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SOUTH AFRICA

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The more I travel, the more convinced I am...that travel should question, not confirm. It should excite, not relax,' says AA Gill, one of our favourite travel writers and a contributor in this issue. We couldn't agree more.

And so this issue is dedicated to travel in its truest sense – because we believe that whether you're hiring a villa in Mauritius or exploring New York, to know a place well, you need to work a little hard. That is, to walk its streets, talk to the locals and soak up the traditions, culture, cuisine and routines that give it a sense of place. And, to prove it, we've given you inspiration to explore places as diverse as the Wild Coast and the Fish River Canyon through to London and Venice, using the most inexpensive (and green) transport of all: your feet.

Long before green was fashionable, the National Geographic Society's position on sustainability was clear: to travel is wonderful but to preserve is critical. 'The world's best historic places' – our second survey of world destinations on page 80 – is a signature *Traveller* feature. In this issue, 280 experts offered their passion and insight to help us rate some of the world's most historic places. Which places are preserving their futures? Which are squandering their tomorrow's for short-term gain? As always, we celebrate the praiseworthy, nudge those that can do better, and help you make informed choices on where to go.

Kemyn

VILLA L'ILOT

Accessible only via a wooden pontoon bridge, Villa L'Ilot is a super-private island hideaway that gives new meaning to the term idyllic





Mauritian Villa Rentals

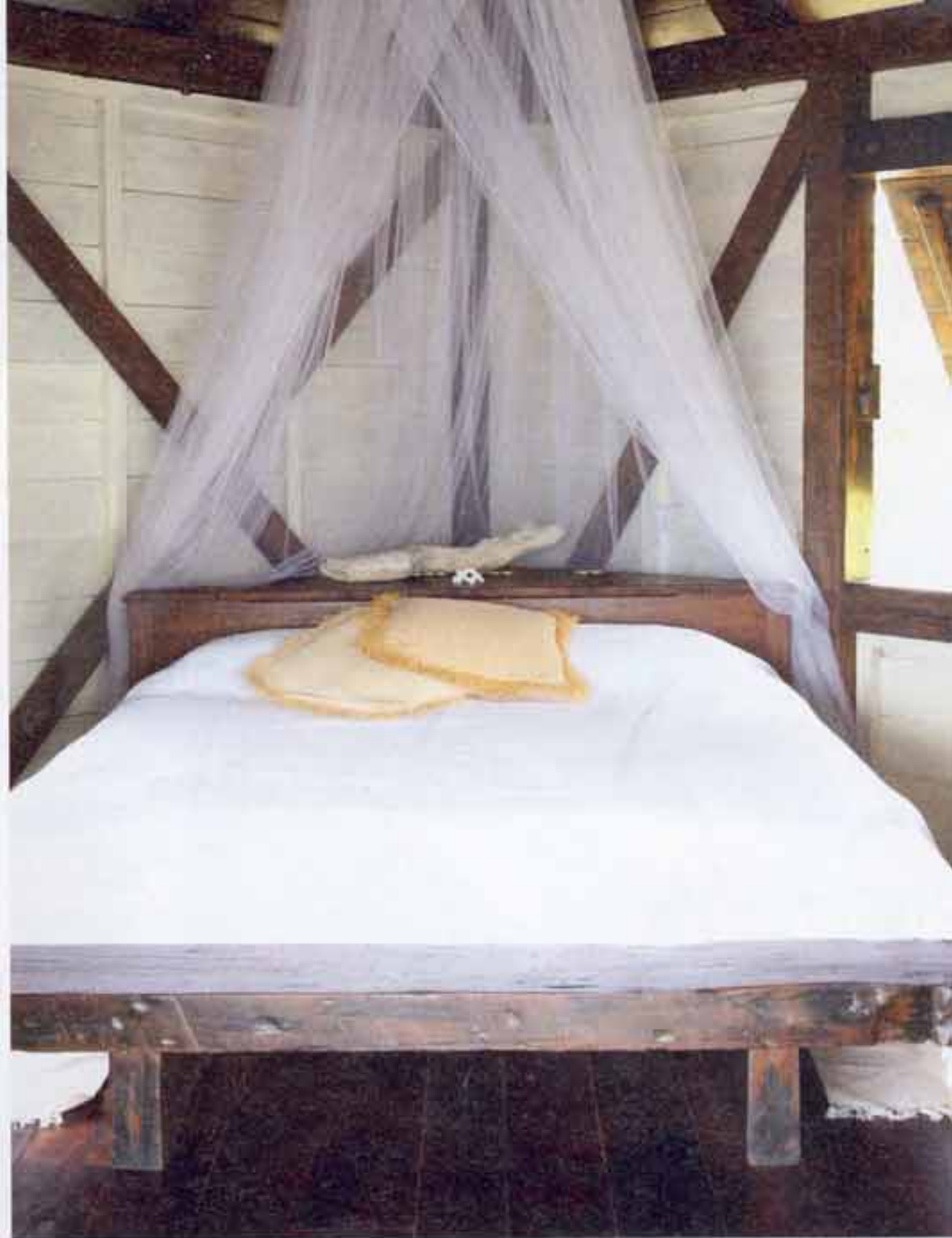
A PACKAGE TOUR OR HOTEL STAY IS JUST ONE WAY TO EXPERIENCE THE WONDERS OF THIS INDIAN OCEAN ISLAND. BUT IF YOU'RE AFTER A MORE AUTHENTIC, PERSONAL AND (DARE WE SAY) ECONOMICAL HOLIDAY, THEN OPTING FOR A SERVICED MAURITIAN VILLA (THAT CAN COME IN UNDER THE PRICE OF A HOTEL ROOM) WILL DELIVER THE HOLIDAY OF YOUR DREAMS! WE GIVE YOU OUR TOP 10 CHOICES...

