



INDIA & THE INDIAN OCEAN



Soak, surf, sunbathe, stretch – you can do it all in the Indian Ocean, says Olivia Greenway



PAUSE AND PLAY



Think of pristine islands with calm, turquoise clear waters, soft sandy beaches, sky blending seamlessly into sea and you think of the Indian Ocean – long perceived as the ultimate fly-and-flop and honeymoon destination. But in recent years operators have upped their game to the region, realising that today's holidaymakers want interesting and exciting diversions too, together with downtime choices that involve more than just chilling out on a sun lounger. The Indian Ocean has among the finest water-based activities in the world, but if your clients want to just de-stress, that is an option too – and they can do it in style. Here we visit Mauritius, the Maldives, the Seychelles and Sri Lanka to bring you the best pause-and-play options for your clients.

● MAURITIUS

Pause: Known as one of the top hotels for foodies on the island, Shanti Maurice has introduced a new private dining experience, the Herb Garden BBQ – a five-course gourmet degustation menu, showcasing local ingredients with a tailored wine flight and service by a personal butler. Highlights include freshly caught lobster with lime and local foie gras. There is a minimum charge of £630 for the dinner, which can be served to between two and six people.

Play: For clients who want something less fancy and would like to get out into the local community, Shanti Maurice also offers the popular Grandma's Kitchen experience, from €20. Guests watch a Mauritian ▶

travelweekly.co.uk/destinations



grandmother cook in her own home, then taste her delicious food around a communal table. Afterwards they are given recipes so they can try to reproduce the dishes once they return home. Sunset Faraway Holidays offers seven nights' half-board at Shanti Maurice from £2,065, including flights from Gatwick and transfers, travelling between April 10 and June 20.

Pause: Sunbathing and yoga are both truly calming experiences, and at Lux Belle Mare clients can combine the two. The hotel lays on complimentary yoga and stretching classes on its own sandy beach. Plus guests have access to the Lux ME spa, the sauna, steam room and adult-only spa garden. Western & Oriental offers seven nights' half board with flights and transfers from £1,539.

Play: For those who want thrills rather than chills, how about kite surfing? Your clients can pick up some skills at the St Regis

Resort. Your lucky customers will be collected by boat and enjoy three half-days of lessons (suitable for beginners) away from the crowds, with all equipment provided. Sunset Faraway offers a Kite Premium Package, plus seven nights' half-board, flights from Gatwick and transfers, from £2,449 between May 1 and June 20.

● MALDIVES

Pause: If clients want to be adventurous without it being strenuous, then how about a romantic Robinson Crusoe-style overnight castaway stay on a deserted island? They'll feel like the only two people on earth as they sip champagne watching the sunset on Govvaafushi, just seven minutes by boat from luxury resort Beach House Iruveli. Then there's a Maldivian luxury picnic dinner under the stars before retreating to their secluded beach hut. They're not marooned for ever,



Mauritius: Grandma's Kitchen experience at Shanti Maurice



Maldives: stay overnight on your own deserted island at Beach House Iruveli



Seychelles: spa couples suite at Kempinski Seychelles Resort



Mauritius: stretching class at Lux Belle Mare



Maldives: cycling at Shangri-La Villingili Resort & Spa



Maldives: a Sunset Beach Villa at Atmosphere Kanifushi

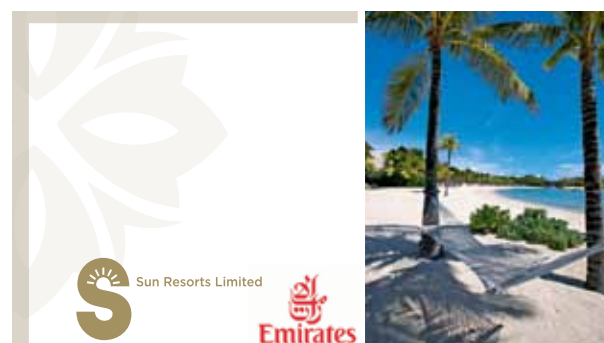
THREE NEW MALDIVES HOTELS

Atmosphere Kanifushi is a new all-inclusive private island in the Maldives opening on December 15. The five-star resort offers a Platinum Plus package, which includes complimentary excursions, entertainment, non-motorised watersports, snorkelling, tennis, gym, kids' club, Wi-Fi, minibars and premium brand drinks. One dining experience at the speciality restaurants is included, plus a 50% discount on one couple's massage at the Akiri Spa and a 20% discount on the first two dives. The 150 villas are all west-facing with unobstructed sunset views and direct beach access.

