein in Zanzibar's capital. In the not-for-profit **Chumbe Island Coral Park**, though, expansive hard-coral formations are his playground, snorkelers cruise by, hawksbill turtles and blue-spotted stingrays are commonplace and fishing is prohibited. Since 1994, fishermen-turned-park-rangers have patrolled these waters, allowing fish populations to swell and coral to thrive, which has bolstered tourism, environmental education and research. Support this private marine park's work by booking an eco-bungalow (think solar panels, rainwater collection and captured Indian Ocean trade winds). From your bungalow you'll see the 1904 lighthouse

commissioned by the Sultan of Zanzibar and watch dhows sail past the outlying reef. Rates from \$330 are mostly all-inclusive. chumbeisland.com

— TIM JACOB



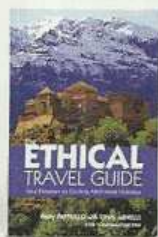
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Lonely Planet's **Code Green** (\$19.99) offers a world's worth of great suggestions for unique eco-experiences and volunteer vacations. Boost Tonga's economy by snorkeling with humpback whales, or help scientist Ian Bell study endangered hawksbill turtles in the Howick Islands of Australia's Great Barrier Reef.



[4]

With **Green Places to Stay** (Alastair Sawday, \$21.95), choosing an eco-friendly hotel couldn't be easier. Global properties like Fiji's Turtle Island Resort, which employs about 150 villagers and runs a foundation that funds local projects, are judged on several criteria, including green technology and social responsibility.



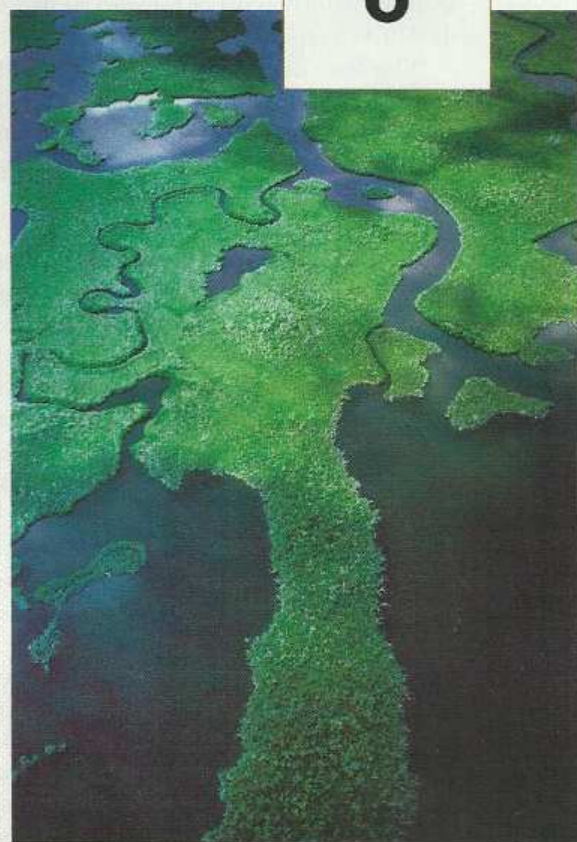
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The **Ethical Travel Guide** (Earthscan, \$22.50) helps you spend wisely: When you visit a village, go on a tour or stay at a guest house listed in the guide, you can be sure that you are directly benefitting locals and giving back directly to the cultures that make these destinations so intriguing. — JACKIE D'ANTONIO

↓ **GET SMART**

To encourage healthy human-dolphin interactions in the wild, the **Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary** (FKNMS) has teamed up with the government and private business partners to launch its Dolphin SMART program. Participating wild-dolphin-watching charter operators will be identified by the Dolphin SMART logo and agree to follow prescribed guidelines, including keeping a safe distance, moving cautiously and not allowing their guests to feed, touch or swim with these friendly and curious cetaceans. This is the kind of conservation policy that is typical of the 17-year-old, Key West-based marine sanctuary, whose mission is to protect the Florida Keys' coral reef — North America's only living-coral barrier reef — and its playful critters, too. dolphinsmart.org — SUZANNE GERBER

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RAMBLE THROUGH RUINS To preserve and celebrate the island's colorful past, the **St. Croix Landmarks Society** established the Heritage Trail, which links a variety of historical sites, including schools, churches, forts and botanical gardens. At one of the stops, the Estate Whim Plantation Museum, you can tour extensive grounds, see an 18th-century coral-stone great house, visit a restored mill or just enjoy the shade of a 300-year-old tamarind tree. An illustrated map of the Heritage Trail is available at shops around St. Croix and on the society's website. Use the map for a self-guided driving tour and for tips on local food, music and patois. Or join a monthly, guided Ruins Ramble, a hike-and-talk excursion through one of the island's rarely visited former plantations. stcroixlandmarks.com — JOAN TAPPER



Find Sanctuary

Step ashore on **Guana Island**, and you'll enter a sanctuary. The American owners of this private British Virgin isle have created a refuge for Caribbean wildlife as well as for travelers seeking an elemental-yet-luxurious tropical escape. As one of the maximum 36 guests, you'll likely never see another person as you roam this 850-acre island, where iguana-trod trails climb tall hills, offering spectacular views of sea-splashed coves. You can watch rare Caribbean roseate flamingos wade across an inland salt pond, tour organic orchards that supply the resort's kitchen, snorkel amid protected reefs or just relax on one of the island's seven perfect beaches. Every October the owners turn the entire island over

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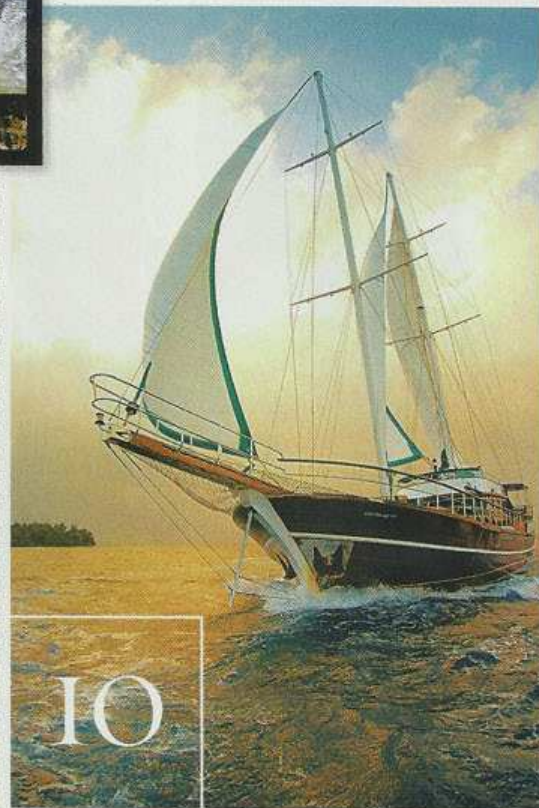
to working scientists who've made Guana's flora and fauna some of the best-studied in the entire region. Rates from \$775 are all-inclusive.