WORDS PHOEBE BELMONT AND LINDA BURBANK
PHOTOGRAPHS WARREN HEATH PRODUCTION LUANNE TOMS



ISLAND VILLA

With wraparound sea views, your own private tidal pool and sandbanks at low tide (a rarity in Mauritius), Villa L'Ilot is a down-to-earth yet luxurious island escape. **OPPOSITE** Built onto a rocky promontory, Bayview Villa on the west coast of the island can sleep 10 people and comes with a fabulous pool and entertaining deck.



hasn't dreamt of breaking out on their own and renting a villa in Mauritius? This beautiful island is proliferated with the weekend homes of Franco-Mauritians who live in the north or the highlands during the week and decamp on weekends and holidays to the west and east coasts. A drive along any of the island's coastal roads will reveal these homes behind high walls and down long, gated driveways. Ranging from simple, three-bedroom 'shacks' in prime beachfront positions to luxurious villas with fleets of staff and rim-flow pools – we've compiled a list of villas across a range of price, position, taste, activity and luxe levels to ensure there is a rental to suit every taste and need.

VILLA L'ILOT/ISLAND VILLA (EAST COAST)

This incredible wood-and-stone house sits on its own island and is reachable only by a private narrow causeway road. The design of the house makes full use of its wraparound sea views with a deep, covered verandah that runs the width of the house and looks out onto the coral reef beyond it. There are three double rooms (two en-suite) with a fourth room that can sleep up to three kids in bunk beds and a baby bed, plus a communal bathroom. You'll find it hard to leave L'Ilot with its instant access to warm water, coral reefs and azure water.

Closest town Rivier du Rempart.

Sleeps Nine, plus a baby.

Child-friendly? Yes, but as the house is surrounded by water, parental supervision at all times is strongly advised.

Activities Kite surfing and diving.

Negatives The prohibitive price.

Cost €750, about R9 900, to €1140, about R15 000 per day, including a cleaner and a cook six days a week.

Contact Villas De Maitre 0044 1296 334138, www.villasdemaitre.com, resa@villasdemaitre.com.

BAYVIEW VILLA (WEST COAST)

This on-beach, private villa on a rocky promontory offers three options. The pumpkin-coloured main house has three bedrooms, (two double en suites, one twin with separate shower) and a kitchen; plus a one-bedroom, en-suite cottage at the back of the property and a 'honeymoon suite' on the edge of the pool deck looking out to sea. The generous pool and entertaining area makes this great for large groups, and