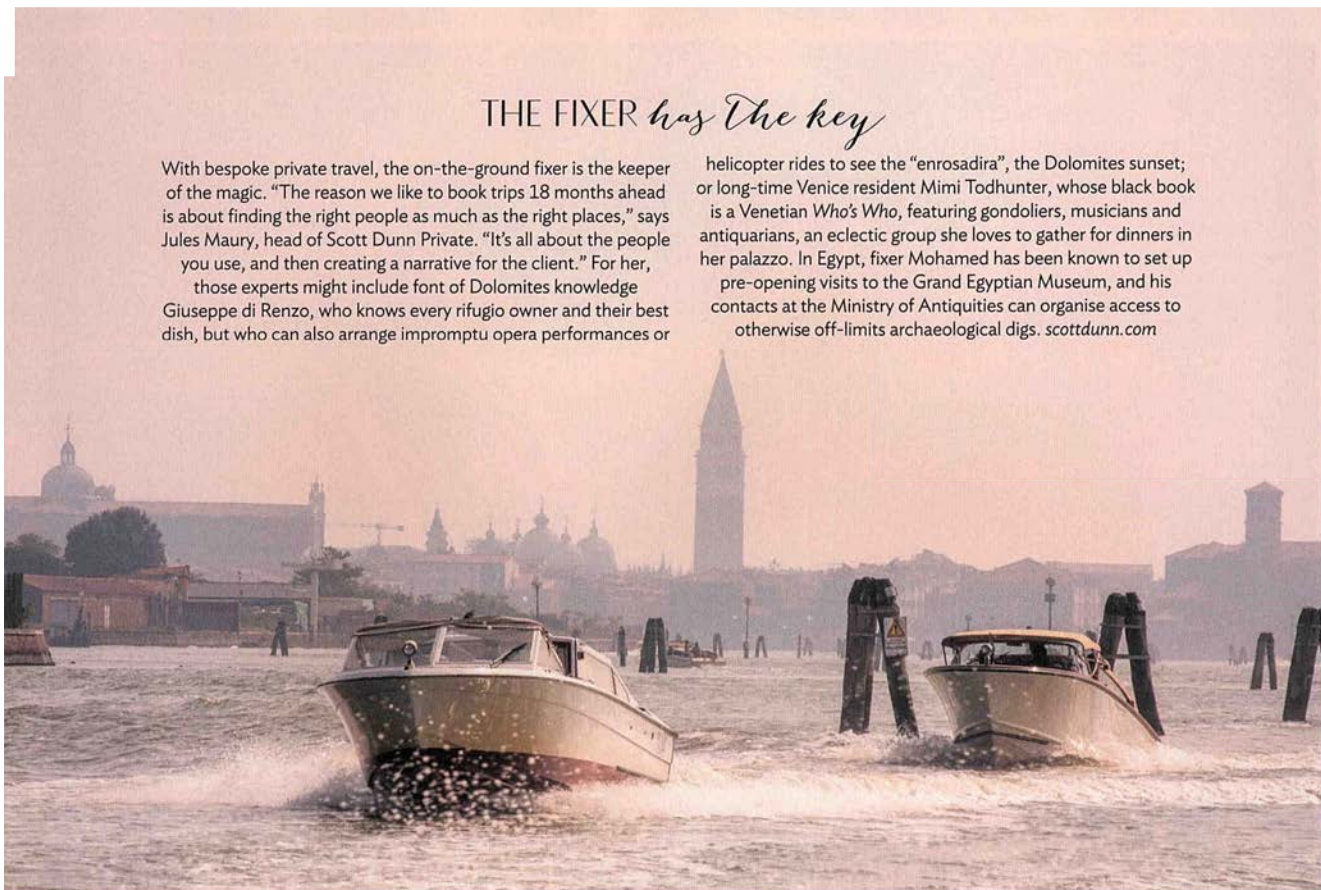


THE FIXER *has the key*

With bespoke private travel, the on-the-ground fixer is the keeper of the magic. "The reason we like to book trips 18 months ahead is about finding the right people as much as the right places," says Jules Maury, head of Scott Dunn Private. "It's all about the people you use, and then creating a narrative for the client." For her, those experts might include font of Dolomites knowledge Giuseppe di Renzo, who knows every rifugio owner and their best dish, but who can also arrange impromptu opera performances or

