

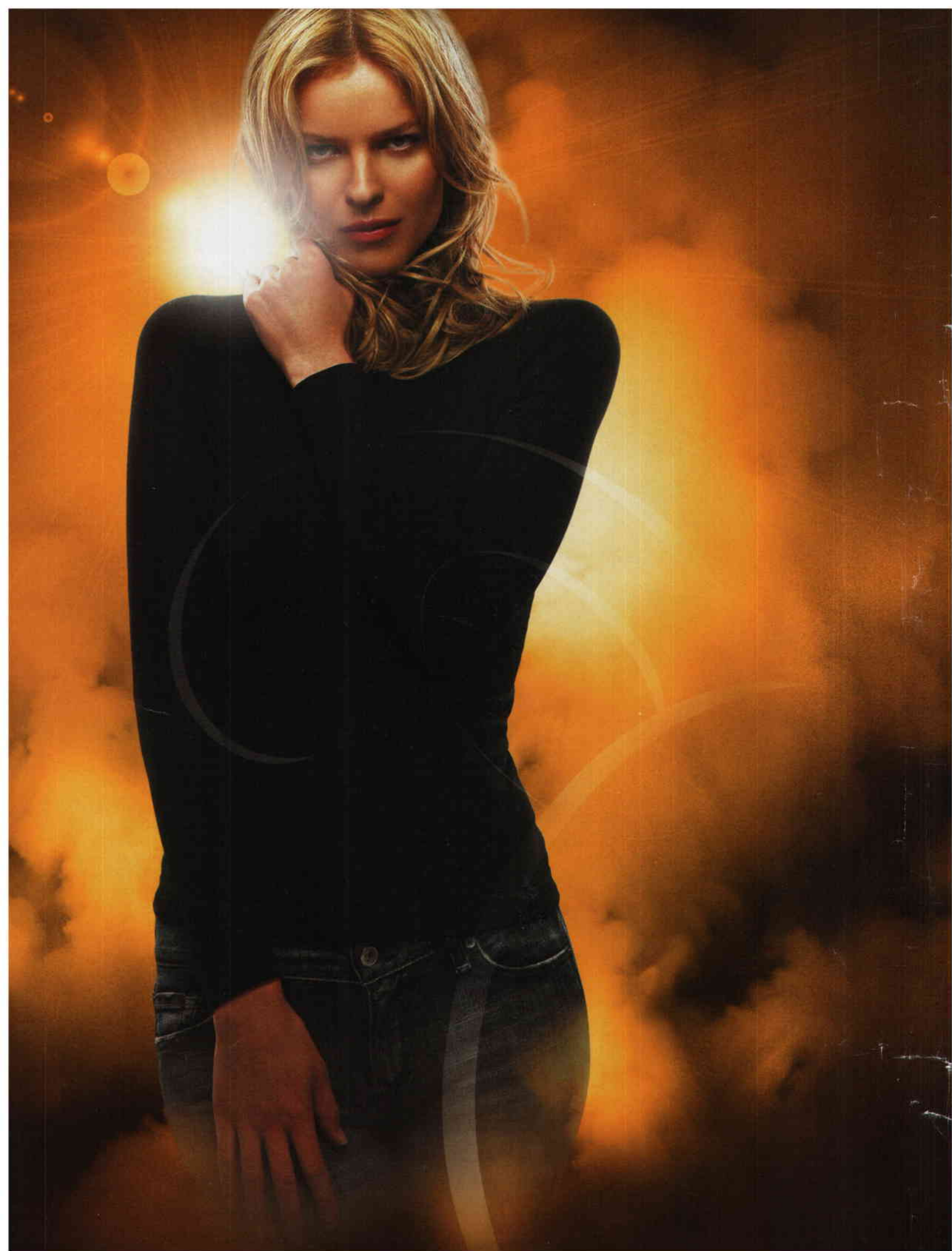
FINANCIAL TIMES

how to spend

LANDING
A GOOD LOOK

SEPTEMBER 4, 2007





travelista

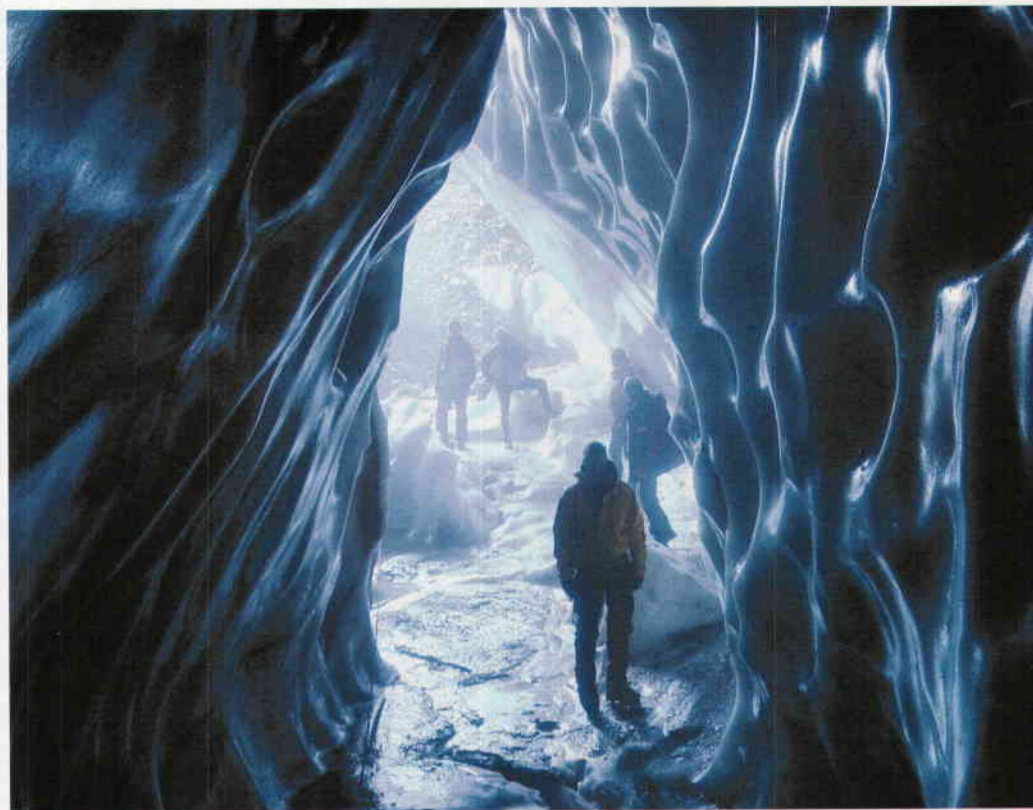
Frequent flyer Sophy Roberts **fast-tracks international intelligence on where to be and what to see.**

Couture camping seems to be sweeping through the continents, from **AFRICA** where designer Anna Trzebinski has added a nomadic tented experience to her high-style safaris in Kenya's Laikipia region (see www.journeysbydesign.co.uk) to **ANTARCTICA**'s chilled interior where White Desert has created the first ever luxury commercial encampment on the ice (see www.white-desert.com). This month it's the turn of **MAURITIUS**. The island has long been a testing ground for trends in luxury travel – it's where South African hotelier Sol Kerzner first introduced beach boys armed with Evian spray to refresh the sun-kissed, where celebrity chefs rolled in with “outpost”

restaurants (Vineet Bhatia, Alain Ducasse) and suites were designed with “his” and “hers” bathrooms. Novelties for winter 2007 include a giant beachside tepee at One&Only Le Saint Géran (www.oneandonlyresorts.com) created by London fashion designer Alice Temperley and featuring a bohemian glass chandelier, fabric-bedecked interior and custom-made wooden bed. However, the island's big news will be when the first phase of Anahita (www.anahita.mu) opens in March, featuring 70 residences on the island's eastern flank. The resort occupies 213 hectares of lush hillside plantation and a 6km stretch of beach. It is likely to appeal to families: the Children's Club is to be managed by

Scott Dunn-trained English nannies, offering a high staff/child ratio.

