

“Lanterns glow, the water in the pool - designed like an old step - well reflects the rising moon and then, as dusk deepens, its stars and bars.”

VANITY FAIR
APRIL 2012
ON TRAVEL

*“The traveller sees what he sees,
the tourist sees what he has come to see.”*
—G.K. CHESTERTON

PATAGONIA
ARE WE AT THE END OF
THE WORLD YET?
By PETER HUGHES

OMAN
GET YOUR FILL OF THE
EMPTY QUARTER
By JEMIMA KHAN

CAPRI
WHEN THE WRONG TIME OF YEAR
IS THE RIGHT TIME TO GO
By ALICE B-B

Plus: STEPHEN BAYLEY ON VIENNA, RACHEL JOHNSON ON CARTAGENA,
STEVE KING ON SINTRA, MARIELLA FROSTRUP ON BOOKS, LUCIA VAN DER POST ON LUXURY
and MICHAEL SIMKINS BOTH ON AND OFF THE RAILS



PLAY IT AGAIN

The scarlet grand piano in the centre of the atrium at the Oberoi Mumbai is a V-sign in musical form, a symbol of renewal after the terrorist attacks. Rooms, many overlooking the bay of the Queen's Necklace, are contemporary and super-chic and you'll find your own grand piano—in red chocolate—waiting for you on your desk. greavesindia.com

The Oberoi Mumbai and, inset left, the red grand piano in the hotel's lobby.

CURRY ON CAMPING

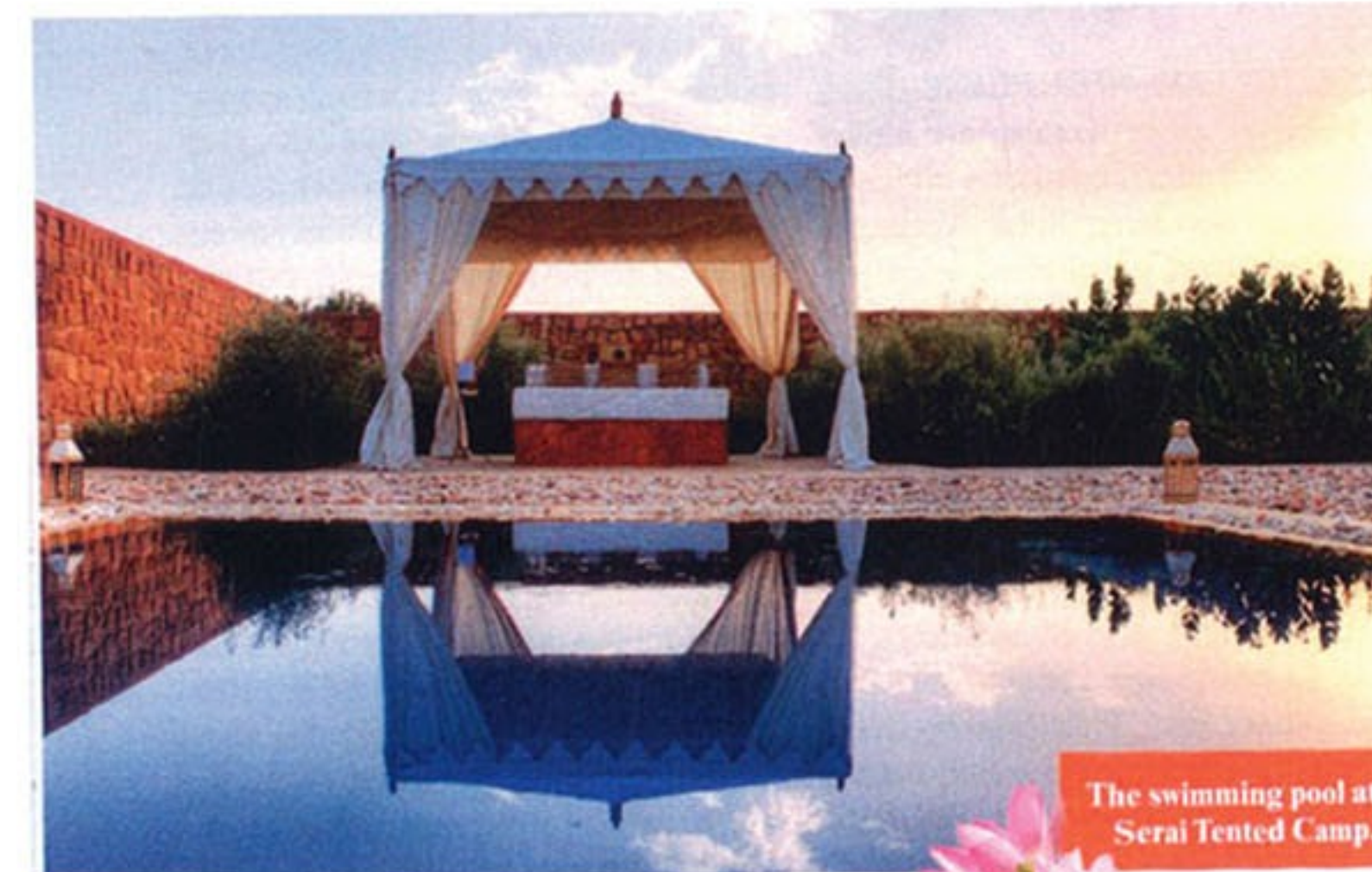
There was nowhere to stay in Jaisalmer, the golden city of sand fast diminishing, like a sandcastle, into the desert from which it was built. Well, there was the Fort Rajwada, where they used to spell out “Welcome Victoria Mather” in lentils in the hall. Now there's the Serai tented camp, and it's dreamy. Jaisal and Anjali Singh, who turned their Sher Bagh Camp from quirky-charming to sexy-smart, have excelled. Lanterns glow, the water in the pool—designed like an old step-well—reflects the rising moon and then, as dusk deepens, its stars and bars. Drinks are set up under the night sky, dinner is around the campfire. All 21 tents have drawing rooms, some have private walled gardens and pools. The spa uses chemical-free herbs and spices. greavesindia.com