There are 18 two-bedroom family villas, 40 suites and 10 villas with private pools. Situated in the Lhaviyani Atoll, Kanifushi Island is a 30-minute scenic flight from Male. It will be the first resort from the Atmosphere brand, which aims to open four properties in the Indian Ocean over the next five years. atmosphere-kanifushi.com

A 45-villa luxury resort has opened on Randheli Island in the Maldives' Noonu Atoll, a 40-minute journey north of Malé. **Cheval Blanc Randheli**, which began receiving guests in mid-November, has been designed by architect Jean-Michel Gathy, who also worked on the One&Only Reethi Rah Maldives in 2005. chevalblanc.com/randheli

Also on Noonu Atoll, **Vela Private Island** opens this month. The property's 43 villas – 18 of which are overwater – range from one to four bedrooms, all with private pools. Three restaurants serve cuisines from Asian to French, and there are two bars. Facilities and activities include spa, yoga, tennis and squash courts, a football field, beach volleyball, a dive centre and watersports. velaisland.com



Long Beach, Mauritius

7 nts fr. **£1545 pp**

in a Standard Sea View room on Half Board
20% Early Bird discount incl.

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T&C's: Applicable for new bookings only. Book by dates apply. Travel validity dates vary per resort. Minimum night stays and blackout dates may apply. Prices are based on specific room types by resort and include return economy flights, transfers and all taxes. Rates are subject to availability, include tax and are based on two adults sharing. Half board at select restaurants. Travel is valid from 27 Apr to 27 Sep 2014.

though – a boat arrives first thing to collect them. The experience starts from £340.

Play: If delving into the past is your clients' bag they will enjoy the historical island tour that the same resort offers from £115, which includes a trip to Utheemu Palace, home to the 16th-century ruler. Experience Travel Group offers both trips, with seven nights on a B&B basis at Beach House Iruveli from £2,849, including flights and seaplane/speedboat transfers, for stays before December 25.

Pause: For blissed-out pleasure, a new 90-minute signature spa treatment, Nature's Secret, is available at the award-winning overwater Talise spa at Jumeirah Dhevanafushi. It uses indigenous ingredients, including warm Maldivian sands, to soothe aching muscles, and costs \$260.

ITC Classics offers seven nights' half-board from £3,249, including flights and transfers, between May and September.

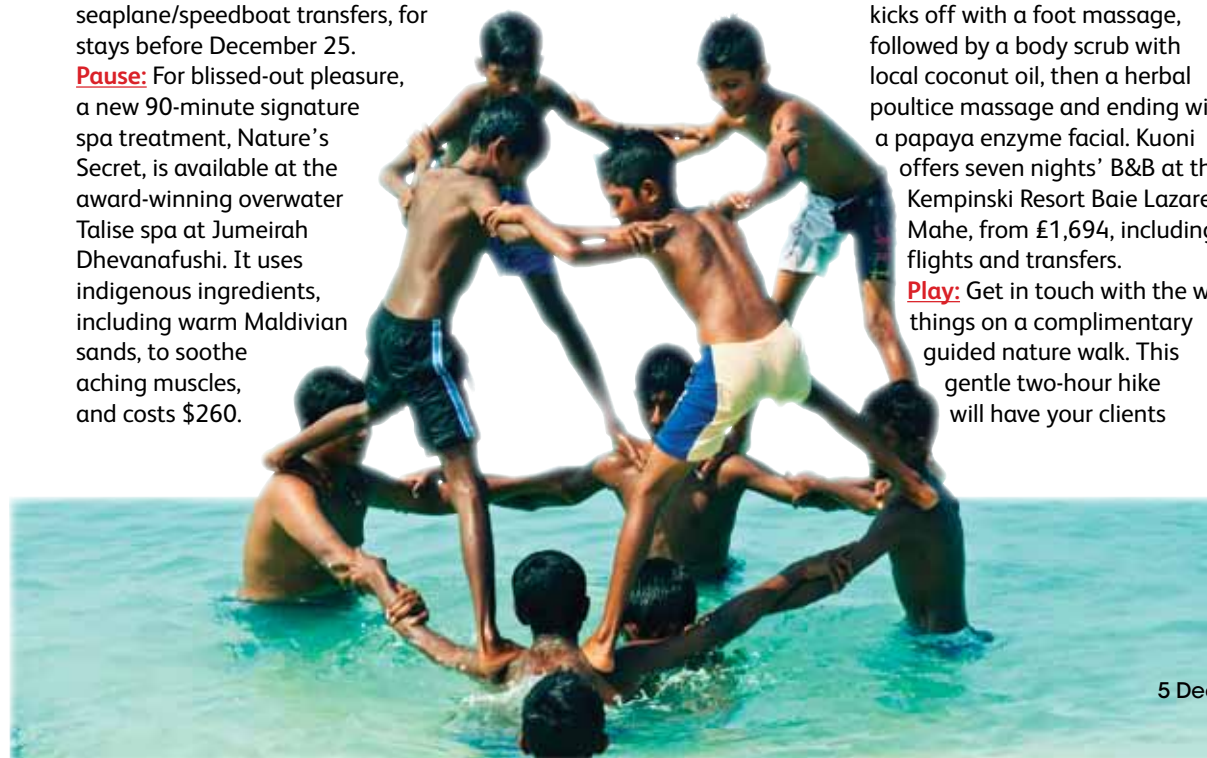
Play: For something that little bit different, your clients can try night fishing with a professional guide at Shangri-La Villingili Resort & Spa, from \$80. Those who don't fancy fishing may prefer a bicycle tour of the neighbouring islands