For a kids-free holiday – a polarising trend as more hotels ban under-16s – head to **THAILAND** and to the isle of Naka Yai (a 10-minute boat ride from Phuket) where Six Senses Erawan (www.sixsensesdestinationspas.com) is poised to break into the market established by Chiva-Som in Hua Hin. Chiva-Som is the mother of Asian destination spas (even if the beach is disappointing) where burnt-out overachievers rock up *sans* cigarettes and leave their bad habits at the door to be holistically reprogrammed, beating fat, stress and more specific health issues on tailored wellness retreats (from three to 28 nights). Six Senses Erawan, which opens in April 2008, will tackle life events from midlife crises to retirement (they like to call them “life passages”) with a team of specialists



Above: inside an ice cave near White Desert's luxury camp in Antarctica. Below: an 1860 Samurai warrior by Felice Beato. Learn how to wield the sword with Experience-Tokyo.



Above: a nomadic tented safari in Kenya's Laikipia region. Below: the deck of *Clipper Odyssey*, which is going on a 14-day trip to Russia's Far East.



◀ ranging from psychologists to acupuncturists. Note the Erawan diet will be exclusively pescetarian.

If carb-loading is not an issue, then you can now join soba-noodle-making courses in **TOKYO** which have English-speaking guides (for other culinary tips, turn to Michelin's just-launched Asia guide to the Japanese capital; see www.michelin.co.uk/travel). You can also learn to fight like a ninja, wield a Samurai sword, take up taiko drumming or sumo wrestling – all unusual, well-priced, half- and full-day events for small groups organised by Experience Tokyo (www.j-experience.com).

This impulse to get under the skin of a country is what distinguishes companies such as Context, which offers thematic walking seminars for travellers to five cities (**PARIS, ROME, FLORENCE, VENICE** and **NAPLES**, with **LONDON** and **NEW YORK** launching in January). Guides are generally scholars, and groups (unless bespoke) are limited to six participants. Walks are about three hours long. Two afternoons per week, dining historian Carolin Young leads clients through the Les Halles area on Context's Belly of Paris walk; on Mondays in Rome, it's a Caravaggio seminar. Special, one-off events include a Boxing Day trip to Rungis, the world's largest wholesale food market in the Parisian suburbs, led by *Gourmet* columnist Louisa Chu (www.contexttravel.com).

Cultural immersion is clearly on the up. Exeter International (www.exeterinternational.co.uk), a tour operator for **RUSSIA**, offers behind-the-scenes tours of the Mariinsky (Kirov) Theatre in St Petersburg. Go for five nights, from March 19 to 24, and you can watch rehearsals, classes and four performances during the VIII International Mariinsky Ballet Festival (www.mariinsky.ru); from £2,990 per person (accommodation and flights included).

For others, access remains a specifically geographical ambition.

KAMCHATKA in Russia's Far East has just such appeal. Here salmon are preyed on by the world's most dense population of brown bears. You can experience this Siberian peninsula, which boasts 19 active volcanos on the Unesco World Heritage List, on a cruise aboard the 118-passenger *Clipper Odyssey*. Abercrombie & Kent (www.akodyssey.com) is taking bookings for the 14-day trip, departing July 2, with prices starting at about £4,900 based on two sharing.

For those seeking a conventional beachside lounge, on December 21 Rosewood Mayakobá (www.rosewoodhotels.com) opens on the Mexican **RIVIERA MAYA** with suites spread among mangrove-fringed lagoons and a mile of Caribbean coastline. Most rooms also have a private boat dock – which is one luxury extra Kerzner hasn't yet thought of. ♦



Above: Six Senses Erawan Spa on Naka Yai opens next April. Below: Chiva-Som in Hua Hin offers tailored wellness retreats.



Above: Rosewood Mayakoba's suites on Mexico's Riviera Maya have private boat docks. Below: balletomanes can soak up the atmosphere backstage at the Kirov with Exeter International.



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