GEM OF A SETTING

Devi Ratn, named for the nine gems said to focus cosmic energy, is an explosion of colour: ruby-red, sapphire-blue, emerald-green. It celebrates the Pink City's craftsmanship with architecture deploying mirror-work, inlay and hammered metal. When the Poddar family opened Devi Garh, near Udaipur, there was an audible gasp from traditionalists who preferred the heritage hotels where switching on the light often means it falls off the wall. If Elizabeth Hurley were a hotel, she'd be Devi Garh (and has indeed stayed there). Love Devi Ratn or loathe it, but realise that India cannot be kept as a preserve of quaint crumbling palaces to indulge our nostalgia. It's made for the bling and the bold, and Ratn is a magical, contemporary statement. greavesindia.com

SO WELL TRAINED

Luxury trains in India are on the fast track. Fabulous service, you don't have to pack and unpack, WiFi, plasma screens, spa cars. Forget the old Palace on Wheels (tired and downmarket), take the Maharajas' Express from Delhi, the Deccan Odyssey from Mumbai or the Golden Chariot from Bangalore. **The Maharajas' Express** All aboard the red train with gold stars: Agra (champagne with the sunset at the Taj Mahal); a moonlight elephant-polo match in Jaipur; a camel-cart ride to dinner, like a pop-up restaurant, in the desert at Bikaner; fireworks at the Mehrangarh Fort in Jodhpur. The horror of trains is rattling along in a tube, having to do strip washes, à la boarding school, with a stinky flannel. Here the suites have baths and showers, a sitting room, proper double beds, sublime staff. coxandkings.co.uk **The Deccan Odyssey** The blue train that enables visits to the monumental forts of Sindhudurg and Daulatabad, the Ellora and Ajanta Caves (shades of E.M. Forster), Gandhi's ashram in Sevagram and Goa's beaches (over-praised) and markets. And all the while you have the spa car and the on-board steam bath. coxandkings.co.uk **The Golden Chariot** Karnataka on the pink train that travels to 14th-century Hampi (wondrous ruins and no decent hotel within hitting distance), Kabini for the wildlife, Mysore's market, a still life of vivid spices, Bandipur in the Nilgiri Hills and Tipu Sultan's island fortress of Srirangapatna. The interior of the train is reminiscent of Buckingham Palace: plush. greavesindia.com



The swimming pool at Serai Tented Camp.