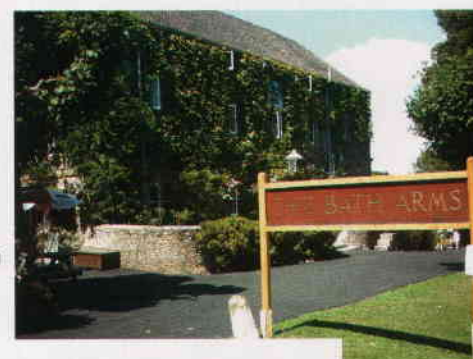


Canvas opinion

Most of us yearn to escape our frenetic urban lifestyle and get closer to nature; hence the growing allure of tented camps.

Turn to page 10 for the best places to sleep under canvas, or better still, invest in your own tent. Here's our pick of the best: *CATH KIDSTON'S COWBOY TRADITIONAL TRIANGLE TENT*, from £35 (above) (0870 850 1084). *WIGWAM SAM'S TEPEES*, from £795 (01288 352316). *AN IRANIAN ALACHIGH NOMAD TENT FROM ALBION CANVAS*, from £3,725 (0845 456 9290). *HAND-PRINTED CUPOLA TENTS BY WHITE CANVAS*, from £2,875 (0870 321 3007). *MILLETS' PAINT YOUR OWN FESTIVAL TENT*, which comes with brushes and waterproof paints, from £29.99 (0800 389 5861).



BEST OF BRITISH

WITH THE DEBACLE OF FLYING ABROAD THIS SUMMER, AND CROWDS FOR LOW-COST FLIGHTS MAKING AIRPORTS FEEL LIKE CATTLE MARKETS, STAYING AT HOME IS NEXT YEAR'S HOT NEW TREND. BOOK INTO THE REOPENED BATH ARMS AT LONGLEAT (01985 844308), GIVEN A NEW LEASE OF LIFE BY DESIGNER MIV WATTS; FROM £80 A ROOM A NIGHT B&B. OR, FOR A TASTE OF FINE CITY LIVING, TRY FIRMDALE HOTELS' HAYMARKET HOTEL (020 7470 4000) IN LONDON, WHEN IT OPENS IN FEBRUARY.

Travel bazaar

ELEANOR SOUTHALL rounds up the hottest hotel happenings and globetrotting trends

Do before you die

A new joint venture between the Taj Hotels group and eco-tourism company CC Africa promises the ultimate wildlife experience in tiger reserves across India. The first camp, Mahua Kothi in Madhya Pradesh, opens in November with 12 suites, ayurvedic massages and picnics under blossoming trees. For more details, ring Taj Hotels (+800 4588 1825), or CC Africa (+27 11 809 4300).

Ear to the ground

We hear that the new 350,000-acre Grumeti Reserves in Tanzania, which features two lodges with amazing facilities, has set a benchmark for luxury and service in the bush. Its owner, Paul Tudor Jones II, ploughs profits into community and conservation initiatives. Watch out for his third camp, Faru Faru River Lodge, opening next year. And book quickly for the annual wildebeest migration in June 2007. *Seven nights at Grumeti Reserves costs from about £4,230 a person full board with Journeys by Design (01273 623790; www.journeysbydesign.co.uk).*

STOP PRESS

OASIS HONG KONG AIRLINES (+852 3629 9000; WWW.OASISHONGKONG.COM) HAS JUST LAUNCHED; FLIGHTS TO HONG KONG COST FROM £75 ONE WAY.



Ezard House Cape Town, South Africa

A couple of years ago, favourable exchange rates meant you could treat yourself to the best accommodation in South Africa and still have change from £200. Nowadays, you can still dine on lobster and champagne at affordable prices but, sadly, hotel rates have crept up and a chic, affordable option is more difficult to find.

However, Ezard House fits this description perfectly. It is situated in the foothills of Table Mountain overlooking Camps Bay, and has 10 contemporary rooms, each with a private balcony or terrace. Designed over various levels with plenty of glass and landscaped gardens to make the most of the stunning ocean views, Ezard is owned by an English conductor (there is music playing throughout the hotel). The dedicated staff are extremely helpful; the chef will concoct delicious feasts at unlikely times, should you so wish, and spa treatments are available. There is a small pool, but head for the rooftop hot tub and savour a Walker Bay chardonnay while you watch the sunset. *Ezard House* (+27 21 438 6687; www.ezardhouse.com), from £130 a room a night B&B, including transfers. ELEANOR SOUTHALL



Base2stay London, UK

New value-for-money budget hotels are springing up across the capital, and this one in Kensington is the best of the bunch. There are no extraneous additions such as a gym, restaurant or bar here. However, the 67 rooms are comfortable and sleek, and come with powerful showers or huge tubs in the bathrooms, well-equipped kitchenettes, free broadband internet connections, music libraries and local delivery directories (Waitrose is nearby and the hotel adds no mark-up to delivery companies' charges). Simple continental-breakfast boxes can also be ordered. The project is proving such a success that further sites are already being planned in London, across the UK and eventually in New York. *Base2stay* (0845 262 8000; www.base2stay.com), from £80 a room a night. ELEANOR SOUTHALL



La Sagesse St David's, Grenada

This low-key, bohemian beach retreat built around a romantic old manor house is tucked away on one of the Caribbean's loveliest, quietest beaches. Local fishermen cross palm groves, cows wander in the shallows at dawn and egrets settle at dusk. There are stunning walks over headlands to other beaches. The laid-back vibe is due in no short measure to the American owner, Mike, who presides barefoot over the bar and beachfront restaurant serving local fish and grilled meats. Children love the shallow water and spend hours racing coconut shells on the tributaries that spring from the salt pond intersecting the beach, fringed with mangroves. *La Sagesse* (+1 473 444 6458; www.lasagesse.com). *Just Grenada* (01373 814214) offers one week room only from £625 a person, including return flights and transfers. CATHERINE FAIRWEATHER



Ngong House Nairobi, Kenya

Rediscover the child in you by sleeping 15 feet up in a rustic treehouse – the ultimate in hippie chic, with huge four-poster beds dressed with crisp linens. There are sitting rooms and verandahs on different levels overlooking the Ngong Hills, which were beloved of the writer Karen Blixen, who lived nearby. You may wake up at first light when birds settle noisily on the bird tables next to your stepladder, but then night falls early in Africa, when the campfire beckons. Here, under the canopy of an acacia tree, companionable house dogs flop around, and guests mingle over cocktails that sharpen the appetite for dinner. The food itself and the staff that cook it are a delight. *Ngong House* (+254 20 891 856), from about £158 a night half board. Book with *Journeys by Design* (01273 623790; www.journeysbydesign.co.uk). CATHERINE FAIRWEATHER