

FINANCIAL TIMES

# how to spend it

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BROADENING  
HORIZONS





# travelista

**Wander woman** Maria Shollenbarger  
**fast-tracks international intelligence**  
**on where to be and what to see**

➔ The USP of many of **LAKE COMO**'s finest hotels is panoramic vistas, their only real drawback the distance from the buzz of Como or Bellagio (which, in truth, is a matter of perspective). Now, longtime local operator Bianca Passera has renovated a noble 19th-century palazzo right in Como's *centro storico*, creating that city's first five-star hotel. The 18 rooms and suites at **Vista Palazzo Lago di Como** ([vitalagodicomo.com](http://vitalagodicomo.com); from €695) all boast separate living areas and lake views; there's opulence and genius in the details, from the suspended green-marble basins in the bathrooms to the hand-hewn marquetry of the wood floors and the hand-embroidered Italian bed sheets. But the real

payoff happens up on the roof, where the Sottovoce restaurant-lounge and alfresco "infinity" bar deliver a 300-degree perspective on the lake's unrivalled beauty.

➔ Ultra-luxe hotels aren't exactly thin on the ground in Greece's Cyclades, and among those isles **SANTORINI** is arguably least wanting for new names. But full-service wellness is a less saturated category, and here the sleek, resolutely contemporary **Andronis Concept** ([andronisconcept.com](http://andronisconcept.com); from about €550) makes a case for itself. Set in the picture-perfect village of Imerovigli, the 28-suite property – which opened officially in April, after a soft season late last year – has honed a series of targeted treatments offered

in its spa, which is built, fairly spectacularly, into a cave. Rooms range widely from a capacious standard double to a handful of private-pool suites to a four-bedroom villa. To the northwest in **MONTENEGRO**, meanwhile, Luštica Bay – a new combination residential-hotel-marina complex that's an all-mod-cons take on local village life, down to the steep, curving cobbled streets, gaily painted shuttered houses and occasional strategically deployed cypress – this month debuts **The Chedi Luštica Bay** ([chedilusticabay.com](http://chedilusticabay.com); from about €92), the latest from the Asian hospitality group. The 100 rooms, 10 suites and one penthouse all manifest a totally unvillage-y aesthetic, with large, airy windows and low-slung contemporary furnishings.

➔ James Grace Jayasundera, the founder of **Ampersand Travel** ([ampersandtravel.com](http://ampersandtravel.com)), is the go-to resource for all things Sri Lanka for those in the know – but his outfit's reach, and know-how, hardly begin and end there. Witness an intriguing new Ampersand itinerary that explores the Himalayan region of **LADAKH** later this



Above: The Chedi is launching this month at Montenegro's Luštica Bay complex. Below: the suites at Vista Palazzo Lago di Como enjoy lake views



Above: Andronis Concept on Santorini features a handful of private-pool suites







Above: Thiksey Monastery is one of the attractions in Ladakh, where Ampersand Travel has launched an itinerary. Below: guests can stay at the cool, new Hamar flycamp during Journeys By Design's expedition to Ethiopia

Africa, a vast landscape populated by as yet unassimilated tribes – the Hamar, the Mursi, the Dassanech – existing much as they have for centuries. A compelling new cultural expedition, tailored to guests' desires, from **Journeys By Design** ([journeysbydesign.com](http://journeysbydesign.com); from £3,700 per person for five nights, departures until end September) takes in the southern valley's beauty from both river and land, including several days on a private boat cruising south towards the remote Omo Delta. Guests can stay at the cracking new Hamar flycamp, which Journeys By Design founder (and Africa fixer *par excellence*) Will Jones describes as “a cross between [Namibia's] Wolwedans, [Botswana's] Jack's Camp and [Tanzania's] Kichaka” – three of the absolute coolest low-fi camps on the continent.

➔ Beyond Catalina's twee charms, **CALIFORNIA's** Channel Islands National Park remains curiously unknown, despite its extraordinary land- and seascapes (of its 2,000-odd species, nearly 150 are found nowhere else – there's a reason naturalists call it the Galápagos of North America). Enter **Lindblad Expeditions** ([expeditions.com](http://expeditions.com); from \$2,490 per person for four nights), which has created **Base Camp Channel Islands**, a wellness expedition cruise aboard the *National Geographic Sea Lion* in partnership with **Exhale** ([exhalespa.com](http://exhalespa.com)). When not indulging in pranayama breathing, barre-cardio classes, massages or meals of wholesome foods and juices on board, guests can kayak, stand-up paddleboard or hike the utterly untrammelled bluffs and meadows of Santa Cruz, San Miguel and East Anacapa islands.

➔ And so back to **LONDON** – Bloomsbury to be precise, which seems to be emerging as something of an independent-hotel incubator.

The latest to bow is **The Academy Hotel** ([ytlhotels.com](http://ytlhotels.com); from £299) – actually a rehabilitation of a faded old Gower Street stalwart, whose five interconnected Georgian townhouses, post the ministrations of the fantastically talented Alexandra Champalimaud, hum with quiet but indulgent style. There's a lovely hushed courtyard and, this being Bloomsbury, a panelled library stuffed with leather-bound editions. That you're steps, literally, from both Russell Square and the British Museum only adds to the appeal. ♦

summer, and for which a few places still remain (*departs August 29; from £7,920 per person*). Led by the company's Himalayan-born and -bred wildlife expert Shalmali Rao Paterson, it includes four nights camping under the stars at 3,500m, trekking across high desert plains, paying dawn visits to monasteries and rafting along the Indus River, before journeying up to the mystical Nubra Valley to immerse in local village life.

➔ **ETHIOPIA's** Omo River Valley is one of the last great frontiers left in



Above: The Academy Hotel in London's Bloomsbury is set in five interconnected Georgian townhouses

