

# TATTLER

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# power tripping

**With £100,000 holidays on the rise, Matthew Bell discovers how far the super-rich go for rest, relaxation and palaces to rent**

When Madonna sang 'Holiday', she wanted 'just one day out of life'. Today, she'd be more demanding. A three-week cruise in the Antarctic, or a multigenerational break on a private island. Forget buckets and spades on Camber Sands: it would be heli-skiing on glaciers or jet-hopping over four continents. But it's not just rock stars who are willing to spend north of £100,000 on a week's holiday; it's businessmen, tech entrepreneurs, bankers – anyone for whom time is a prized commodity. Which, these days, is everyone.

'Time is now the greatest luxury, so holidays are more precious than ever,' says Lady Emily FitzRoy, sister of the Duke of Grafton and owner of Bellini Travel, which deals exclusively in super-high-end holidays in Italy. 'And people are willing to spend more than ever to get it right.' It would once have been grotesque to spend £100,000 on a week's holiday. Today, people think nothing of shelling out three or four times that amount. It's all about exclusivity – shutting the Vatican Museums down to wander its corridors alone, or a candlelit dinner in Saint Mark's Basilica, say – and many are happy to pay. 'There is a degree of one-upmanship with our clients,' says FitzRoy.

As luxury tour operators attest to *Tatler*, the super-rich demand the kind of access most can only dream

of: they have dined under the 'Mona Lisa', fished for salmon in the wildest reaches of Alaska and swum with turtles in Borneo. Billionaire thrill seekers can race Formula One cars in Bahrain before veering off to the desert for dinner, explore the Amazon by private jet with a dedicated chef, fly a Spitfire over Sussex, tear through the Andes in Dakar Rally 4x4s, and heli-ski seven Alpine resorts in seven days. Dream it and someone will fix it.

With one-off, one-in-a-million adventures, it's vital to get it right, says Jonathan Townsend Rose of Loyd & Townsend Rose. His firm has been renting out fully staffed luxury castles in Scotland and Ireland for 20 years, which can easily cost £100k for a party of 28 for a week. 'The thing about a holiday is you can't retake it,' he says. 'Especially our American clients, who typically have only two weeks per year.' He has noticed a rise in multigenerational holidays, in which one person pays for everything. 'If grandpa is paying, he wants his whole family there and will fly them in from all over the world. Money is not really the question.'

For the super-rich, the group holiday is now a megawatt, million-pound getaway for 50 of their nearest and dearest. Certain hosts are renowned for their generosity – Lord and Lady Bamford are chief among these, memorably inviting 180 friends to celebrate their joint 70th birthdays in jaw-dropping style with a four-day extravaganza in India. Everyone was flown out by private jet and accommodated in five-star hotels – and the couple even took care of tipping to save their guests from 'anxiety'. 'They love being generous hosts,' says an insider. Their friends are whisked

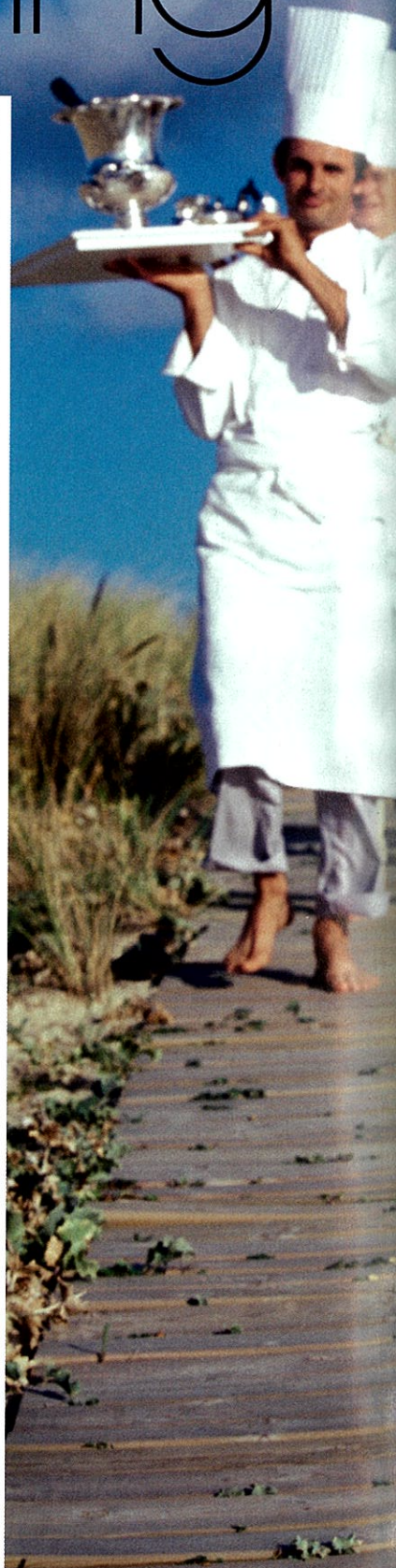
to Barbados every winter. 'Of course, it's hard to reciprocate in the same fashion, but they don't expect it. They just want you to turn up and be on good form.'

