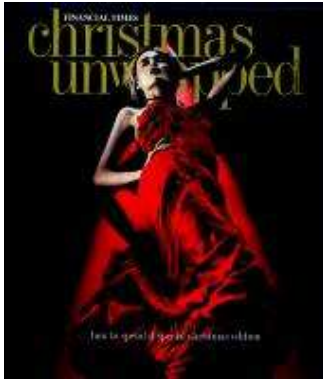


Hand Picked Hotels

Financial Times – How to Spend It

15 November 08

Circulation: 451,676



how to find it

12 MAKE MINE A METHUSELAH

John Stimpig on oversized bottles of wine that are fabulous for parties and are now attracting investors

17 PAST MASTERS

Avril Grosson says the time is right for vintage women's evening watches

21 THEY'VE GOT FLARE

Karen Wheeler on the multi-sensory experience that awaits the new candle cognoscenti

26 CLINK, CLINK, FIZZ

Vivienne Becker can't wait to get her hands on the latest experimental cocktail rings

37 FANCY A SNIFFER?

Karen Wheeler on the new classroom spirit of men's fragrances

42 SCARLET FEVER

Dominic Pote sets the party season alight with dazzling red dresses and towering heels

103



61 HER AIDS

Laura van der Post on why the most desirable women's pens now have the status of fashion accessories

67 IT'S A STREYCH

Jenny Dalton craves a new dining table that's big enough for a banquet

75 ELECTIBLES FOR HIM

Phillipa Clark selects seasonal must-haves for monsieur

76 A HAT-TRICK FOR VILLA FANS

Julian Allison on the private villas, hotel villas and serviced residences vying for our custom

85 TECHNOPOLIS

Jonathan Margolis plays kooky Santa with new techie toys

86 DASH AWAY, DASH AWAY

Olivia Pump presents pepped-up partywear for men

103 ELECTIBLES FOR HER

Phillipa Clark's cache of cadeaux for mesdames

105 A PIECE OF THE ACTION

Strom de Burton on the traditional family game that's been given a Hollywood makeover

