

5 March 2011

Lighting-up time

Neon brights for the new season

DRIVEN MAN

Sebastian Vettel's rise from kid in a kart to F1 world champion

DOWN TO THE LAST DROP

The water disaster that threatens the return of the Dust Bowl

FOOD & HOME

Rose Prince's recipes for March; an eco-house with living walls

Four of the best South American boutique hotels, by Francesca Syz

email travel.magazine@telegraph.co.uk

TOCA DA CORUJA PIPA, BRAZIL Built in the style of a traditional colonial country home in lush tropical gardens on the outskirts of the village of Pipa on Brazil's wild north-eastern coast, the utterly enchanting Pousada Toca da Coruja is a series of 25 wooden bungalows set within the jungle but still only a 10-minute walk from the beach. Ranging from huge to spacious and linked to each other by wooden walkways, the bungalows have been lovingly furnished by the owner, Enrique Ribeiro, with a blend of antique and contemporary furnishings picked up from local farmhouses and on his travels. Walls painted in bright Caribbean colours are also hung with local art and striking photography. The restaurant, situated in the garden and candlelit at night, has won numerous awards for its Brazilian food and is considered one of the best in the region. For those who don't feel like exploring the jungle, the hotel's Land Rover and driver is on hand to whisk you to any of the nearby beaches.

The details Jacada Travel (020-7562 8288; jacadatravel.com) offers five nights' B&B in Special Bungalows at Toca da Coruja from £1,650 pp, including international flights and transfers.



CASA PESTAGUA CARTAGENA, COLOMBIA Built for a powerful count in the 18th century, this colonial mansion near the Plaza Santo Domingo in the heart of Cartagena was opened as an 11-room hotel in 2007 by the French actor Claude Pimont. Comfortable, romantic and beautiful, it offers completely personalised service and is a great base from which to explore the city. Restored by the Colombian architect Alvaro Barrera, the hotel's rooms are all large, unique in character and open out on to a landscaped courtyard. There is an outdoor pool with daybeds shaded by palm trees in the late afternoon, ideal for a cooling dip after a day in town. Room styles range from antique-filled colonial and art deco to strikingly modern. Grand Suites have vaulted ceilings, spacious living-rooms and marble bathrooms with sunken shower areas. The spa offers a range of treatments including massages, facials and scented steam and Jacuzzi treatments. There is a Caribbean restaurant with tables in the central patio area, an open bar by the pool and a rooftop veranda with a large Jacuzzi. **The details** Exsus (020-7337 9010; exsus.com) offers seven nights' B&B at Casa Pestagua from £1,865 pp, including international flights and transfers.

INKATERRA LA CASONA CUSCO, PERU A decadent leaping-off point for a trek to Machu Picchu, the 11-suite Inkaterra La Casona in historic Cusco is the ultimate crashpad for the contemporary intrepid explorer. Housed in a restored 16th-century mansion next to the Museum of Pre-Colombian Art, the city's first boutique hotel combines traditional Peruvian antiques with a subtle, stylish modernity. Candlelit and cloistered, it is the sort of place that doesn't feel full even when it is, and you are always made to feel you are treasured guests in a private home. The spacious rooms, accessed through ornately carved wooden doors, are arranged around a courtyard and furnished with a combination of antiques, white linens, coffee-table books on local culture and TVs artfully hidden within cabinets. Service is thoughtful and discreet, food local and creatively executed, and in keeping with Inkaterra's sustainable tourism ethos, the hotel is 100 per cent carbon neutral. **The details** Journey Latin America (020-8622 8469; journeylatinamerica.co.uk) offers seven days from £2,148 pp including flights, transfers, half-board accommodation at Inkaterra La Casona and Inkaterra Machu Picchu Pueblo, and a guided excursion to Machu Picchu.



AWASI SAN PEDRO DE ATACAMA, CHILE While Chile and in particular San Pedro de Atacama has seen its fair share of new hotels in recent years, there is nothing quite like Awasi, which has only eight rooms and a staff-guest ratio of almost three to one. The Atacama, the world's driest desert, provides a fittingly dramatic natural backdrop to this striking, rustic-luxe retreat of thatched cabanas forged from stone, adobe and wood, furnished with giant beds, alpaca blankets and freestanding baths. Its philosophy is a simple one of providing world-class lodging, delicious food and fantastic excursions. Impeccable service is never at the expense of a laidback ambience, and meals, served on a candlelit patio, use local ingredients and ancient recipes. Located right in town, Awasi is not far from the main square, so strolling distance from restaurants and cafes but equally close to the wide-open desert. Outings, which include off-road safaris, river hikes and visits to natural geysers, are tailor-made and a fleet of four-wheel drives is always available. **The details** Audley Travel (01993-838000; audleytravel.com) offers seven days from £2,565 pp, including four nights' full board at Awasi and private daily excursions. **Next: floating hotels**