

A Special Supplement to **Bridal Guide**

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2012

# HONEYMOON

## & Destination Wedding Guide

### CHEAP & CHIC

- Mexico's Sexiest Beach Scenes
- Panama: The Hot New Wedding Spot
- The Best Deals in the Caribbean

A CELEB WEDDING IN TEXAS!  
PG 80

**Fly Right**  
Six Easy Packing Tips

**\* Exclusive!**  
Tour Miami with Top Chef José Andrés

**Isles of Romance**  
Europe's Most Enticing Destinations

**INTO THE WILD**  
OUR FAVORITE SAFARIS FROM AFRICA TO ANTIGUA

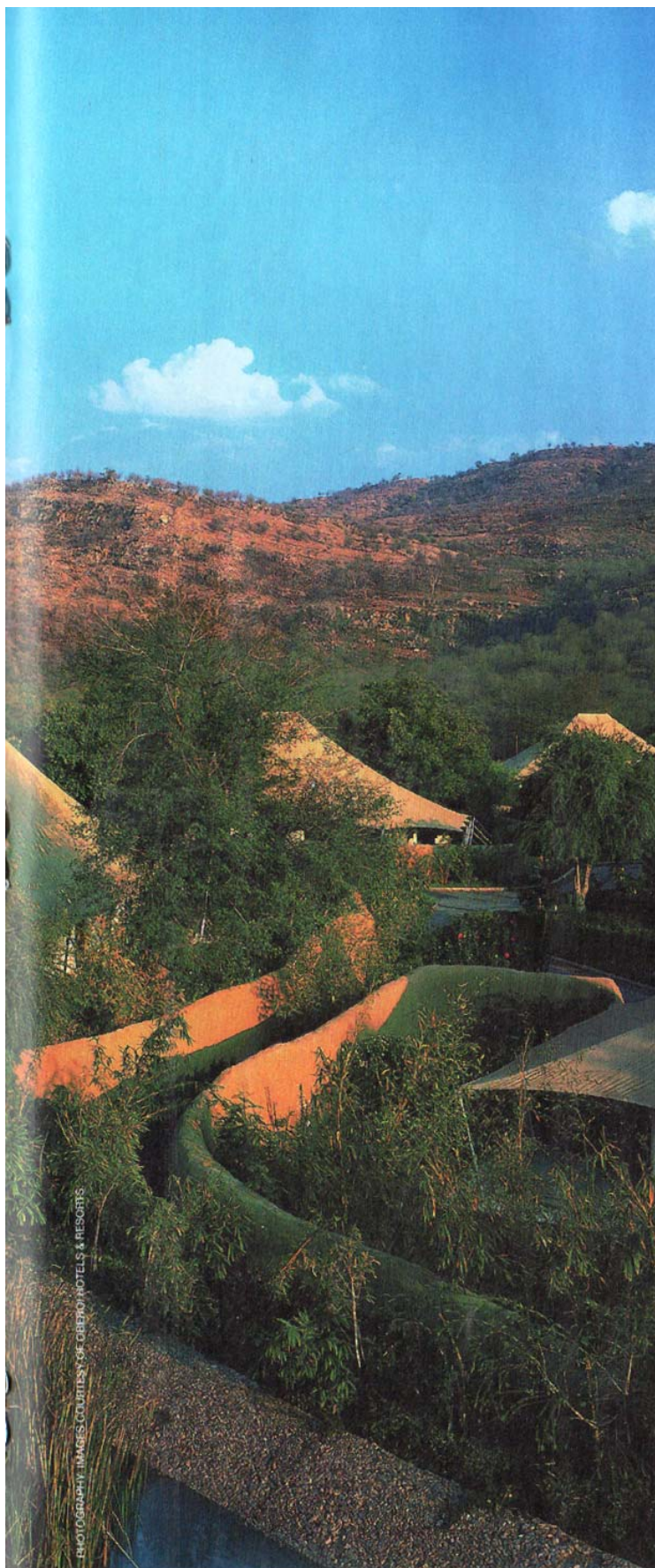
WORLDWIDE

# INTO THE WILD

SAFARI GETAWAYS FROM AFRICA TO ANTIGUA OFFER SPECTACULAR OPPORTUNITIES TO SEE THE WORLD LIKE NEVER BEFORE.