guana.com — BOB FRIEL



9 WATCH A PARADE

Just before sunset, the first of 233 blue penguins waddles out of the South Pacific and onto a beach on the east coast of New Zealand's South Island. From seats a few yards from the shoreline, onlookers watch as the world's smallest penguins shake beads of water off their midnight-blue plumage and return to their nests. After a day of feeding in the water, the penguins instinctively return every evening to the **Oamaru Blue Penguin Colony**, where they rest and breed. This former harbor quarry was handed over for the exclusive use of the colony in 1992. Admission fees fund education and conservation efforts, which have helped quadruple the number of breeding blue penguin pairs. Rates from about \$17 for a behind-the-scenes tour and the evening viewing. penguins.co.nz — TJ



Plant a Coral Garden

The Maldives have long been a top dive destination, but global warming has raised water temperatures enough to bleach (a process that can starve coral to death) 70 percent of the once-opulent reefs. In the North Male Atoll two resorts are making heroic efforts to reverse the damage: Banyan Tree's resort on Vabbinfaru and Angsana Resort & Spa Maldives Ihuru. The **Banyan Tree Maldives Marine Laboratory**, led by Azeez Hakeem, has created effective programs to grow and transplant corals, protect sea turtles, educate locals and involve resort guests. Guests are invited to attend free educational seminars, and divers can plant new coral gardens on the house reef and remove invasive predators like the crown-of-thorns starfish. As Director Hakeem said, "We must conserve and preserve the reef at any cost because if the reef is gone, we are gone."

banyantree.com; angsana.com — SG





DRINK TEA

Purchase a box of organic Lemon Ceylon Green tea or Ceylon Chai tea from **Alter Eco Fair Trade**, and you'll directly support 700 farming families working cooperative land in the Sri Lankan highlands.

Sweeten that tea with a spoonful of Alter Eco's organic ground-cane sugar with

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hints of vanilla from Negros Island in the southern Philippines, and benefit 400 cooperative farmers working communal land that once belonged to wealthy landowners. The San Francisco-based company buys organic products — from coffee to chocolate — directly from farmers in 42 cooperatives spread across 35 countries. By paying fair wages and providing access to the world economy, Alter Eco helps marginalized farmers become self-sufficient and even profitable, all the while encouraging environmentally-sound agriculture. One tea box: \$4.99; one pound of sugar: \$3.99. altereco-usa.com — JAD DAVENPORT



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Save a Reef

In its 12 years of operation, **Wakatobi Dive Resort** on the island of Sulawesi, Indonesia, has helped preserve 600-plus species of reef-building corals that surround the island, enhancing the health of an unparalleled array of marine life. Here divers can observe six varieties of pygmy sea horses, a rare blue-ringed octopus, leaf fish, crocodile fish and mating mandarin fish. You can also swim among dozens of species of butterflyfish, an indicator species that proves with its rising numbers that the marine environment is becoming healthier. This success is driven by Wakatobi's Collaborative Reef Conservation Project, which unites resorts and



locals in the fight to protect the reefs. Using a portion of their profits, Wakatobi's owners lease sections of the reef from villagers and fishermen. They also supply locals with free electricity from the resort's generators and provide funding for school projects, sporting events and community infrastructure. In exchange, the islanders have gradually taken ownership of their reefs, no longer overfishing or polluting them. At Wakatobi, everyone — the guests, the resort owners and the locals — becomes a marine steward. Seven-night all-inclusive rates from \$1,940 per person. wakatobi.com — SG

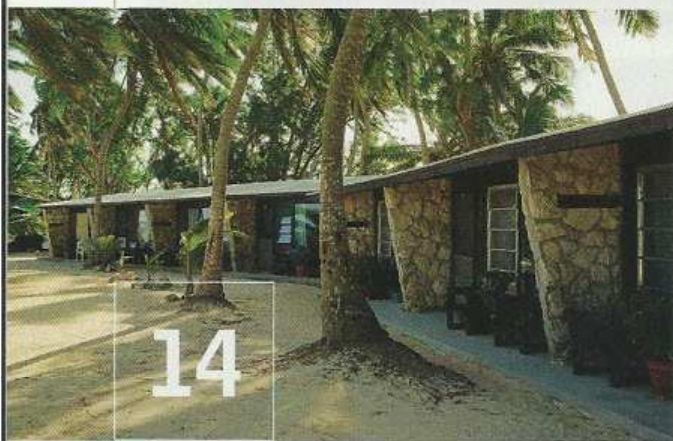
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Travel Green

The **International Ecotourism Society** uses its 17 years of experience to teach local organizations around the world how to be truly green. Visit their website to find approved eco-trips and sustainable travel tips. Get involved by attending the group's eco-tourism conferences, which provide a clearinghouse of responsible-travel information. ecotourism.org

— RAMIN GANESHAM





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↑ Have High Hopes

When Canadian Dick Birch established **Small Hope Bay Lodge**, a dive resort on the Bahamian island of Andros in 1960, sustainability was something that happened naturally. The main lodge and 20 cottages overlooking one of the largest reefs on the planet were all hand-built from limestone blocks and native Andros pines; guests were served produce grown in island gardens and fish caught during season on the reef. Dick passed away in 1996, but his son Jeff, who now manages the eco-lodge, continues the legacy. Jeff worked with locals to found the Andros Conservancy and Trust, which protects the island's native forests, blue holes (pictured above) and pristine reef from clear-cut logging, industrial mining and commercial fishing. Small Hope Bay Lodge was recently affiliated with Green Globe, the first step in becoming certified. Jeff says his father would have been proud. "He always taught us that we have a symbiotic relationship with nature. Take care of nature, and nature will take care of you." All-inclusive rates from \$418. smallhope.com — JD

IS

Schmooze Over Cocktails

At the weekly cocktail party at Jamaica's **Villas on Bluefields Bay**, meet locals who are always on hand to share their culture with guests. When visitors learn more about the needs of the local community, they are often inspired to get involved. For instance, one guest donated 22 computers and provided networking capabilities to help create a computer-training program. The resort adds a 2-percent community fee to villa rentals, using it to fund worthwhile projects like early-childhood education programs and anti-litter campaigns. At Bluefields, social networking creates meaningful tourism. Villas from \$3,500 per week. bluefieldsvillas.com — BRENDA FINE