111 THE STRONGEST LINK

Rogge Nadelson rediscovers the charm bracelet

117 THE SMOOTH GUIDE

Seah Murray finds Khmer style and cool art deco in Cambodia's Stern Resip

122-126 ALL OVER THE SHOP

HOW TO SPEND IT: THE CULT SHOP THE SMART BUYER CONSUMING PASSIONS DETAILS PLEASURE ZONE PERFECT VOUCHERS

42



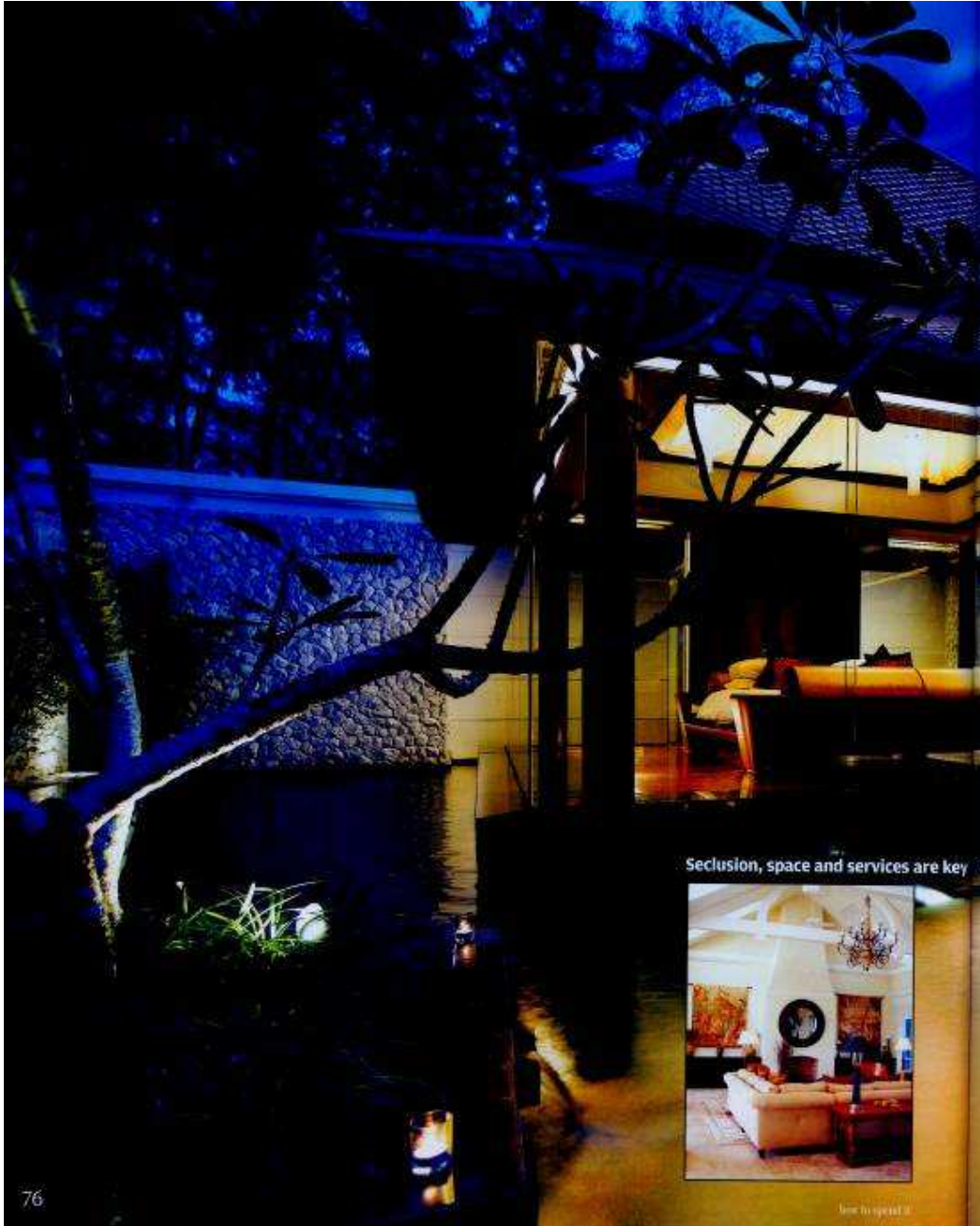
ISSUE 210 NOVEMBER 15 2008

editor **Gillian Triggs** art director **Graham Black** deputy art director **Tina Mapleton** acting picture editor **Susan Stanton** chief sub-editor **Vicki Brown** deputy chief sub-editor **Alison Green** junior sub-editor **Victoria Woodcock** editorial assistant **Michelle Reed** contributing editors **Vivienne Becker** **Simon de Burton** **Mark Dodds** **Dominic Pote** **Jonathan Margolis** **John Stimpig** **Claire Wrathall** production manager **Clare Paris** publisher **Julia Carrick** magazine publishing director **Dominique Moseley**

Cover photograph: Stephen Branson, see page 41

FT.COM www.ft.com **How to spend it is online at www.ft.com/hsit**

Year 10. Printed in Singapore. Published by FT Publishing Limited, 100 Brook Hill Drive, London SE18 3PL. Registered in England. Company number 02037912. All rights reserved. 020-707 4000



A HAT-TRICK FOR VILLA FANS

As private villas, hotel villas and new "serviced residences" vie for custom, says Julian Allason.

It is 1991 and I am ambling down Grace Bay in the Turks and Caicos Islands, one of the largest, loveliest beaches in the Caribbean. Its white sands and turquoise waters are shared by a flight of seagulls, two small hotels and the simple beach bar that is my destination. On its deck the Chief Minister is nursing a rum punch, feet up, eyes closed to the swaying sun. Pretty relaxed for the setting of several corruption scandals, but then the Turks and Caicos Islands have long been a quiet haven. Fast-forward 17 years and the scene is barely recognizable, with some 200 hotels jostling for space in the sun.

The person blessed by islands for their good fortune — many having become rich beyond the dreams of their parents — is Christina Ong, widow of Baron Ong, the low-key merchant who made the Caicos name. His innovations led to other contemporary beach-house architecture of pared-back

serenity, with deceptively simple facades offering comfort and style — the original villa ethos. In addition, and the concept that inspired Hollywood to come flocking (with the media in persistent pursuit), was the simultaneous construction of private villas in commanding positions. When not occupied by such owners as Bruce Willis, Christie Brinkley and Donna Karan, these villas are available for rent, complete with 18th-century butlers.

This new resort model established by Mr Ong and her husband, the Singaporean hotelier Ong Beng Seng, went a significant way toward the wreck of hospitality and real estate. Today the Turks and Caicos Islands enjoy the presence of several villa hotels, including Anantara, serving the needs of the infatuated with Asian-oriental take on accommodations. Indeed, villa hotels are popping up right across the archipelago of exotic island destinations

favoured by the annual adherents of horse-boat luxury. It has also raised the stakes on the high-value poker game being played out between developers, landlords and the private villa rental sector for control of who remains a desirable global market.

"It used to be such a simple decision," sighs one client. "Originally we rented a house with a cook and a maid, then hotel villas came along with butlers and resort facilities. Now..." the trails off into confused silence. For the choice has become dauntingly complex. On the one hand, recession is bringing some outstanding private houses onto the rental market for the first time, now supported by concierge services and all manner of amenities and pampered local services. On the other hand, the first generation of cookie-cutter cottages (renamed into hotel rates) is being superseded by villa hotels more closely resembling the legendary private

White pavilions at Double Pool Villa of the Raffles Hotel, St. John's. (Left) Interior of David Copperfield's private villa at Maunabo, St. John's, as seen through Copper Villas.



enclaves of Lyford Cay in the Bahamas and Mustique in the Grenadines.