India's posh Oberoi  
Vanyavilas.

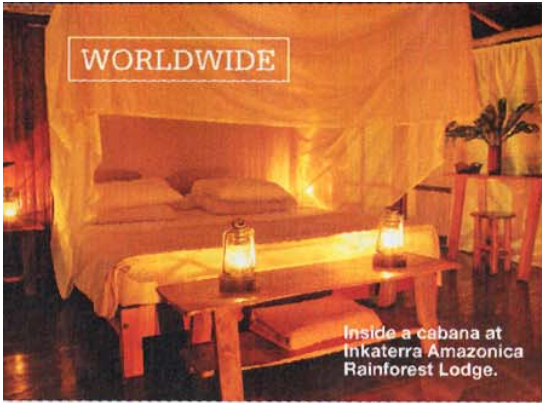


PHOTOGRAPHY: IMAGES COURTESY OF OBEROI HOTELS & RESORTS

There is something so inherently **romantic** about the idea of a **safari**. Perhaps it is the tented accommodations, or the feeling of being in a place where life began, but the **experience** of viewing **wildlife** up close invokes a **spark** that is unlike any other honeymoon experience. And while **Africa** gets all the praise as the mecca of safari **adventures**, there are more places around the world that offer **exciting** opportunities to spy never-seen-before creatures. Here, we **trek across the globe** to find the best places to walk on the wild side.

### INDIA

Two colorfully painted elephants named Laxmi and Mala will greet you as you check into **The Oberoi Vanyavilas**, an award-winning luxury tented resort in India's royal Rajasthan district in the northern part of this fascinating country. Despite the pachyderm welcome, though, the resort's setting next to the Ranthambore National Park—a former Maharaja hunting ground famous for its diurnal tigers—makes safaris here all about the majestic big cat (with some crocs, deer, hyena, leopards and rare birds along for the ride). Guests typically venture out on two game drives a day: the first at around 5:45 a.m. (after a light snack of biscuits and tea), then another at 2:30 p.m. In between, you'll enjoy gourmet meals at the flower-filled resort, plus activities like herb garden tours and fantastic cooking classes with the chef and pampering treatments in the three spa tents. Of course, relaxing by the pool in your freestanding bathtub or on your private patio as peacocks coo nearby is another popular option. Unlike some of the Big Five safari spots around the world, the vibe here is very private—you'll rarely find several jeeps chasing after the same tiger, for example—and the facilities are more regal than rustic, with an on-site piano bar, nightly fire pits and flat-screen TVs and WiFi in the guest tents. Since the National Park limits the number of jeeps allowed in each day, the resort suggests that guests book their two daily drives →



WORLDWIDE

Inside a cabana at Inkaterra Amazonica Rainforest Lodge.



A Peruvian butterfly.



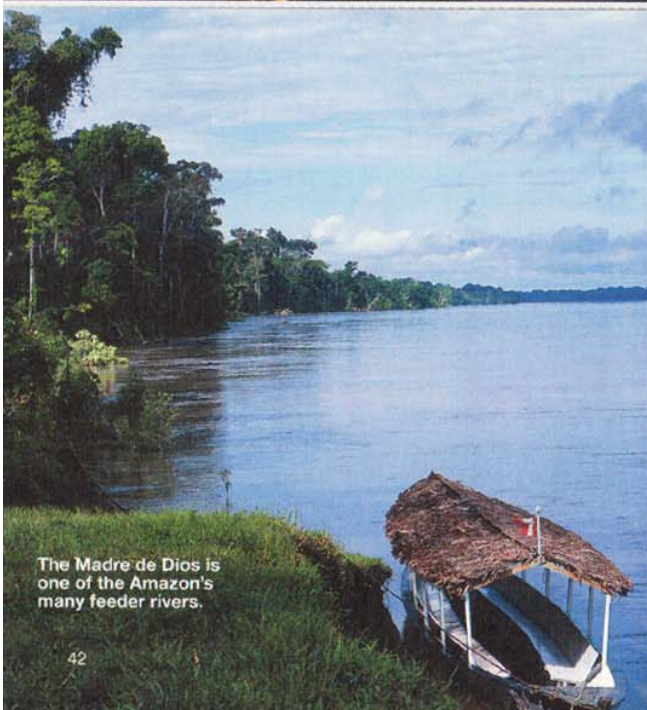
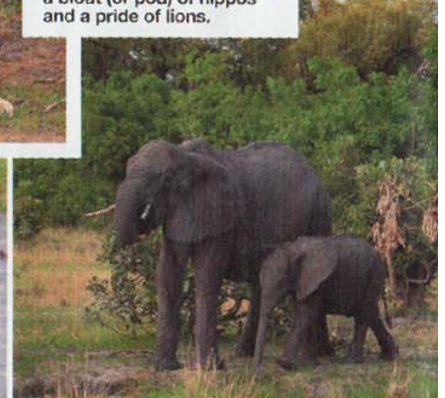
One of many Amazonian bird species.