↓ CLIMB A TREE

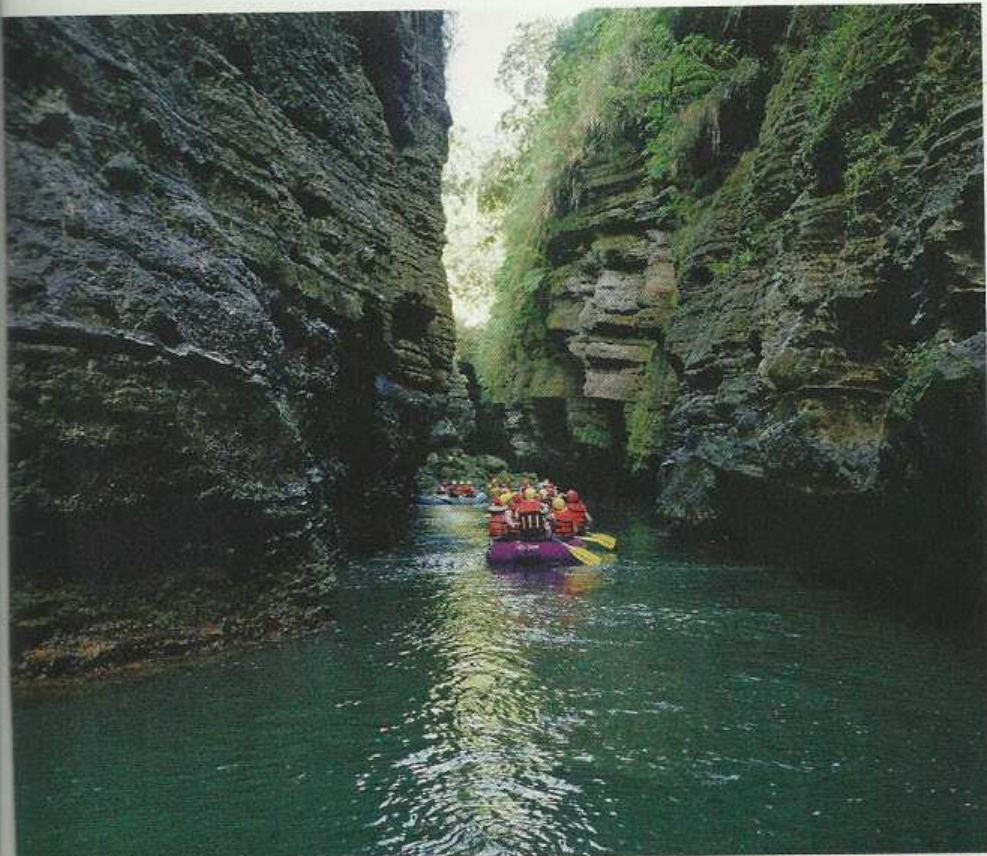
Remember the joy you felt as a child, escaping high into the leafy boughs of a sturdy old tree? On Britain's Isle of Wight, **Goodleaf Tree Climbing** takes you back to this magical world of green, but this time you'll be safely outfitted with a harness, helmet and ropes before you climb 50 feet up into the canopy of a magnificent English oak. Swing a little, hang upside down or chill out in a tree hammock before you rappel back to earth, where snacks (locally-made pastries and fair-trade tea) await the young-at-heart. Another treat: Part of your climbing fee, through the non-profit Trees for Life, helps replant U.K. forests. From \$71; save 5 percent by arriving via public

transport or pedal power. goodleafco.uk

— JENNICA PETERSON

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↑ **Go Paddling**
 On the Fijian island of Viti Levu, steep canyon walls draped with a mossy-green mane edge the Upper Navua River as your raft rushes through its Class III rapids. More than 10 miles of verdant rainforest abut the river and its canyons, and **Rivers Fiji** wants to keep it that way. That's why the rafting company has teamed with local *matagali*, or landowning groups, and the Native Land and Trust Board to protect this area against potential threats from logging and gravel extraction. For every guest who signs on for a trip, Rivers Fiji makes a lease payment to local families and villages, which benefit more from tourism than development. Job opportunities for local youth and

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donations to schools further ensure that these canyon walls will remain green for years to come. Upper Navua trips from \$160. riversfiji.com — JP

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GET REST
 On a four-day **Responsible Ecological Social Tours Project (REST)** trip to Koh Yao Noi in the Andaman Sea, you'll weave fishing nets with locals and then join them to fish at nightfall. A modest family home is your hotel room; the fish you just caught, served fiery hot, is dinner; and your host may teach you how to make *kanom tom*, a coconut-and-caramel confection, for dessert. Because trips are planned and managed by locals and profits are poured back into cultural projects and ocean conservation, travel with REST brings you closer to Koh Yao Noi while keeping the sea it depends on healthy. Four-day trips departing Phuket from \$369 are nearly all-inclusive. rest.or.th — JP

↓ **Thread a Needle**
 In Bali's artistic and cultural center of Ubud, **Threads of Life** works with the nonprofit Yayasan Pecinta Budaya Bebali Foundation to preserve the ancient Indonesian traditions of textile arts and weaving. Tucked down a lane near the Pura Desa, Ubud's main temple, the Threads of Life Gallery sells hand-woven, naturally dyed textiles that are used as ceremonial dress, ritual gifts and religious offerings in their communities of origin. The sale of these pieces, commissioned directly from weavers' cooperatives, helps support the economic development and cultural integrity of more than a thousand weavers working throughout Indonesia. You can also enroll in a textile appreciation class to learn more about the motifs and functional uses of hand-woven cloth

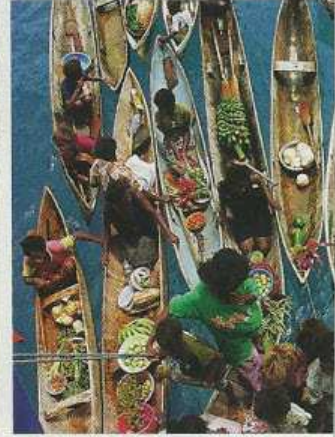
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 in Indonesian life. Classes from \$20. threadsoflife.com
 — MAURINE SHIMLOCK





Save an Island

Seacology partners with island populations to save their environment.



→ THINK A VOLUNTEER VACATION MEANS NOTHING but work? A **Seacology** trip to Fiji will change your opinion. Seacology's island projects range from establishing a marine reserve to providing running water, and you may be thanked for your efforts with a traditional feast of roast pig and other local dishes while islanders perform elaborately costumed spear dances in which everyone is encouraged to participate.