– a two-hour tour costs from \$44. Premier Holidays offers seven nights' half-board at the resort from £2,284, including flights and transfers.

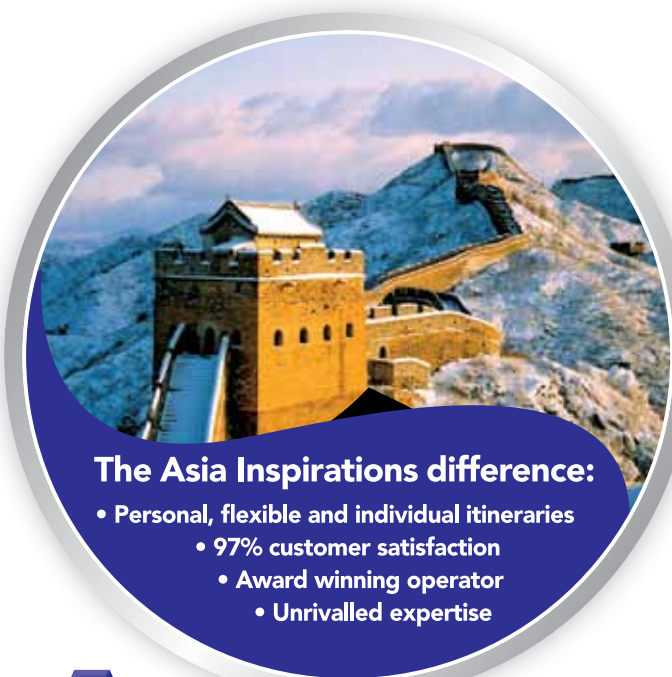
● SEYCHELLES

Pause: This is not just any spa, this is a Kempinski luxury spa. It offers a unique signature treatment, using local and European ingredients, lasting two and a half hours. The \$340 session kicks off with a foot massage, followed by a body scrub with local coconut oil, then a herbal poultice massage and ending with a papaya enzyme facial. Kuoni offers seven nights' B&B at the Kempinski Resort Baie Lazare, Mahe, from £1,694, including flights and transfers.

Play: Get in touch with the wild things on a complimentary guided nature walk. This gentle two-hour hike will have your clients



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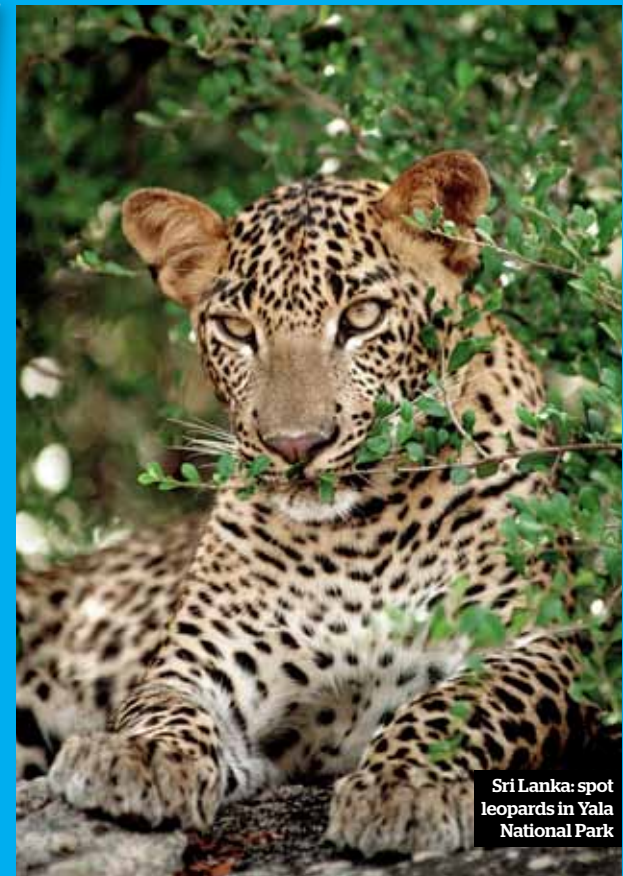
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Seychelles: meet
giant tortoises on
Desroches Island