Botswana's animals have different names for their groups. A tower (or herd) of giraffes, a herd of elephants, a bloat (or pod) of hippos and a pride of lions.



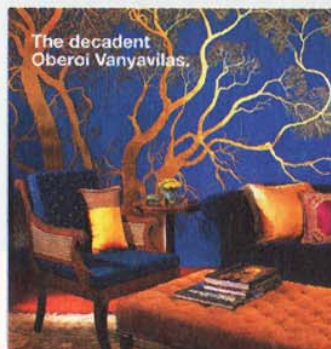
All aboard, Aqua Expeditions.



The Madre de Dios is one of the Amazon's many feeder rivers.



Inkaterra Amazonica's main lodge.



The decadent Oberoi Vanyavilas.



Antigua's sugar sands.

in advance. Private couples' jungles ride are available for an extra fee (room rates start at about \$890 a night; oberoihotels.com). —*Veronica Mullen*

## PERU

Though rarely billed as official safaris, the wildlife-viewing ops in the Peruvian Amazon rival any game drive in the world—so otherworldly are the creatures (from peek-a-boo pink dolphins to mob-forming macaws to anacondas the length of the average wedding aisle runner). And two local lodging options are sufficiently swank that you'll never forget you're on your honeymoon.

The first is **Inkaterra Reserva Amazonica Rainforest Lodge**, an easy-access gateway to the wildlife-crammed Tambopata National Reserve. Upon arrival, a staffer will help you devise the best possible lineup for your tastes and time considerations. One offering you shouldn't miss is the Canopy Walkway: a series of towers, bridges and platforms that takes you through the toucan- and parrot-populated treetops and gives new meaning to *bird's-eye view*. For a natural high of a less literal sort, take the half-day trip to Lake Sandoval—home to many a hoatzin (a winged mini-dinosaur with a mohawk and blue eyes), howler monkeys and macaws. You may also have run-ins (from a respectful distance) with giant river otters, caimans (crocodile-like creatures) and anacondas. And though honeymooners wouldn't be faulted for wanting to take full advantage of their cabana after dark, consider going on at least one excursion at night, when you'll see a whole new cast of characters—especially those of the amphibious variety.

Among the four cabana styles on offer, options include screened-in porches with hammocks, ceiling fans, warm-water showers and low-impact electricity. Vying for the title of most eco-romantic are the Tambopata Suites (with private plunge pool, terrace and outdoor shower) and the Canopy Tree House (the most secluded place to stay—on a 90-foot-high platform alongside the aforementioned Canopy Walkway). As for the fresh, local meals—they begin at 5 a.m. daily in the interest of early-bird excursions—though any late riser (or *Homo Newlywedus*, in rainforest taxonomy terms) can catch breakfast until 10 (room rates start at \$492 per person and include three nights accommodations, meals, round-trip transfers, guides and most excursions; inkaterra.com).