As a nonprofit, nongovernmental conservation organization, Seacology works to preserve fragile island environments and cultures around the globe, sponsoring more than 160 projects on 90 different islands. Individuals who contribute at least \$1,000 are invited to witness firsthand (at an additional expense) Seacology's projects in all corners of the globe, from Chumbe Island, Pemba Island and the Maldives in the Indian Ocean to Papua New Guinea and Vanuatu in the South Pacific.

"Seacology is about mutual trust. We offer to build schools or hospitals and provide solar energy, medical equipment or a water supply for island villages," explained Dr. Paul Alan Cox, the founder of Seacology, who is also an ethnobotanist and a former mountaineering instructor. "In return, the villages promise to protect their rainforest or coral reef. This can be a big

sacrifice for them, since they may have little local support." According to Dr. Cox, villagers show a keen interest in Seacology projects and volunteers. "They like to see our people at work, look into our souls and determine if we are worthy partners in such an endeavor. We usually have a meal with the villagers, listen to their stories and often dance or sing with them.

"One of the hallmarks of a Seacology trip is that donors have a good time doing good for other people," Cox said, "and we do our utmost to show our respect for the indigenous culture." However, this does not mean you have to rough it or tote bricks to help build a new footpath or bridge. "If we can have a luxury dive boat or a four-star hotel as our base, so much the better," Cox added with a smile.

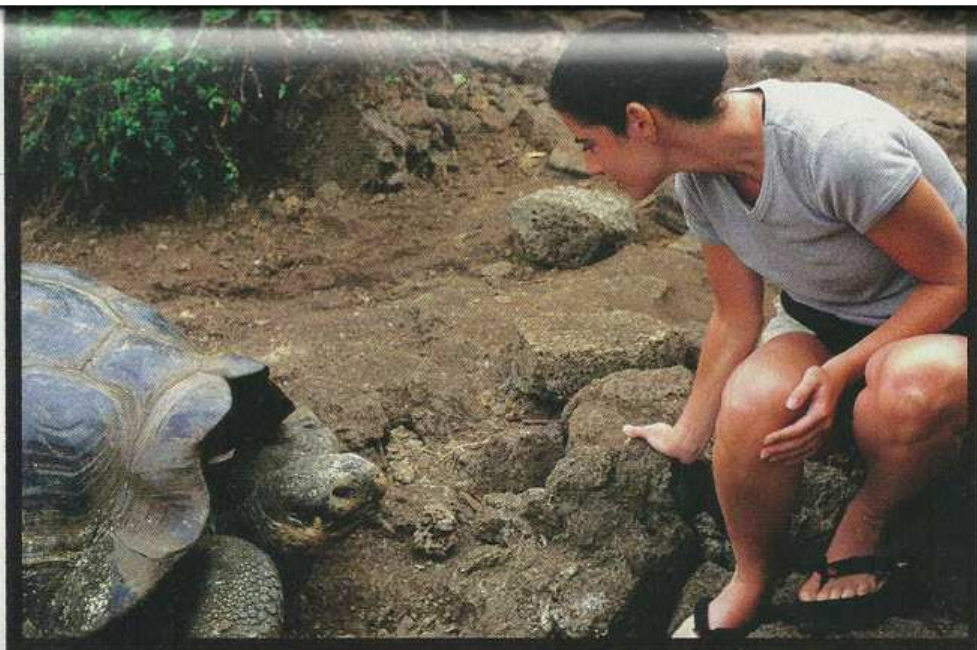
Upcoming Seacology scuba-diving trips include the Red Sea. You'll travel with an experienced crew on the *Royal Explorer*, sleep in one of 12 private cabins with en-suite bathrooms, and photograph rare marine life in Seacology-funded marine sanctuaries.

Donor Trips for 2008: Madagascar and South Africa, May 10-24, from \$4,250; Red Sea Diving Expedition, November 6-20, price TBD; Jean-Michel Cousteau Fiji Islands Resort, August 11-18, from \$2,360. All rates per person, based on double occupancy. seacology.com — LANIE GOODMAN

"One of the hallmarks of a Seacology trip is that donors have a good time doing good for other people, and we do our utmost to show our respect for the indigenous culture."

An aerial photograph of a coral reef. The water is a vibrant turquoise color, transitioning to a deeper blue further out. The reef itself is a complex, textured landscape of various coral species, appearing in shades of green, brown, and tan. The sky is a clear, deep blue with scattered white clouds. The horizon is visible in the distance, where the water meets the sky.

The coral reefs surrounding Fiji are fragile environments. Opposite, from left: Viani school kids in Fiji; EcoReef installation at Manado Tua in Indonesia; Fiji beach; floating market in the Solomon Islands.



Soak in Kiwi

Hike up and over Mount Tongariro on New Zealand's North Island, and you'll pass isolated waterfalls, ancient lava flows, sacred lakes and valley views that extend to the horizon. **Flying Kiwi** helps preserve this scenic wonderland by transporting travelers to destinations where they hike, paddle, swim, cycle and camp their way toward fewer carbon emissions and minimal ecological impact. Flying Kiwi operates a continuous loop of specially outfitted buses (think onboard sinks, mini-libraries and bike racks) that stop at campgrounds with tent and cabin accommodations. Try the Grand Traverse from Auckland on North Island to Queenstown on South Island. Go straight through in 15 days or delve deeper into local culture with an extended break at any stop, hitching a ride with the next bus. Rates from about \$1,200 per person. flyingkiwi.com — TJ

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Cruise the Galápagos

Snorkeling with penguins and gazing into the eyes of a dusty land tortoise that may have once blinked at Darwin are only a few of the daily wonders that unfold among the lava-stone, cactus-prickled Galápagos Islands.