Sri Lanka: the Sahana Spa
at Saman Villas, Bentota



Sri Lanka: spot
leopards in Yala
National Park

spotting giant tortoises and possibly some turtle nesting sites as well as learning about endangered flora and fauna. Seven nights' all-inclusive on Desroches Island including flights and transfers starts from £2,998 (saving up to £1,000) through Western & Oriental.

Pause: Your clients can brush up on their hosting skills by learning to make cocktails at the Banyan Tree Seychelles. The complimentary Martini Cocktail Mixology Class teaches guests how to create a martini that would make James Bond proud, and then the fun begins with the sampling. As a finale, they could try the fresh barbecue fish at the new rum shack on the beach to accompany the creations. Western & Oriental offer seven nights' B&B, including flights and transfers, from £2,499. **Play:** The islands of the Seychelles were made for island-hopping. From Praslin, take a full-day boat and bike tour on the laid-back island of La Digue. Your clients will be met by a guide off the boat and given maps, bikes and lots of ideas for best routes and lunch plans. They shouldn't miss Anse Source D'Argent, which often tops

lists of the world's best beaches. The tour is £65, but Sunset Faraway offers the tour plus seven nights' half-board at Domaine de la Reserve in Praslin, with flights and transfers, from £1,669.

● SRI LANKA

Pause: The boutique Saman Villas in Bentota is designed for peace and quiet. The architecture is based on that of a traditional Sri Lankan temple, and the views out to the Indian Ocean are uninterrupted – not just from the private infinity pools but also from the open-air bathrooms. The Sahana Spa offers traditional Ayurvedic treatments, including Shirodhara, where after a scalp massage warm oil is poured on to the forehead to balance the emotions and calm the mind, from \$86. Caribtours offers seven nights' B&B in a superior suite from £1,999, including flights, private transfers and a lounge pass at Heathrow.

Play: There is so much to see and do on this teardrop-shaped island; if variety is what your clients crave, Sri Lanka delivers it in spades. Travelsphere has an action-packed itinerary in its Colonial Highlights

of Ceylon tour that includes a visit to a monastery, an elephant-back safari, a visit to a rural school and an elephant orphanage, plus the chance to have a meal in a farmer's house, making it a truly cultural, immersive experience. Prices for this 13-day tour start from £1,799, including flights. **Pause:** Yala National Park has the highest concentration of leopards in the world, and clients don't even have to leave the hotel to spot them. Cinnamon Wild Yala's observation deck is its showpiece offering – a rooftop bar with a 360-degree view of the national park. It's one of the only hotel bars in the world where you might catch a glimpse of a leopard while sipping a sundowner.

Play: Those who want to learn more about the leopards and their conservation can take a special new trip with Cinnamon Wild Yala's Nature Trails team, from \$50. Guests visit a cattle farm, spend time with the farmers learning about their way of life, and inspect a pen site, designed to minimise human-leopard conflict. Kuoni offers four nights' half-board, including flights and transfers, from £1,310. **TW**

OPERATOR NEWS

Western & Oriental has introduced a standalone Indian Ocean and Middle East programme for 2014. It features three times as many Mauritius hotels as last year, more multi-centre breaks such as island-hopping in the Seychelles or twin-centres between Sri Lanka and the Seychelles using the new Mihin Lanka flight between Colombo and Mahé. The operator's 2014 India and Sri Lanka brochure has also added product in southern and eastern India, the east coast of Sri Lanka, plus Ganges cruises. **westernoriental.com**

Kuoni has introduced a new brochure focusing on tailor-made itineraries and authentic travel experiences. The Discover India, Nepal, Bhutan and Sri Lanka programme includes stays in Corbett National Park in northern India, and at a new eco-friendly hotel in the Periyar Wildlife Sanctuary in Kerala. **kuoni.co.uk**

Travelsphere has added escorted tours in India and Sri Lanka. A Return to Kashmir itinerary travels from Delhi (below) to Srinagar, with a cruise on a shikara, a talk about Sufism and a 12-course banquet, from £1,899 for nine days. A 13-day Colonial Highlights of Ceylon tour includes Sigiriya, the monastic complex of Ritigala, an elephant-back safari and a visit to a rural school, from £1,799. **travelsphere.co.uk**

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