helicopter rides to see the "enrosadira", the Dolomites sunset; or long-time Venice resident Mimi Todhunter, whose black book is a Venetian *Who's Who*, featuring gondoliers, musicians and antiquarians, an eclectic group she loves to gather for dinners in her palazzo. In Egypt, fixer Mohamed has been known to set up pre-opening visits to the Grand Egyptian Museum, and his contacts at the Ministry of Antiquities can organise access to otherwise off-limits archaeological digs. scottdunn.com



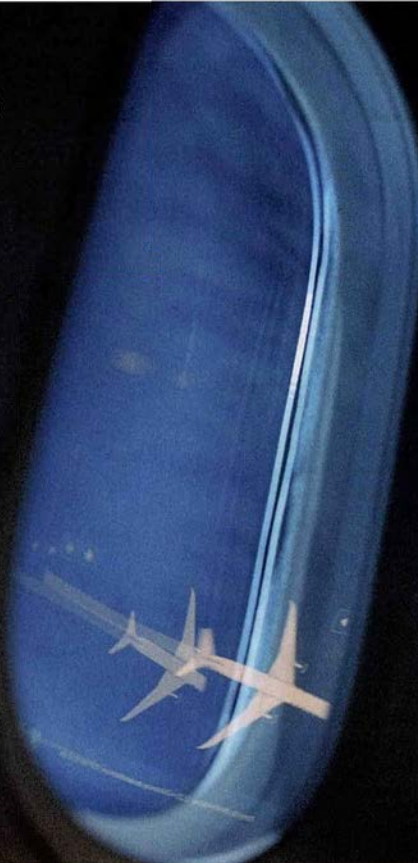
BIGGER *is better*

"The pandemic was a turning point for the villa," says Rossella Beaugié, cofounder of Mediterranean specialist The Thinking Traveller. "People realised they could get the same service as in the best hotels – but could walk around in their pyjamas." As for specific trends, she says that bigger is frequently better. "We've seen an increased demand for our largest villas, as more people bring the whole family or big groups of friends. And while an older member might pay, we've seen 20-somethings become more influential in the decision-making. They tend to like places that look great on Instagram, such as Casino Doxi Stracca in Puglia, with its poolside chapel, or the gorgeous Antika on the Sicilian island of Panarea." thethinkingtraveller.com

PHOTOGRAPHS: KAREL BALAS/VEGA MG; ANNA GUNSELMAN; OLIVER PILCHER; MICHAEL TUREK; SAM TURRELL/KINTZING; LUIGI TAVARIS

CHARTER FLYING *is changing*

The pandemic created a boom in private air travel – and many haven't gone back to first or business class. Thankfully, the segment has become more inclusive and at least slightly more environmentally friendly: flight-share companies such as Surf Air allow travellers to snag spare seats on private charters in the US, and Scott Dunn Private partner Victor is the first jet charter to use Sustainable Aviation Fuel for every flight. Meanwhile, private terminals are sprouting at airports. American outfit PS has plush suites and private cars to planes (including commercial flights) in LA and Atlanta, with plans to expand to Miami and Dallas. There's also the Windsor Suite at London's Heathrow: first designed for royalty, it now has Jason Atherton dishes and white-glove service for anyone prepared to pay. surfair.com; flyvictor.com; reserveps.com



SAFARIS *are more exclusive*

For so long, safari was a communal affair, but the game-ready private house has come into its own of late. Pioneers include eight-bedroom House in the Wild, on a lovely bend of Kenya's Mara River, owned by Tarquin and Lippa Wood, founders of the surrounding Enonkishu Conservancy; and Onduli Enclave, three exclusive-use stilted suites looking out over the faintly Martian landscape of Namibia's Damaraland. There are new additions this year, such as Singita Milele, five private suites on a prime wildebeest migration overlook in Tanzania's iconic Grumeti Reserve; and the high-design Melote House, dug into the landscape like an eco-Bond lair in South Africa's rhino-friendly Lapalala Wilderness Reserve. collectioninthewild.com; theluxurysafaricompany.com; singita.com; lepologoldges.com



THE PRIVATE *life*



THE BILLIONAIRE WHISPERER

*Sienna
Charles
India*

The founder of luxury travel concierge Sienna Charles, Jaclyn Sienna India, doesn't deal with the merely wealthy. Her clients – including former presidents and Fortune 500 CEOs – pay up to £120,000 a year for membership, which can include fixer services and bespoke travel experiences.