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To protect these timeless experiences, **Ecoventura**, an Ecuadorian expedition-cruise company, has

become a certified member of Rainforest Alliance's Smart Voyager program, which involves meeting strict requirements for low energy consumption, water conservation and recycling. Recently, Ecoventura partnered with the World Wildlife Fund to create the Galápagos Marine Biodiversity Fund, which grants local students scholarships to study tourism and natural-resource management so Darwin's wonderful "laboratory" will continue to educate future generations of environmentalists. Seven-night trips from \$2,450 per person for a double cabin. ecoventura.com — JD



PRACTICE THE ART OF POTLATCH

23 On Quadra Island, just off Vancouver Island's central east coast, pay tribute to the Kwakwakawakw people at the **Nuyumbalees Cultural Centre**, which brings to life their sacred potlatch (gift-giving, feasting and dancing) ceremony. Exhibits include pieces from a priceless collection of more than 400 original potlatch artifacts, including whistles, long-beaked bird masks, cedar-bark skirts and wristlets. The artifacts were seized after the Canadian government banned the potlatch in 1885 and were returned in 1979. Admission from \$15. [250-285-3733](tel:250-285-3733)

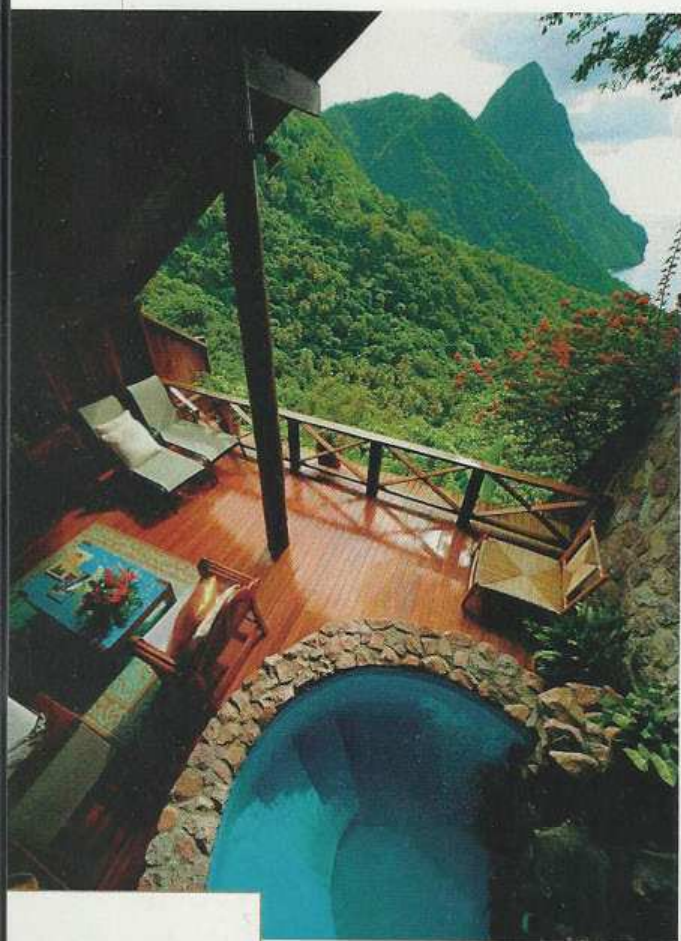
24 Choose a four-night summer cruise with **MotherShip Adventures** for an up-close experience of First Nations culture with Lillian Hunt, a Namgis tribe member, as your cultural interpreter. Be one of only 10 guests to sail the wilderness waters near her ancestral home on northeastern Vancouver Island aboard the 22-passenger classic wooden yacht, *Columbia III*. You'll visit ancient First Nation sites, including beaches with clam-shell middens and a century-old burial ground guarded by mortuary totems. From \$1,690 per person. mothershipadventures.com

25 This is no ordinary canoe slicing through the waves of Clayoquot Sound on the west coast of Vancouver Island. The wolf-head prow created by master canoe-carver Joe Martin reflects the tradition passed down by his late father, a Tla-o-qui-aht tribal chief. Your **Tla-ook Cultural Adventures** guide will likely be one of Joe's daughters, Tsimka or Gisele. Gisele also founded a nonprofit society which takes First Nations children into their traditional territories to learn the outdoor skills of their ancestors. Rates from \$44. tlaook.com — JANICE MUCALOV

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CLEAN UP YOUR ACT There's no mistaking where you are when dining on the beach at the Pirates' Nest. This all-Aruba cultural feast includes native fare accompanied by local music as a local historian strolls past, regaling diners with folklore and stories of the island's heritage. This weekly event at **Bucuti Beach Resort** is just one example of your host's dedication to the local culture and environment. Owner Ewald Biemans is the island's tireless advocate for sustainable tourism through programs like Turtugaruba, which protects sea turtle nests and hatchlings. At Sponsor-a-Mile, a monthly beach clean-up, you can work on your tan while volunteering alongside hotel staff to keep the coast clear. At the resort, everything from the front desk to the beach bar to the pirate-themed restaurant follows Biemans' sustainable philosophy, including solar-heated water, extensive energy-saving strategies and a strict recycling program. The result has been six straight years of Green Globe-certification, a history worth sharing. From \$210. bucuti.com — BOB FRIEL





27

Forego Four Walls

St. Lucia's world-famous Pitons remain a constant, awe-inspiring presence as you pad around your romantic, open-air, three-walled suite at **Ladera**. The

entire Green Globe-certified resort, built with local wood and stone, seamlessly melds with the mountain forest. Solar water heaters, organic linens, wildlife-friendly lighting and a restaurant with a locally sourced menu all ensure that Ladera's footprint on the environment remains minimal. Even spoiling yourself with a treasure from the boutique is guilt-free, as a portion of each purchase goes to the Good Works Fund, one of Ladera's community-outreach programs. The resort also gives to food charities, supports a local school and an old-age home, and assists staff members with their children's educations.

Rates from \$310. ladera.com — BOB FRIEL

28

MONEY TALKS

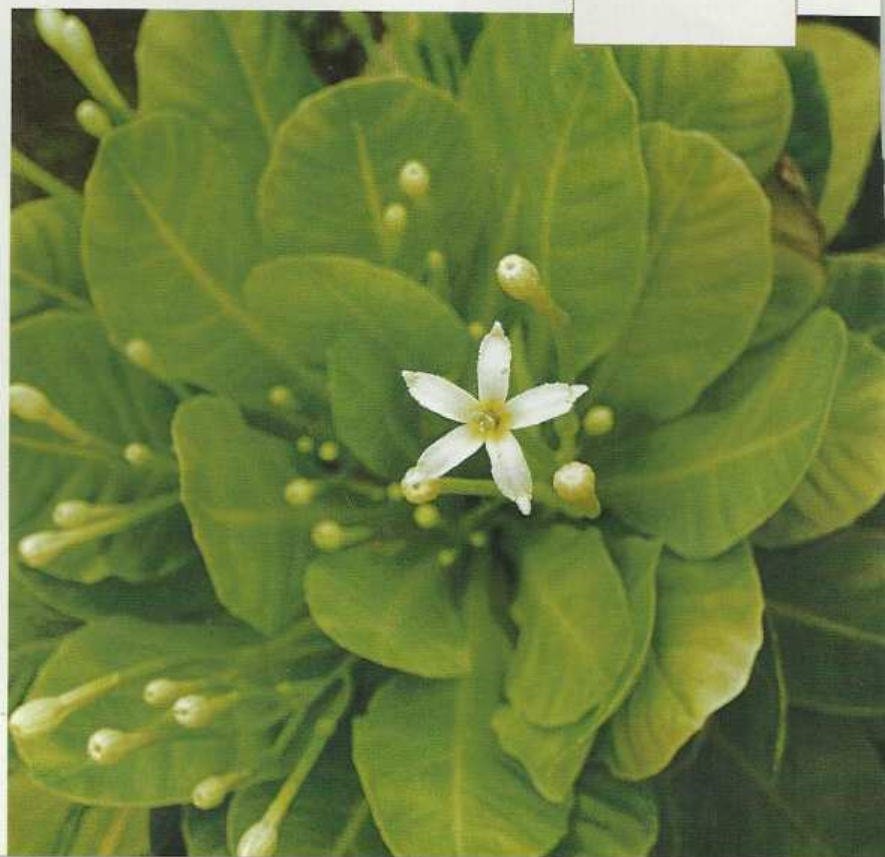
Ethical Traveler, which grew out of the San Francisco-based Earth Island Institute, uses the economic power of travelers (or "accidental ambassadors") to protect the environment and human rights in the countries they visit. The grassroots website offers guidelines for ethical travel, including how to bargain fairly with local vendors and how to spend your dollars in ways that benefit the local economy. ethicaltraveler.org — RG