The second, and even swankier, way to take in the Peruvian wildlife is by boat—specifically, aboard an **Aqua Expeditions** cruise into the pristine Pacaya Samiria Reserve. Departing from Iquitos (a short flight from the capital Lima), the 12-suite M/V *Aqua* and 16-suite M/V *Aria* are packed with amenities (oversized lounge chairs, high thread-count linens, luxury toiletries and massive picture windows, among others). But the most important feature is arguably the dinghy that takes you on your daily excursions. As you motor ever deeper into the surrounding waterways keep your eyes peeled for the area's most elusive residents. Amazingly, whether the pink dolphins that seem loath to flash more than a dorsal fin, or the sloths that climb treetops in super-slow-motion as if to avoid detection or the anacondas that lurk beneath the water lilies, no creature will go too long without being spotted by your

Arrayed along the **edge of a forest**, Khwai River Lodge's elevated, thatch-roofed **tents** let you survey the Moremi Wildlife Reserve: a massive unfenced swath that allows for the free movement of the **Big Five**.

guide. Don't be surprised, however, if during the course of the cruise, you develop expert eyes yourselves. Of course, when massive, multiple flocks of birds are sharing the waterways with you—as tends to happen in the early morning and evening—you can be the least observant spotter in the history of the Amazon and still get a total eye feast (room rates start at \$2,550 per person for the three-night cruise and include all meals and excursions and transfers aquaexpeditions.com). —*Abbie Kozolchyk*

## BOTSWANA

While you've probably encountered some runway traffic at one point or another, chances are you've never looked out the window to find that giraffes were the cause. But there's a first time for everything, and a giraffe-filled airstrip is just the intro to the firsts you'll likely experience in Botswana's Okavango Delta—one of the planet's largest and most wildlife-rich inland water systems.

Once you touch down in Maun, the full-sized jets that got you there (generally, via Johannesburg) will become a thing of the past, and station wagon-sized bush planes your new ride. Or at least the ride that shuttles you between remote African lodges—**Orient Express Khwai River Lodge** and **Orient Express Eagle Island Camp** being two of the most romantic (think four-poster beds draped in the requisite, gauzy mosquito netting, candlelit dinners on private decks and total quiet, with the exception of some very chatty hippos).

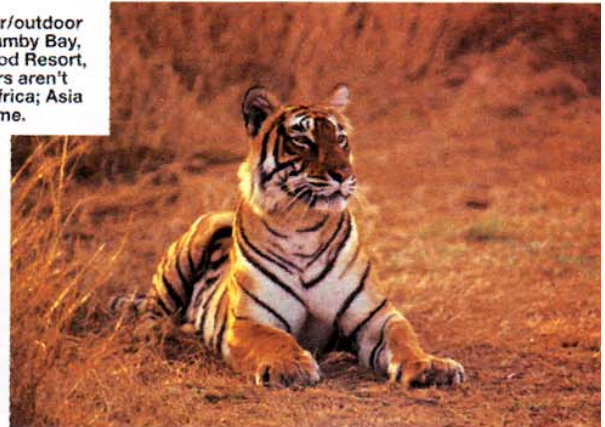
Arrayed along the edge of a forest, Khwai River Lodge's elevated, thatch-roofed tents let you survey the floodplains of the Moremi Wildlife Reserve: a massive, unfenced swath that allows for the free movement of the Big Five—lion, leopard, elephant, buffalo and rhino—as well as the copious numbers of hippos in the area.

However lovely the wildlife-gazing may be from your hammock though, the twice-daily game drives provide the best animal action around. True, you'll need to get up obscenely early for the first one, but the pre-breakfast delivery of fresh pastries and coffee (and the hours you'll have to lounge in the afternoon) go a long way toward offsetting the 5- to 6 a.m. wakeup knock. Bouncing around the delta's dirt paths in your open 4x4, you have excellent chances of seeing not only the aforementioned →

PHOTOGRAPHY: CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT, INKATERRA; ABBIE KOZOLCHYK; (4), INKATERRA; COURTESY OF JIMBY BAY; IMAGES COURTESY OF OBEROI HOTELS & RESORTS; INKATERRA; AQUA EXPEDITIONS; INKATERRA.