"Our clients pay for access to my little black book, and because they know we can make the impossible happen – whether that's closing the Hagia Sophia, securing last-minute Super Bowl tickets or getting a royal warrant to skip quarantine during the pandemic.

"It's about knowing the client but also knowing the ins and outs of every destination: the hotels, restaurants, when the traffic's going to be hectic, everything. It's my job to know when there might be too many other billionaires at the Ritz in Paris; that [high-end New York Italian] Marea is better than Carbone these days; or the exact suite to book at the new Fifth Avenue Hotel.

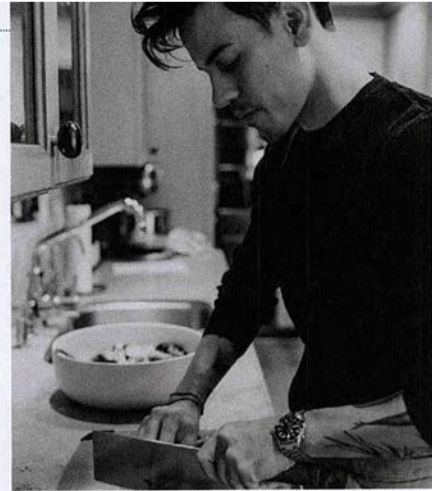
"We get to know our clients and their specific needs really well. When we took a former US president to Ethiopia's Omo Valley, we had to cater for his 30 secret service staff as well. We built camps from scratch with everything he needed, including his favourite peanut butter sandwiches. Sometimes the simple is as important as the sublime.

"We like to throw in magic moments – and sneak in excitement. We had a CEO of a major US corporation on a trip in the desert in Jordan, and we faked a breakdown, only for the client to take a camel to a tent with a beautiful dinner laid on." siennacharles.com



PROPER SAILING *is back*

A mixture of romance and sustainability is set to make this year a big one for private sailing yachts. *NaiSabah*, a 75-foot Omani liveboard dhow that cruises the pristine waters of Kenya's lovely Lamu archipelago, is powered by wind and solar energy, with experiences such as weaving with local women, and some profits going to conservation efforts. Over in Indonesia, hotels are operating traditional phinisi yachts, such as Aman's *Amandira* and the *Vela* boat from Bali boutique hotel Nirjhara. And in the exclusive world of high-end private charters, heritage yachts are exerting a bigger pull than ever – such as the elegant 1967 *Malcolm Miller*, beautifully restored and available to hire from about £52,000 a week with Arthaud Yachting. naisabah.com; aman.com; sailvela.com; arthaudyachting.com



THE CELEBRITY CHEF *Michael Dane*

In-demand private chef Michael Dane is known as much for his hosting and event organising as his food. While most of his A-list clients – including tech founders, actors and rock stars – have to remain anonymous via “ironclad NDAs”, he is known to have worked with the Osbournes, Sofia Vergara and Priyanka Chopra Jonas.