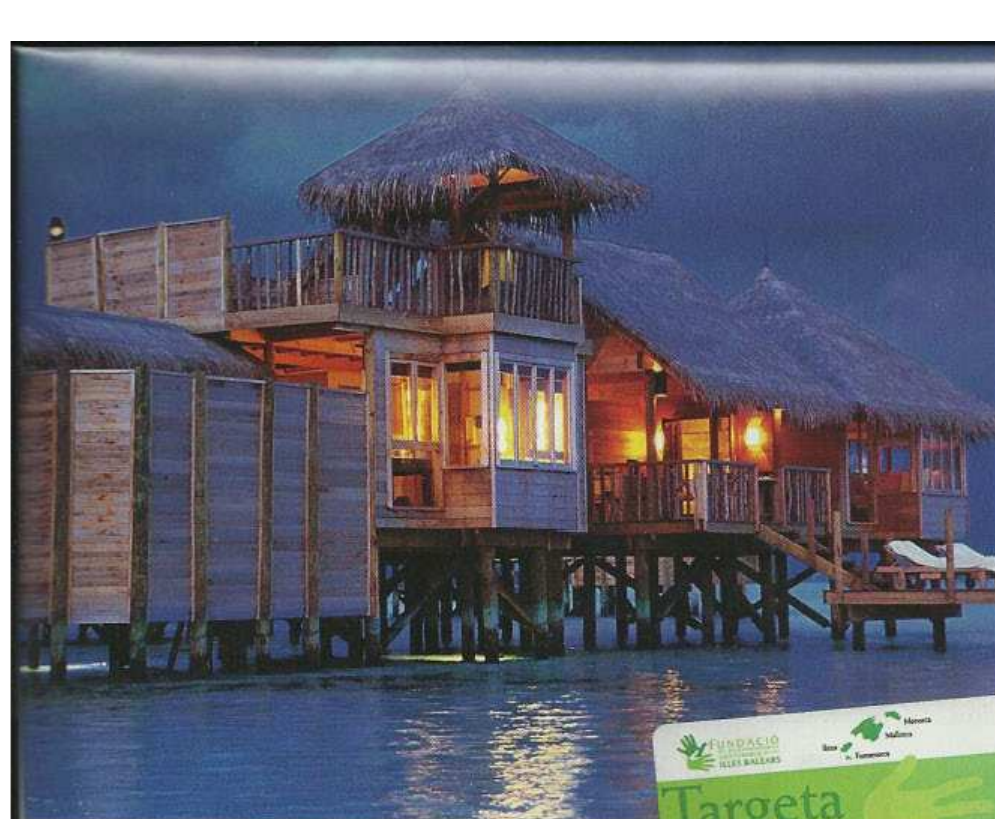


Combat Invaders

For its long-standing effort to perpetuate Hawaiian culture, **Limahuli Garden and Preserve** on Kauai was awarded top honors this year by Keep It Hawaii, the Hawaii Tourism Authority's statewide recognition program. A branch of the statewide National Tropical Botanical Garden, Limahuli has undertaken projects that include restoring lava-rock taro terraces (some of which date back 700 to 1,000 years), cultivating ancient varieties of taro, rappelling down cliffs to hand-pollinate the rare *alula* plant and rediscovering and propagating *kokio keokeo*, a fragrant, native white hibiscus that was once believed extinct. Tour the garden at the foot of Mount Makana to see examples of Limahuli's work, or take in one of the special lei-making workshops. You must be a member in order to participate in the workshop. Admission from \$15. ntbg.org — KSR

29





30 Stay Over Water

Climate change is a serious issue in the Maldives, where rising sea levels and coastal erosion in the Indian Ocean could erase most of this low archipelago within 100 years. **Soneva Gili & Six Senses Spa**, an over-water complex on Lankanfushi Island, is combating global warming through a series of initiatives that include using fuel-efficient motors on all boats and electric-powered golf carts; planting several thousand native trees to prevent wave erosion; reducing energy consumption through a stringent recycling program; and composting organic waste. The resort even invites local children out for field trips, teaching them about conservation so they can continue the quest to preserve their island. Rates from \$1,055 per night. sixsenses.com — JD



31

GET THE CARD

Can a round of golf help the environment? On Spain's Balearic Islands it might. Here, being green is as easy as exploring Pollença's Roman ruins; touring Frederick Chopin's one-time winter home, the Valldemossa monastery; listening to an underground concert in Hams Caves; or teeing off at Canyamel Golf, a rolling course overlooking the Mediterranean. That's because these and 1,000-plus other venues across Mallorca, Menorca, Ibiza and Formentera offer perks (like discounts of up to 50 percent) to holders of the government-sponsored **Targeta Verda**, or "green card." The dual aim of the card, sold at hotels and tourist offices for \$14 and valid for 15 days, is to promote local businesses while funding conservation efforts. targetaverda.com — SARAH ANDREWS

Go to the Beach

Thirty-five years ago, the owners of **Puntacana Resort & Club** recognized the impact their 15,000-acre Dominican Republic property would have on local people and the environment. So after building a school for their employees' children, they formed the Puntacana Ecological Foundation. Its offshoot, the Center for Sustainability and Biodiversity, partners with major U.S. universities on issues facing the island, such as ocean-water quality, coral-reef restoration and threatened species. The center hosts professors and leading researchers from around the world so they can share the latest in biodiversity research. See some of the natural beauty they're fighting to preserve at Puntacana's 1,500-acre Indigenous Eyes Ecological Park, where 11 lagoons peek out from the lowland tropical forest. Rates from \$170. puntacana.com — BOB FRIEL