Richard Branson is an exemplary host, too. After leaving the White House, the Obamas decompressed on Necker Island, Branson's £58,000-a-night Caribbean paradise. The former POTUS then headed to The Brando, a £10,745 a night, eco-luxe resort on Tetiaroa in French Polynesia – the former home of Marlon Brando – to focus on his memoirs.

Then there are the yachts. One can easily spend £100,000 before stepping foot on the deck. Tara Getty's *The Talitha* is a regular home-from-home for Carphone Warehouse mogul, David Ross. But why stop at one floating palace? Elisabeth Murdoch chartered a flotilla of yachts around Panarea last year for 60 guests for her 50th birthday.

These are high times on the high seas. Cruises are growing more popular, as a way of packing more than one location into a holiday. Taking luxury to the furthest-flung corners of the world was pioneered by Italian firm Silversea, which has just announced the first \$1 million cruise. From 2021, guests can enjoy a 167-day voyage, calling at 107 destinations in 30 countries. Their current Explorer cruise ships are small but luxurious, with strengthened hulls that allow them to navigate the most remote waters. Guests can then use smaller Zodiac boats to get close to glaciers, penguins and polar bears, before returning to a three-course dinner and butler service in the evening.

Popular escapes by Abercrombie & Kent include a two-week cow-





boy holiday in the Midwest, in which you watch John Wayne films on outdoor screens and learn how to wrangle cattle (from £115,000 for a family of four). To stay in Tommy Hilfiger's Mustique villa, booked through The Mustique Company, peaks at £70,000 a week for board alone. Super-luxe safaris in Kenya and Tanzania have been de rigueur for years. And now that it's possible to experience extreme destinations with supreme levels of comfort, the rich have conquered the world. You don't have to spend months trekking across the Antarctic – you can now nip in for a few nights.

Ampersand Travel organised a 70th birthday extravaganza for a client who treated 100 guests to 10 parties at 10 palaces across India, costing a cool £2.2 million. Travel and adventure company Pelorus have a client due to celebrate his 60th in two years' time, who asked for a proposal. They suggested a mixed, two-year schedule of destinations. 'We said, look: you plan for your money over a five-year period, why not your time? We created a calendar he can fit around his work, and his kids and friends can opt in whenever suits them.'

Luxury clients fall into two categories: those who've been everywhere so want something new, and those who want their eyes opened afresh. Pelorus is sending a client to Patagonia – he wanted wilderness, peace and quiet. 'We said: "Why don't we helicopter you to the top of a glacier? You can kayak down, and we'll serve you the most delicious meal under the stars, no mobiles, not a soul around.'" He said, "Woah! Okay!"

A response that just goes to show that while £100,000 can buy the kinds of experiences of which mere mortals can barely conceive, it also affords something far more precious – a perfect, blissful solitude. After all, as Jean-Paul Sartre once sniped, 'Hell is other people.' Perhaps seclusion, then, is the greatest luxury of all. □

## the luxury list

### SOUTH AFRICA AND ANTARCTICA

For those who blow hot and cold over their holiday destinations, this expedition is the perfect couples' retreat that makes the most of two climates. Spend two nights in sunny Cape Town before jetting off in a Gulfstream to Antarctica, to an exclusive stay in your own heated 'pod', where you can live beside a colony of 6,000 Emperor penguins. *Nine nights from £138,396 per couple.* [redsavannah.com](http://redsavannah.com)

### VELAA PRIVATE ISLAND, MALDIVES

This four-bedroom private residence in the Maldives, owned by Czech billionaire Jiří Šmejč, exudes luxury. Guests can enjoy underwater tours in the resort's private submarine, or sip champagne while cruising on a private yacht – all before a spot of yoga overlooking the sparkling turquoise ocean. *Seven nights from £182,000.* [velaaprivateisland.com](http://velaaprivateisland.com)

### D HOTEL MARIS, TURKEY

A favourite of Tom Hanks and Bruce Springsteen, D Hotel Maris is Turkey's billionaire haven. This two-week trip gives you ample opportunity to take in every one of the hotel's five private beaches, from onboard a traditional Turkish sailboat, fully staffed with crew and captain – spa treatments included. *Fourteen nights from £100,000.* [dmarisbay.com](http://dmarisbay.com)

### AMERICA'S SOUTH WEST COWBOYS

Immerse yourself in an ultimate Western outing that is perfect for those seeking a unique experience of the US. Camp under the stars at Canyon de Chelly, be taught to herd by real cowboys and stay in Amangiri's private house which blends into the desert below. *Fourteen nights from £115,000 for four.* [abercrombiekent.co.uk](http://abercrombiekent.co.uk)