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# Land and sea: eco-friendly travel destinations for every kind of trip

From diving in the Maldives to rehabilitating turtles in the Caribbean, The London Magazine writers find inspiration on their travels

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Overwater villas made of recycled materials are part of the commitment to responsible tourism at the Maldives' Constance Moofushi resort. Credit: Constance Moofushi

## The Maldives

Anne Cuthbertson, editor

You'll never feel closer to the ocean than in the Maldives. From the moment you arrive by seaplane, gliding above sugar-soft beaches which barely break the surface of clear waters, you feel its gentle embrace.

My experience at Constance Moofushi would take me deeper still into the heart of the ocean. On our first dive with [BlueTribe](#), we glimpsed the tips of manta wings from the boat. As we descended, we were greeted by an oceanic Cirque du Soleil of more than 60 vast manta rays, executing graceful back flips, breakfasting on clouds of fusilier fish eggs. Even our divemaster Enzo, with three decades' experience in the area, admitted it was [one of the finest displays](#) he'd ever witnessed.



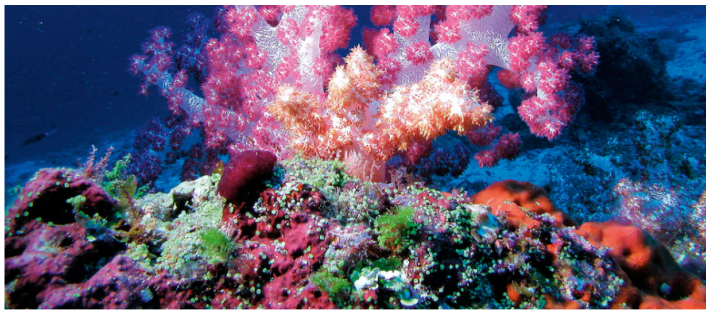
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At Constance Moofushi, there's a guest-sponsored coral-planting programme. Credit: Constance Moofushi

Soon I was testing my newfound skills with an underwater scooter, held at arm's length, at the famous 'Shark Pass'. Scooters allow divers to swim against the current and access top spots for coral and marine life. I was surprised how easy it was as I marvelled at hawksbill turtles nibbling on sponges and lazy junior reef sharks (everything in the Maldives is friendly, bar the odd triggerfish).

For some of the best marine life, you need venture no further than the house reef, and it was here that I discovered Moofushi's enduring commitment to sustainability. Elena, the resident marine biologist, takes snorkelling trips twice a week to show guests the resort's successful coral planting scheme. Guests are encouraged to be 'citizen scientists' and send their underwater photos of turtles to the [Olive Ridley Project](#), to support the [Be Gentle to Giants](#) campaign promoting responsible whale shark tourism, or to adopt a coral frame to add to the house reef's 193-strong collection. A small change we can all make is using reef-friendly SPF which doesn't contain harmful toxins.



A formation of dancing manta rays is a regular sighting on a BlueTribe dive in the Maldives

Moofushi's green credentials were evident in its thoughtful approach to everything. All restaurant fish is pole-and-line caught, as discarded 'ghost nets' are a danger to sea turtles and dolphins. My overwater villa, made from recycled materials, was the epitome of barefoot luxury and guests are encouraged to bag up any microplastics they find on the beach.

A 40-minute journey by speedboat is Constance Halaveli, Moofushi's glamorous sister resort. With the third-longest jetty in the Maldives, 57 overwater villas and 30 garden villas, Halaveli is high on luxury but low on environmental impact. The fragility of this tiny island civilisation needs constant servicing, including topping up the beaches with sand as tides shift and careful desalination of thousands of cubic litres of water a day to provide running water and our still and sparkling table water. "This is Noah's Ark," says resort manager Vidya.

Whether dipping in and out of the water surrounding my villa, snorkelling with reef sharks in the shallows under the jetty, or gazing at the horizon in a zen-like state post-massage, the ocean was all around me. An enchanting world to cherish.



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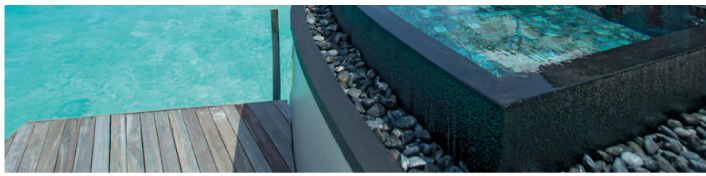
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While hosting 87 luxury holiday villas, Constance Halaveli still keeps its environmental impact low Credit: Bamba Sourang

Stay three nights at Constance Moofushi in a Beach Villa on an all-inclusive basis followed by 3 nights at Constance Halaveli staying in a Water Villa on an all-inclusive basis from £3,849 per person. Offer includes up to 40% discount on accommodation saving £2,400 per couple, including return seaplane transfers, inter island speedboat transfers and international flights departing from London Heathrow. Further details are available from [Turquoise Holidays](https://www.turquoise-holidays.com) on 01494 678400 and [constancehotels.com](https://www.constancehotels.com)

## Botswana

Jane Slade, writer

There's nothing like staying under canvas in a fenceless camp for an authentic, immersive African safari experience. We stayed in three such camps in the Okavango, a game-rich inland delta in Botswana, run by sustainable safari specialists Machaba. Each resort varied in size, ranging from the diminutive Little Machaba which had just four tents to the larger Gomoti and Siri which could accommodate up to 24. Machaba, which has six camps in the Okavango with another due to open next year, prides itself on offering unforgettable game experiences while leaving the lightest footprint in the bush.