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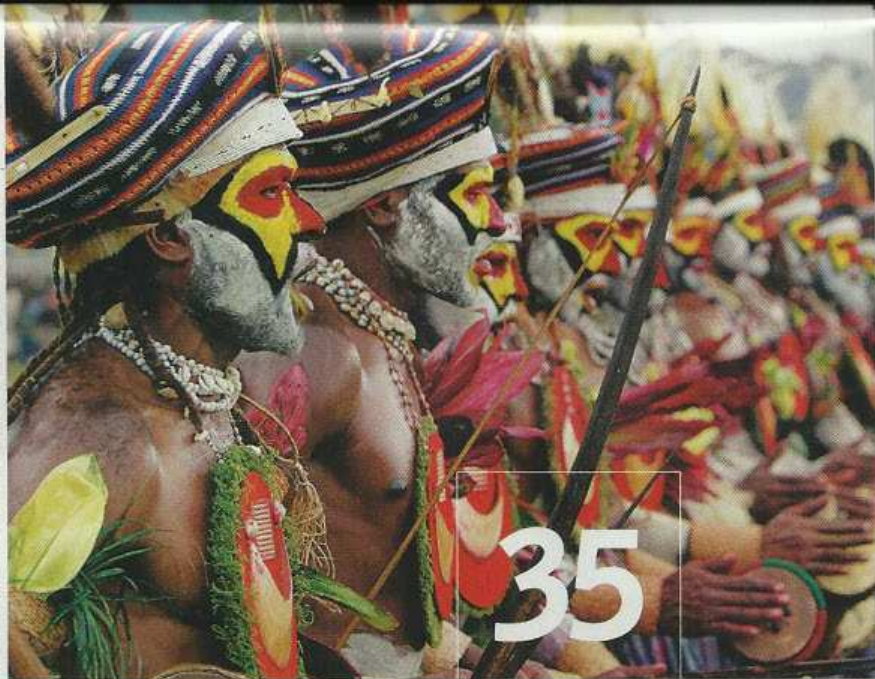


Relax in Harmony

"Our goal is to teach by example," says Mike Hartman, co-founder of **Tiamo Resorts** on remote Andros Island in the Bahamas. Hidden within a green tangle of wild sea grapes, mangroves and coconut palms that flourish on the island are 11 perfect examples of how a resort can effectively combine eco-sensitivity with luxury. Tiamo's beachfront bungalows integrate solar power and composting toilets among many other eco-friendly elements. Each bungalow also has a wraparound porch, open-air shower and beachy-chic furnishings. To help guests explore the bonefish flats or inland blue holes, the resort's "nature concierges" act as guides. "Their job is to help integrate guests into Andros," Hartman explained. "Each concierge also must

leave a legacy. One established a bottle-recycling program at the school." An example worth following. Rates from \$660 are nearly all-inclusive. tiamoresorts.com — BRENDA FINE

33



35

Join a Tribe

In Watam Village, on Papua New Guinea's Sepik River, your hosts may greet you while wearing feathered headdresses and grass skirts. After, they'll share ancestral dances and show you how to prepare sago, a starchy food from the sago palm. The Watam culture thrives, thanks in part to their relationship with Australian-based **Orion Expedition Cruises**. The company brings clothing, equipment and medical assistance along with their culturally curious tour groups, and landing fees paid by Orion support community development initiatives, such as purchasing school materials and agricultural supplies. Another plus, Orion's boutique-style ship, your home base, is rigged to be environmentally friendly, recycling paper and water and using specially designed engines that promote energy efficiency. Cruises from \$5,465. orioncruises.com.au — JENNIFER BALJKO



34

WALK THE WALK

Having already donated \$29 million in cash and in-kind donations to tackle mammoth environmental issues like protecting the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, outdoor-gear manufacturer **Patagonia** could be forgiven for ignoring the lowly foot. But their new Lemon Grass sandal for women — a two-strap Greek-style flip-flop — is a 12-ounce masterpiece of eco-art. The leather straps come from environmentally sensitive tanneries, the midsole contains coconut fiber and latex from *hevea* tree milk, and the sole is 70 percent all-natural latex. \$80. patagonia.com — JD

SMELL THE JAVA

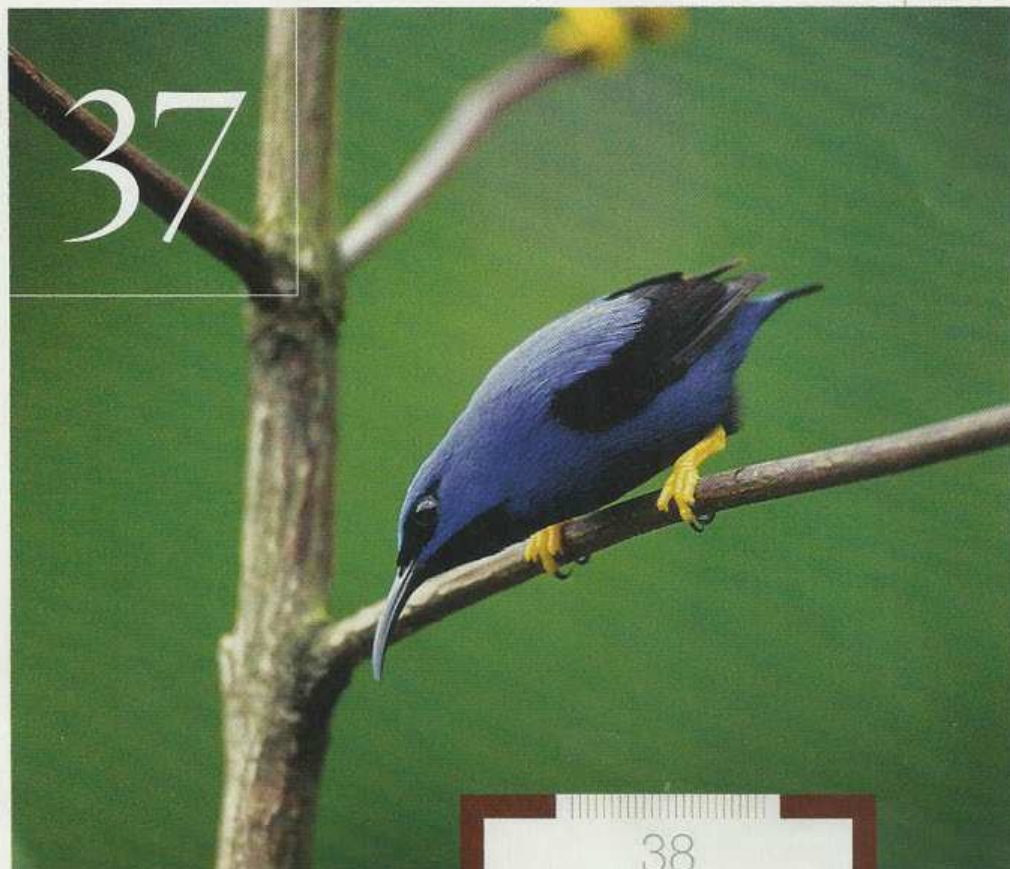
☐ **Coffees of Hawaii** donates one percent of its revenues to local and environmental nonprofits like Surfrider Foundation and The Nature Conservancy. But you can do more than just buy its coffee to help out: Tour the 500-acre Molokai plantation in Kualapuu in a mule-drawn wagon and learn about their pioneering method of harvesting overripe fruit, ordinarily considered waste. During the October-through-February season, watch as dried beans are husked and polished, and breathe in the aroma of the roasting room. Then head to the cupping room,