Indeed, so far is the concept of villa hotels being pushed that the forthcoming Four Seasons Resort in Seychelles has all but done away with the hotel part. The central block housing guest rooms and suites will be conspicuous by its absence when the entire opens its gates early next year. This is, perhaps, just as well, given the mountainous terrain of Petite Anse bay on Mahé island. The 67 Creole villas and 10 "residences" have been built on stilts above a jungle of cinnamon and jackfruit, while the spa appears to teeter on giant granite boulders.

Ah, residences. It is a neutral word no longer, at least not in the hotel world. General managers shudder at the implication that they might be at the beck of ruffianly property developers, worrying that their hotel is but the acceptable face of hospitality, there to add lustre to real estate schemes of uncertain permanence.

"It is all about brands now," notes Markus Odermatt, managing director of uber-luxe Villa Feltrinelli on Lake Garda, who has eschewed the residence game.

"What's more, none of the present hotel residence schemes has cracked the service problem. Hotels

and villas have quite different service requirements – and they conflict."

Perhaps recognising this, investors are increasingly planning for villa-only hotels, whether the villas are individually owned or centrally financed. This is the case at Anshin the Resort in Mauritius, where the beachfront freesthold villas were the first properties available for foreign purchase on the Indian Ocean island. The intention has been to create private residences with luxury-hotel facilities, hence the infinity pools and the championship golf course. The first phase of 70 residences sold out within six hours; they are also significantly larger than the villas at the five-star hotel on the estate, an indication that residences have now morphed into a separate category midway between hotel villas and private houses for rent.

This desire to enjoy the best of all worlds had already been established in 2001 by an ingenious scheme on the fashionable French Caribbean island of St Bartha. Charles Vere

Hotel villas have begun to challenge the advantages of privacy and space offered by the rented private house.

Nicoll, British owner of the Île de France hotel, built a handful of colonial-style two-bedroomed "club villas" in the tropical gardens at the rear. To the incredulity of local agents, these sold rapidly, despite having no sea view whatsoever. Apart from the attraction of owning a piece of scarce St Bartha real estate, there was the low entry price of €275,000. This was achieved by offering the club villas on a fractional basis wherein purchasers acquire five weeks' residence a year – to be used or rented out. This might include Christmas, a not unattractive proposition given that the hotel's waiting list for that season now exceeds 400 names.

At the very top end of the villa hotel market, the stakes have been upped dramatically at Banyan Tree Resort

on the Thai island of Phuket. Determined to retain leadership of the sector, the owner has progressively escalated facilities in an arms war of luxury. Having created hotel villas with their own pools, Banyan Tree trumped itself in 2004 with a pair of Spa Pool Villas, in which spa facilities were incorporated into the house. I watched an arrangement as a diminutive maousse traversed the lagoon at speed in a traditional juncal boat. The latest – and spectacular – enhancement is the Double Pool Villa, which has a swimming pool at the front of the villa, while a dramatic glass bedroom appears to float in a wading pool at the back. Seclusion, and an air of romance, is provided by an encircling walled garden.

For the first time, hotel villas have begun to challenge the advantages of privacy and space traditionally offered by the rented private house, providing an overdue wake-up call to



above: a lodge at Lake Garda, the former Vanderbilt camp in the Adirondacks, to rest through Carpe Diem, left: Cabo Wabo, Costa Rica, through Carpe Diem.

proprietors of the latter. After a frankly rocky period, during which some owners balked at the cost of upgrading to meet such contemporary requirements as wireless broadband,

private villa owners have fought back with a surge of investment in décor and facilities. Meanwhile, rental agencies have begun to plug the remaining gaps with concierge services and experienced staff from the restaurant world. Their reward has been an increase in both the number and length of bookings. "For a decent family holiday there is no substitute for a private house," observes Marina Grasses, MD of top-end agency Carpe Diem.

Partly it is a matter of space; Five Star Greece offers a villa on Santorini that is larger than most of the hotels on the island and has a longer pool. How come? The owner bought the site before Santorini became fashionable and thereby gained pole position. "To replicate it now would be impossible," notes the agency's managing director, Ilseana von Hirsch. Carpe Diem has been thinking even bigger, adding magician David Copperfield's very private Bahamian island, Mustique Cay, to its books, alongside the Costa Rican hacienda Cabo Wabo where guests have the choice of five private beaches and can ride out among the mysterious stone halls that dot the landscape. Another option is Lake Garda, formerly the Vanderbilts' "great camp" in the Adirondacks in upstate New York. Set in 1,000 private acres of woodland, its charming lodges, cottage and boathouse can accommodate a family gathering of up to 22 people in space and tranquillity – a boon in summer when beaches are packed.

Part of the appeal of renting private houses over a nook or two down is that they often come with old residents who not only know the history (and scandals) but provide a valuable entrée to the local community. In fact, better age may be no bad test of service quality. As Ivan Selles of rental specialist Indigo Lodges puts it, "Would you rather have a

