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Luxury hotels in remote locations: 10 of the best



Ute Junker

It had taken most of the day, but we were almost there. After a three-and-a-half hour flight from the Chilean capital, Santiago, to the southern town of Punta Arenas, we continued our journey by car. We had already been driving for three-and-a-half hours; only one more hour to go and we would finally arrive at Explora Patagonia, the luxury lodge located in the magnificent Torres del Paine National Park. That was the plan, anyway. What we hadn't reckoned with was the car breaking down.

Even if you manage to avoid mechanical issues, getting to Explora Patagonia can be a challenge. However, that is part of the property's appeal. Indeed, Explora is a company that has built a successful business out of introducing its guests to out-of-the-way locations, including Chile's Atacama Desert and Easter Island.

It is just one of a number of high-end hotels operating in increasingly remote destinations. They are catering to travellers searching for a new type of luxury: one that focuses less on high thread count sheets and more on taking the road less travelled.

"Remote destinations offer pristine environments, authentic tribes and rare species," says Sarah Hoyland of the Classic Safari Company, which represents a range of far-flung five-star properties in countries as diverse as Tanzania and India. "It may be a schlep to get there and it may be pricey, but ultimately the reward is well worth it."

Pick any far-flung corner of the world, from the plains of Africa to the glacier-studded Alaskan fjords, from remote Himalayan kingdoms to Central American jungles, and chances are that you will find a luxury lodge open for business.

What is surprising is not just how many of these isolated properties exist, but how many creature comforts they make available to their guests. Explora Patagonia, for instance, offers not just gourmet meals and a roster of more than 40 "explorations", including hiking and horse riding, but also hot tubs with a view. Other lodges offer yoga classes and spa treatments.

Delivering a luxury experience in an under-the-radar destination requires formidable logistical skills. Take Berkeley River Lodge, a remote camp on north-west Australia's Kimberley coast that operates on a fly-in only basis. Even something as simple as making sure that guests can enjoy their favourite breakfast requires precise planning.

"We nearly ran out of eggs the other day," says lodge manager Kate Goodchild, explaining that the majority of supplies are brought in regularly by barge. "The tides can be tricky here, and the barge was five or six days late. That is not that unusual."

Leaving a margin for error is standard practice but, even so, things sometimes go wrong. That is when a certain degree of creativity is required. "There may be an issue with the freight; say we have received some fish in shocking condition. If we have guests going fishing, I'm never afraid to tell them that they responsible for catching that night's entree," Goodchild says.

Unlike most luxury properties, these lodges sometimes require a sense of adventure. Getting there can be an experience; at one lodge tucked into the Central American jungle, guests arrive by rafting down a river. If, however, the idea of spectacular surroundings, superior service, and a one-of-a-kind experience appeals, then give one of these boundary-pushing lodges a try.

THE PLACE

Sujan Sher Bagh, Rajasthan, India



WHERE The camp is located on the edge of Ranthambhore National Park, a four-hour drive away from Jaipur airport.

WHY Sher Bagh offers a classic safari experience, complete with old-school personal service and its 12 hand-stitched tents decked out with period furnishings. (Not everything is retro, however; each tent has a spacious en suite bathroom.) The big attraction here is India's best tiger spotting, with daily game drives into the dry thorn forest where tigers make their home along with other wildlife including antelope, jackals, mongoose and a wide range of bird life. Other activities include visits to Mughal ruins, cooking classes and massages.

LUXE FACTOR Dinner by the campfire is a magical experience, with starry skies overhead and the camp bathed in the soft light of lanterns hanging from trees.

ESSENTIAL Rates from \$2900 per person twin share for three nights. See sujanluxury.com; classicsafaricompany.com.au