where you'll finally get to sample coffees. Mule Drawn Wagon Tours from \$35. coffeesofhawaii.com — KSR

36



37



☐ **Bird Watch**

Drink tea on the veranda of the **Asa Wright Nature Centre & Lodge** as jewel-colored hummingbirds buzz around bird feeders and the loud peal of the bearded bellbird repeats through the air. You may spot up to 160 bird species while staying at the center, which occupies more than 1,500 acres of forest and rainforest high up in the Arima and Aripo Valleys of Trinidad's Northern Range. Accommodation fees paid to this nonprofit conservation and education trust help preserve the valley's habitat and bird life, in particular, an important breeding colony of oilbirds, the world's only nocturnal, fruit-eating bird. Fees also support scientists studying at the center's research station; their work has resulted in over 306 published studies in neotropical biology. Rates from \$280, including all meals. asawright.org — JM

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PEOPLE WATCH

Through shamanistic ceremonies, the Mentawai people who live on the island chain of the same name off Sumatra, Indonesia, restore harmony between humans and nature. Travel company **Mentawai Adventure** also seeks this harmony in their eco-minded trips, developed together with the locals. Through tourism and employment, the company provides a sustainable means for the Mentawai to support their communities and keep cultural traditions alive. On 12-day treks to traditional villages, a tattooed medicine man might show you how to hunt monkey, deer and wild boar with poison arrows. Later you'll learn how to gather the pulp of the sago tree, the village's main food source. If you're lucky, you'll witness shamans performing a sacred ceremony that will reestablish peace and harmony in the jungle after hunting — and perhaps in you, too. Twelve-day treks from \$1,560 per person. mentawaiadventure.com — JP





Aerial view of Jean-Michel Cousteau Fiji Islands Resort. Opposite, from left: glass bottom boat; a *bure* at the resort; Jean-Michel Cousteau; on the reef; on-site organic gardening.



Plunge Into the Depths

A Fiji resort honors the Cousteau family legacy of conservation.



→ WITH A NAME LIKE THE **Jean-Michel Cousteau Fiji Islands Resort**, it seems natural that this 25-cottage haven on Vanua Levu has long been a leader in sustainable tourism. After all, the Cousteaus have been synonymous with conservation since the mid-20th century, when Jean-Michel's father, ocean explorer Jacques-Yves Cousteau, pioneered scuba diving and taught the world about the importance of protecting the marine environment. At the resort, the palm-thatched, fan-cooled *bures* (Fiji-style cottages) that gaze out at Savusavu Bay were constructed with plantation-harvested timbers. Solar energy provides the hot water, and wastewater flushed through a coconut-husk filter irrigates the resort's organic vegetable gardens. Even the pools, where you can practice your scuba-diving techniques or cool off with your kids, are treated with special saltwater chlorinators. All of these practices prevent contaminated runoff into Savusavu Bay, a scuba-diving mecca and the reputed soft-coral capital of the world.

The resort is also a leader in environmental education. A full-time marine biologist conducts research in the marine-protected area immediately adjacent to the resort, educates guests about marine ecology and visits nearby villages and schools to help the local Fijians — most of whom are subsistence fishermen and farmers — understand the economic benefits of a healthy reef system. The resort also collects a usage fee from divers and uses the revenue to fund reef protection programs and a scholarship fund for village children.

Participating in a rousing war dance and downing coconut cupfuls of kava with the friendliest people in the Pacific are activities as important as admiring the scarlet sea fans and learning about conservation.

In an effort to build strong community relationships, all but three of the more than 200 employees are Fijians. Free, specialized healthcare is regularly provided to villages through a partnership with the nonprofit Savusavu Community Foundation. The resort flies in doctors who have performed over 1,400 eye surgeries, and annual dental clinics have provided nearly 4,000 children with fluoride treatments.

Community involvement is also an integral part of the guest experience. Niумаia Kavika, a Fijian medicine man and the resort's cultural guide, offers guests a chance to visit a local village and learn about traditional life and customs. The tour was developed in conjunction with the villagers themselves as a means of highlighting and preserving their culture; it also brings income directly into the community through tour fees and craft purchases.

So even if you're a die-hard diver, plan to stash your mask and fins at least one day during your stay. Participating in a rousing war dance and downing coconut cupfuls of mind-numbing kava alongside some of the friendliest people in the Pacific is just as important at

the Jean-Michel Cousteau Fiji Islands Resort as admiring the scarlet sea fans and learning about the mangroves' role in reef conservation. "Sure, we're an eco-resort," says Greg Taylor, who together with his wife, Karen, manages the resort. "But when Sandra Bullock and Robert Redford come down here, they come for the human experience. They come to connect with the Fijians." Rates from \$590. fijiresort.com — JD

WEED A VOLCANO

Sure, you'll crawl through lava tubes, cross steam vents, peer over the edge of a half-mile crater and drive through lava fields resembling giant slabs of fudge brownies. But when you tour the Big Island's Hawaii Volcanoes National Park on **Hawaii Forest & Trail's** Kilauea Volcano Adventure, you'll also help the eco-tour company preserve a special plot of land by yanking out invasive *kahili* ginger. The quick-growing foreign plant has beautiful yellow blossoms, but it chokes out *ohia* saplings (in the myrtle family), tree ferns and other native Hawaiian varieties in the park, which is designated a UNESCO biosphere reserve. Removing the ginger helps prevent threatened indigenous species from becoming extinct. Full-day tours including breakfast, lunch and all hiking gear from \$155. hawaii-forest.com — JM