LEFT: Indoor/outdoor living at Jumby Bay, A Rosewood Resort, RIGHT: Tigers aren't found in Africa; Asia is their home.



marquee creatures—often in large numbers—but the many varieties of antelope and birds that populate the area, as well as a multitude of giraffes.

Though Eagle Island Camp features some of the same characters—most notably, loads of hippos—it does so in a different context: The camp is totally, gloriously water-locked. Occupying secluded Xaxaba island and overlooking a flora- and fauna-filled lagoon, the place is best experienced on foot or by traditional *makoro* (canoe). Unless, of course, you hire an open-sided helicopter to zip you around the area. While the chopper's expansive, shimmering, animal-dotted views are undeniably amazing, their gorgeousness is rivaled by any given sunset you take in from the lodge's lounge. When you're sitting at the Fish Eagle Bar—on its own little island just off the main camp—and the late afternoon light hits the lilac-breasted rollers (birds) and malachite kingfishers just so, you'll think you've died and gone to honeymoon heaven (room rates start at about \$1,900 a night and include game drives, meals, alcoholic beverages, laundry service, park fees, and more; [orient-express.com](http://orient-express.com)). —AK

## ANTIGUA

Juggling snorkel gear in one hand and your picnic lunch in the other, you'll slide off the boat knee-deep into the clearest water you've ever seen. As you wade ashore, look down and see how you're scattering schools of fish, like the electric Blue Tangs. Just ahead is the blindingly white sand beach of Great Bird Island, an islet populated by countless wildlife and no humans. Ah, wilderness—Caribbean style.

Great Bird Island is a deserted islet just off the coast of Antigua that offers the adventure of spotting much of the local wildlife. There are exotic red-billed tropic birds, brown pelicans, whistling ducks, frigate birds, lizards and the super-rare Antigua racer, a small and harmless snake found only on the island.

Follow a local guide on a short hike to the summit. It may surprise you how steep the climb is, given how flat the island looks from a distance. The reward is a glorious view of sea and nearby islands. Along the way you'll likely spot lizards sunning themselves, frigate birds soaring overhead and pelicans dive-bombing head-first into the sea for their lunch. The island excursion also leaves plenty of time for snorkeling around the off-shore reef that teems with colorful coral and fish galore, including some surprises like upside-down

At Jumby Bay, A Rosewood Resort, **pick your favorite**: Suite 44 is a bit more **secluded** because it is on a cliff, while 23 has direct access to the **beach**.

jellyfish and even a couple of sea cucumbers. A few lazy fin-kicks bring you back to shore where you can spread out on the beach for a while and then tuck in under some shading seagrapes to enjoy the lunch your hosts at Jumby Bay have packed for you.

**Jumby Bay, A Rosewood Resort**, too, is a private island, but this one is home to people as well as wildlife. Located just off the northeastern coast of Antigua, these 300 acres house a luxe resort, as well as many stunning private villas. While all the rooms on property are sumptuous, the one-bedroom Estate Suites are just a bit more honeymoon ready, offering private touches such as intimate courtyard areas with outdoor garden showers and infinity-edge pools overlooking the sea. Pick your favorite: Suite 44 is a bit more secluded because it's on a cliff, while 23 is steps from the beach.

The property's resident wildlife is also remarkable. The odd-looking sheep you see grazing across the island are direct descendants of those brought here in the 16th century by Spanish settlers. You'll spot plenty of birds here, too from white egrets and blue pelicans to tiny yellow bananaquits, (locally known as sugar birds because they'll try to invade your table to pilfer the sweet stuff).

And over on quiet Pasture Beach, the Jumby Hawksbill Turtle Project continues (2011 marked the 25th anniversary of the privately funded research project). If you're on-island anytime between June and November, you can take an active role in this project by signing up to turtle-watch. Jumby Bay Resort offers cruises to Great Bird Island three days a week (room rates start at \$995 a night and include meals; [rosewoodhotels.com](http://rosewoodhotels.com)). —Brenda Fine ■

PHOTOGRAPHY: (FROM LEFT) COURTESY OF OBEROI HOTELS & RESORTS