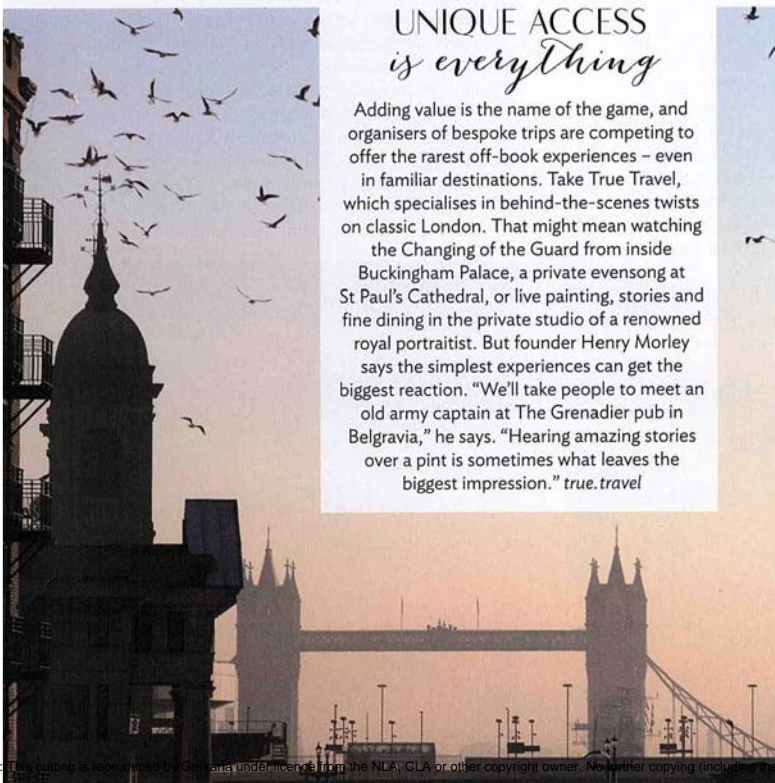
“My food is Mediterranean meets fresh Californian, but with classic French technique. I’m also a host. It’s my job to make sure that the lighting is set, the flowers are arranged, the scent is right; that guests will find mints and plasters in the bathroom. I usually know what cocktails the guests will like. The idea is that the client doesn’t have to worry about a thing. “Often the vibe is casual and I chat to guests like friends. I think a layer of formality has fallen away since the pandemic. But I’ve also done crazy parties.

Once, a client rented the Houdini mansion for 500 people and I created a living wall of cheese and charcuterie; another time, I had a day to lay on a buffet for 150 people at the Sundance Film Festival. There’s a lot of MacGyver-ing behind the scenes. “I know many of my clients like friends, but there are patterns. Tech folks tend to be quite regimented, whereas musicians will often change things at the last minute. You have to roll with it but still present something beautiful.” @daneandchampagne

