

# Hot List

Cox & Kings' Katie Cosstick discovers the season's best new luxury hotels and travel experiences



## 1 Floating above the Atacama

Taking off at sunrise, drift over the lunar landscapes of Chile's Atacama desert and see the spectacular formations from a whole new perspective. The British-made balloons are operated by UK or Australian registered pilots and conform to the highest safety standards. The 45-minute flight is followed by a light champagne breakfast, while the crew pack up the balloon. Stay at the revamped exploratory Atacama hotel, which is reopening in January on the edge of Andes-set San Pedro.



## 2 South India's Arts and Crafts Movement

Known as the cradle of South Indian religion, art and architecture, until now Thanjavur in Tamil Nadu has only been visited by the most discerning Indophiles. Svatma, a restored traditional century-old mansion, is now the city's first luxury hotel. Featuring light airy suites, a yoga room and luxury spa, guests can visit the Unesco-protected Great Living Chola Temples, learn the simple vegetarian home cooking of the region, watch handloom silk weaving and traditional painting, or simply meditate in the relaxing surroundings of the hotel gardens and pool.



## 3 Borneo on the River

Pandaw, who operate on the Mekong and Irrawaddy rivers, are launching a new river cruise in the remote region of Kalimantan – Indonesian Borneo – on the Kapuas river system. With the first departure in February 2017, this will be a truly pioneering expedition into a rarely visited area where the main attraction will be the scenery, wildlife and tribal village life. The rainforest is one of the oldest and most bio-diverse in the world where a plethora of wildlife and bird species can be seen.



**4 Pack Your Trunk**

Built around the trunk of a Jackalberry tree, the new Jackalberry Tented Camp lies in Namibia's Caprivi Strip, a panhandle of land in the country's far north east, close to the border with Botswana. There are just four luxury tents, each with a private shower. From the main deck around the tree there are uninterrupted, 360-degree views over the floodplains and across the river to the woodlands of Botswana. There is an abundance of wildlife to be seen from the camp as well as on daily safari drives or boat trips, including over 400 species of birds.

**6 Flying Further with BA**

This year British Airways launched two new direct routes to Latin America: one to San José in Costa Rica and another to Lima in Peru. In fact, make that three, as from January 2017 British Airways will be adding another South American direct route, flying to Santiago, Chile. A 14-hour flight makes this the longest that BA operates.

**5 Oman, the View!**

Perched 3,000 metres above sea level, the new Anantara Al Jabal Akhdar Resort sits in one of the highest regions in the Middle East. Just a 2-hour drive from Muscat airport – passing date plantations, wadis and historical Unesco-listed forts en route – the resort overlooks the spectacular Grand Canyon of the Middle East. The spa and infinity pool are perfect for those wanting relaxation after a day exploring the mountains, ancient villages and rose-growing terraces.



For some beachside R&R, Anantara has also just opened a bespoke beachfront hotel in Salalah in the very south of Oman – the first luxury hotel in the region. The coastline has vast, empty beaches but there are also ancient sites – reputedly linked to the Queen of Sheba – picturesque wadis and small traditional fishing villages to explore.

**7 Miavana, Madagascar**

Meaning 'coming together' in Malagasy, Miavana is set to open on the island of Nosy Ankao in December. With just 14 exclusive villas, each with ocean and beach views, the resort will bring a new level of barefoot-beach luxury to Madagascar. Nosy Ankao is a private five-island archipelago to the north-east of Madagascar's coastline, lapped by warm waters protected by the surrounding reefs. Its many bays and beaches are perfect for 'blue safaris', while the islands provide nesting sites for turtles and myriad bird species.

