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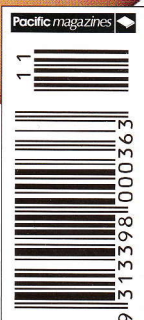
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PP 255003/08793



The villa's Balinese-inspired central atrium



Water features create an aura of calm

THE STARS' SECRET HIDEAWAY

Welcome to the Byron Bay eco-estate where A-listers come to play by Juliet Rieden

DRIVING THROUGH THE GATES OF EMERALD VALLEY ESTATE IN BYRON'S LUSH hinterland, it's easy to see why this away-from-it-all private estate is proving such a hit with Hollywood stars and local VIPs—here nature and luxury are in perfect sync. The stunning eight-person villa is set in 80 acres of landscaped gardens, which include a spring water lake, a natural waterfall, a dreamy swimming pool, outdoor jacuzzi and indoor marble steam room. Indeed, everything you need for a stylish, private house party or retreat.

But the real trump card in this five-star haven is its eco-cred. Here you can indulge and party like a star without leaving that well-trodden carbon footprint. While it may be suspiciously trendy to jump on the green bandwagon, Emerald Valley is doing much more than that. Green power runs this impressive estate and its water supply is 100 per cent self-sufficient, thanks to smart water harvesting and bore water. And that's just the start. The handsome wooden floors in the villa are made from recycled or plantation timber, its paint is



All bedrooms overlook the lush gardens.

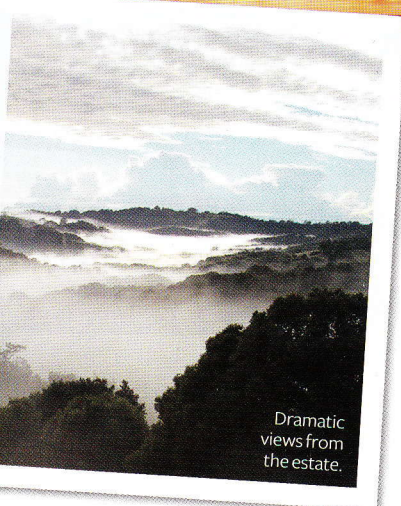
“Luxurious living brings new meaning to eco-chic!”



The fresh spring water swimming pool.



Most of the villa's furniture is made from recycled teak.



Dramatic views from the estate.

non-toxic, and the furniture is crafted from recycled teak. The solar-heated pool surrounded by Balinese fountains and plush sun-beds, and set within terraces of native flora and fauna (and an organic veggie patch), is filled with pure oxygenated spring water with no added chlorine or salt.

Green issues aside, Emerald Valley is a deliciously special place. Much of the architecture pays homage to Balinese arts and

traditions, creating an aura of tranquillity both indoors and out. The villa is dominated by an open-air central atrium with serene water features, and from this its many rooms lead off a covered walkway. There's an open-plan living area that opens onto verandahs and the pool terrace, an airy state-of-the art kitchen and dining area for formal dining, four bedrooms and four pale marble bathrooms decorated with Balinese reliefs.

To pamper your every need, an on-site concierge is on hand, primed to organise gourmet catering, spa therapies, entertainment and travel arrangements. You can jump behind the wheel of the fun Polaris 4x4 mini-Ranger to motor around the property or, to go further afield, there's a latest model Range Rover available for rental. And if all this sounds a tad energetic, kick back on a daybed in one of the two converted rice barns—one facing the pool the other overlooking the green, green valley below. You might even spot a native koala!

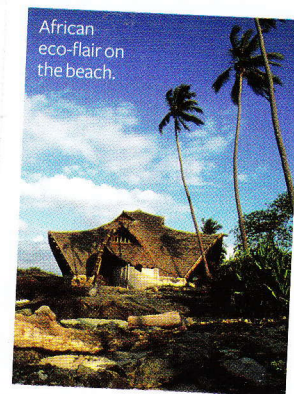
TO BOOK Emerald Valley Villa Private Estate, Byron Bay Hinterland, Goolengerry, NSW 2480 (02-6684 9398/emeraldvalleyvilla.com). From \$1,000 per night for the villa (8-person).

MORE ECO RETREATS

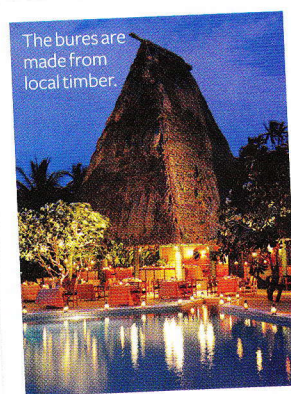
CHUMBE ISLAND

This exotic island, and its unique reef off the coast of Zanzibar, has battled hard for its conservation status to protect its unique marine life and forest reserve. So staying here is a once-in-a-lifetime delight. There are just seven two-person eco-bungalows, each with a self-contained bathroom, open living area and palm-thatched roof. Prices include all meals served in the visitor centre (right), boat transfer to the island, snorkelling tours of the reef and park fees.

TO BOOK Chumbe Island, Zanzibar, Tanzania (0011-255 24 2231040/chumbeisland.com). From \$250 pp/per night in a double bungalow.



African eco-flair on the beach.



The bures are made from local timber.

FIJI ISLANDS RESORT

This award-winning eco-resort is set on 17 acres of a former coconut plantation overlooking Savusavu Bay with its pristine coral reefs. Built in the style of a traditional Fijian village, the resort features 25 thatched roof bures nestled amid the palm trees and a freshwater swimming pool. There are no phones or TVs and bures are elevated to take advantage of the sea breezes. Prices include all meals, airport transfers and a host of free water activities.

TO BOOK Jean-Michel Cousteau Fiji Islands Resort, Vanua Levu, Fiji (03-9815 0379/fijiislandsresort.com). From \$908 per night per couple incl. two children.

HOTEL PUNTA ISLITA

Set in a secluded cove along Costa Rica's rugged Pacific Coast, with ocean on one side and tropical jungle on the other, this lovely hotel is part of the Small Luxury Hotels of the World group and also prides itself on its responsible tourism. Islita runs a sea-turtle protection program, has 85 per cent local staff and operates a host of eco-initiatives. It's an intimate hideaway with an exquisite infinity pool and deluxe rooms, suites and villas with private decks and plunge pools. ■

TO BOOK Hotel Punta Islita, Guanacaste, Costa Rica (1800 251 958/hotel-puntaislita.com). From \$320 per night (ex tax) for double room incl. breakfast.



Harry's Bar overlooks the infinity pool.