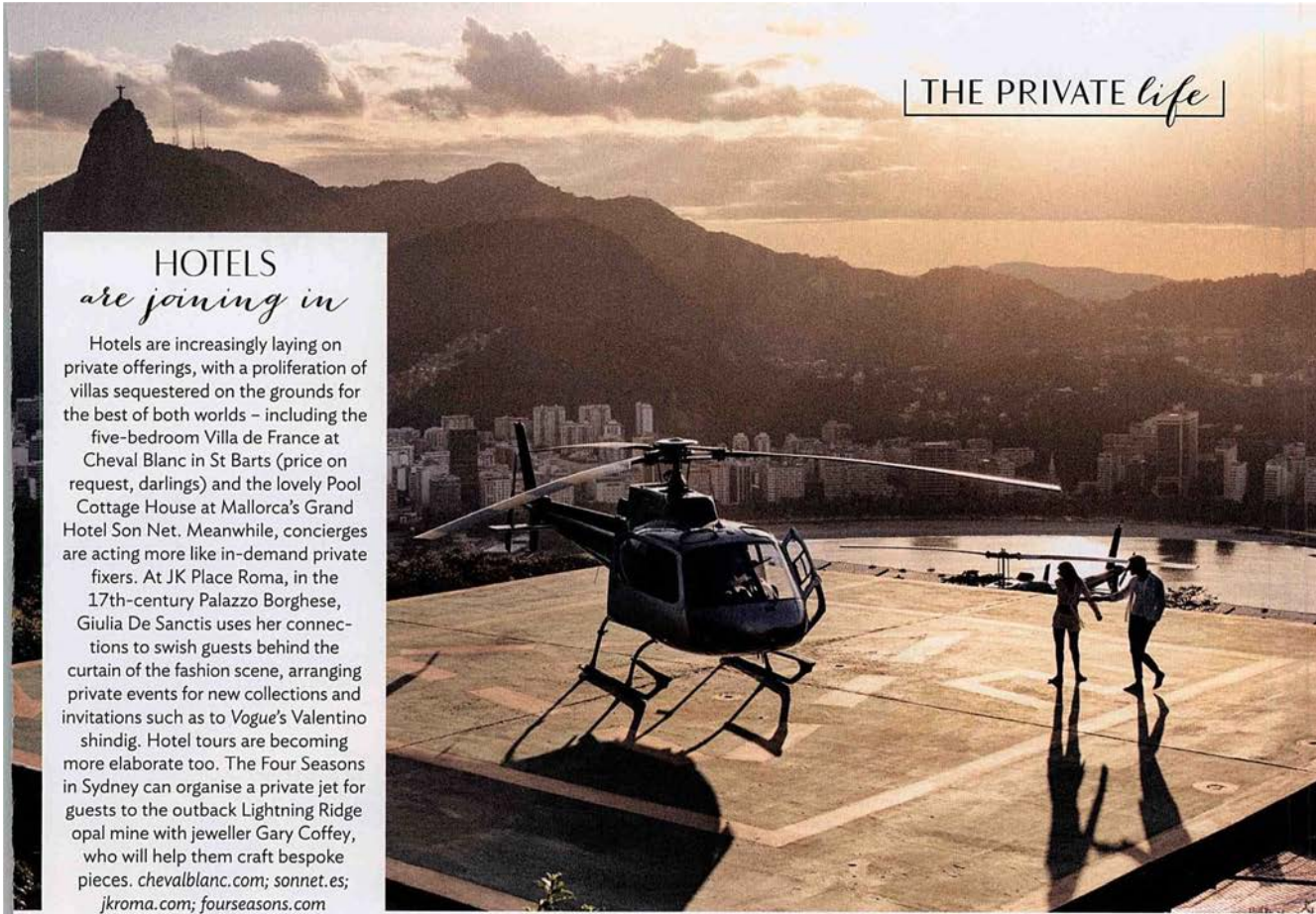


UNIQUE ACCESS *is everything*

Adding value is the name of the game, and organisers of bespoke trips are competing to offer the rarest off-book experiences – even in familiar destinations. Take True Travel, which specialises in behind-the-scenes twists on classic London. That might mean watching the Changing of the Guard from inside Buckingham Palace, a private evensong at St Paul’s Cathedral, or live painting, stories and fine dining in the private studio of a renowned royal portraitist. But founder Henry Morley says the simplest experiences can get the biggest reaction. “We’ll take people to meet an old army captain at The Grenadier pub in Belgravia,” he says. “Hearing amazing stories over a pint is sometimes what leaves the biggest impression.” true.travel



PHOTOGRAPHS: JEREMY BASTARD; SEAN DARNBOROUGH; PHILIP LEE HARVEY; SHAWN JEFFERS; MIRANDA McDONALD; OLIVER PILCHER



THE PRIVATE *life*

HOTELS
are joining in

Hotels are increasingly laying on private offerings, with a proliferation of villas sequestered on the grounds for the best of both worlds – including the five-bedroom Villa de France at Cheval Blanc in St Barts (price on request, darlings) and the lovely Pool Cottage House at Mallorca's Grand Hotel Son Net. Meanwhile, concierges are acting more like in-demand private fixers. At JK Place Roma, in the 17th-century Palazzo Borghese, Giulia De Sanctis uses her connections to swish guests behind the curtain of the fashion scene, arranging private events for new collections and invitations such as to *Vogue's* Valentino shindig. Hotel tours are becoming more elaborate too. The Four Seasons in Sydney can organise a private jet for guests to the outback Lightning Ridge opal mine with jeweller Gary Coffey, who will help them craft bespoke pieces. chevalblanc.com; sonnet.es; jkroma.com; fourseasons.com

ISOLATION *is still glorious*

While many fixers set up insider access in cities, private travel has also been trending towards far-flung escapes and a total break from being "on". Red Savannah likes to recommend New Zealand's South Island, where options include taking a helicopter to the Minaret Station, with its tented suites and terrace hot tubs, at the head of a glacial Southern Alps valley; or a night or two at The Lindis, a high-design home hidden under a wave-like roof in the pristine Ahuriri Valley, like a glassy hobbit home from the future. redsavannah.com