Kick back and sip sundowners around the firepit after a day's safari at Machaba's Kiri Camp on the Okavango Delta Credit: Machaba Safaris

Each one operates on solar power, so there are no air conditioning units or hair dryers, which are high-energy consumers. Even so, we had a vast suite with indoor and outdoor showers and a private terrace where we could peacefully observe herds of buffalo and elephants making their daily stroll across the savannah to their bore hole.

We had the most thrilling game drives in our own vehicle, mostly having the vast plains and bush to ourselves. We followed a family of cheetahs on a hunt, watched a lioness play with her cubs in the shade of an acacia tree and were clocked by the eyes of some 60 hippos bobbing in the river. "Our vehicle density is very low," explained David Kind, Machaba's chief operating officer who was on an inspection visit to Gomoti camp while we were there.



Aside from game drives, Okavango in Botswana manages to keep vehicle density low Credit: David Rogers



Machaba  
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“Look at East Africa, Sabi Sands and South Africa, there are vehicles everywhere – all using fuel, polluting and impacting the land. Conversely, our model is very low impact and respectful of the wilds.”

We also went on walking safaris and explored the Delta’s waterways in canoes called mokoros, traditionally constructed from dug-out tree trunks but now made of fibre-glass so the forests can be preserved.



Enjoy the thrilling sight of a cheetah while on a sustainable safari here Credit: Neil MacKichan

Maintaining a sustainability portfolio like Machaba’s is a costly challenge, with elephants digging up the pipes to the swimming pool to access fresh water; and ensuring reliable and regular deliveries of food. “With small air strips and few roads we’re trying to keep a light footprint and reduce carbon emissions, which is a huge challenge,” David said.

To book an all-inclusive Machaba safari including internal flights and transfers, visit [rhinoafrica.com](http://rhinoafrica.com). For more information on Machaba’s specialist work and experiences, visit [machabasafaris.com](http://machabasafaris.com)

### St Vincent and the Grenadines, Caribbean

Find a tropical oasis on the Caribbean isle of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, from the award-winning Sandals. Home to 32 islands and cays, the latest adults-only Sandals resort opened its doors in March this year joining neighbouring islands Jamaica, Saint Lucia, The Bahamas and Barbados to name a few.



Feel at one with nature by booking a Sandals’ Garden Suite Credit: Sandals

With ample rest and relaxation available in 301 rooms, the latest addition includes the Vincy Overwater two-storey villa with picture perfect views. Feel at one with nature amid a rainforest and between lush green mountains, complete with an inviting cobalt- blue sea that’ll make your friends wish they were there. Sample a taste of the island and beyond in 11 restaurants, including the finest coffee blend, Jamaica Blue Mountain blend. Whether you want fresh salads, an indulgent island chop house steak or soul food, there’s something for every diner.





Holidaymakers can participate in the rehabilitation of turtles to the Caribbean Sea in Jamaica Credit: LF Puntel

Guests are encouraged to get involved with the [Sandals Foundation](#). The Caribbean Islands branch gives back to the local communities that have welcomed the resort. Founded in 1981, holidaymakers can experience the continent's vibrant culture through a new philanthropic lens, whether participating in the rehabilitation of turtles back to the Caribbean Sea in Jamaica or venturing on a [Reading Road Trip](#) to nurture the comprehension of young children. With the option to roll up sleeves and help planting the school gardens, it'll be a trip adventurers will forever cherish. For the latest prices and offers, call 0800 742 742 or visit [sandals.co.uk](http://sandals.co.uk)

## Marbella, Spain

Tallulah Rushaya, content editor

Amid the magical Andalucian mountains, with views of Gibraltar and the tip of North Africa on a clear day, the METT Marbella is a paradise hideaway. Set in the tranquil town of Estepona in southern Spain's Marbella, where visitors can venture for cobblestoned walks in the old quarter, the hotel's interiors feature traditional Andalucian details mixed with modern minimalism for a clean finish.



Bask in the Spanish sun with a clear conscience at CEE-certified resort, METT Marbella Credit: METT Marbella

Guests are greeted by plush, layered interiors featuring calming hues and handmade crafts. Taking sustainability strides both big and small, from bamboo keycards and photovoltaic panels to energy efficient air conditioning, the hotel has received a CEE certification measuring energy consumption. Additionally, it has a world-leading BREEM certification of Very Good in relation to its architecture.





Enjoy super-fresh oysters at the hotel's Greek restaurant Ammos Credit: Ammos

Bask in the glorious Spanish sunshine here, whether by the glamorous poolside symmetrically aligned with bountiful palm trees or on the golden-sand beach. METT's 'zero kilometre' approach in the kitchen, results in the most local and seasonal produce bringing ample flavour and nutrition to each dish. Taste Greek flavours at [Ammos](#) and Italian classics at [Isola](#) restaurant, with an unmissable tiramisu. Meanwhile, in [Bar de Lola](#) you'll find traditional tapas and sample Pan-Asian delights at [Azure Beach](#). Rooms are priced from £287 per night. To plan your stay, including transfer availability, visit [metthotelsandresorts.com](http://metthotelsandresorts.com)

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