

Where to stay

Hotel confidential

Four far-flung outposts making waves with the island-hopping crew. By **Issy von Simson**

MALDIVES Here come two of the atolls. First up, in the far from LVMH, the luxury group



serious contenders at opposite ends north, is **Cheval Blanc Randheli** behind Louis Vuitton and Moët

Hennessy. Its Courchevel sister property is shiny and full-throttle, but here in the Noonu Atoll things are more pared-back: the Jean-Michel Gathy-designed villas have soaring thatched



roofs, open sides and infinity pools that spill onto the sand. Then way down south is Christina Ong's latest, **Maalifushi by COMO**, Japanese in style, nicely crisp and concise and, of course, with a sushi bar. www.chevalblanc.com; www.comohotels.com

FIJI Laucala, a sensational private dot in the South Pacific owned by Red Bull's Dietrich Mateschitz, has everything – *everything* – on tap, but in a seemingly effortless way: 400 staff, an 18-hole golf course and five restaurants open all day



every day, for just 25 villas. August



California, for some casual

sees the arrival of a **submarine**, made in underwater cruising. Kurt Wachtveitl, legendary

GM of the Oriental Bangkok and global adviser for the hotel, lets slip, 'It's better than the one on Necker – everything is to beat Branson.' www.laucala.com

ST HELENA If you hanker after unbeaten paths, look to this rugged colonial island in the South Atlantic, one of the remotest places in the world, halfway between Brazil and Namibia and only accessible via the Royal Mail ship. Now the forward-thinking management company **Mantis Collection** is planning to build a five-star hotel in time for the 2016 opening of St Helena's first airport. www.mantiscollection.com

HOTEL ROOMS UNDER £150

Rajakkad, Tamil Nadu INDIA



High in the Palani Hills, on a 50-acre estate, this 18th-century wooden building was once the summer palace of the Maharajas of Travancore, Kerala. Ten years ago, the English chocolatier Jeremy Fry broke it up into 20,000 pieces, loaded it onto lorries and had it reassembled in Tamil Nadu without the use of a single nail. Modest by palace standards, it has just seven guest rooms. Beds have deep mattresses, soft pillows and fine linens (a rare treat in India), and the only sound to wake you in the morning is birdsong. There are three colonnaded courtyards, stylish sitting and dining rooms and a gem of a library. A French textile artist based in Pondicherry helped with the interiors, and there is vintage and contemporary art everywhere. The food is a delight. Chef Arul Raj serves light Mediterranean dishes for lunch and south Indian meals in the evening; nearly all the produce comes from the estate. The climate is comfortable enough for hikes around the estate, ending with a picnic at a waterfall – a feast for all the senses. But for me the greatest pleasure was to do nothing: instead of consuming my energy like so much of India, Rajakkad completely restored me. **FIONA CAULFIELD** + 91 9487 444333; www.rajakkadestate.com. Doubles from about £105, half board