

An A-list summer

As the days grow longer and thoughts turn to sunny getaways, Paul Clements gives us a definitive guide to the hot places to see and be seen in this season

PHOTOGRAPH BY CORBIS. ADDITIONAL WORDS: HARRIET COOPER

THE URBAN RETREAT

Already a magnet for international restaurants and bars, Istanbul's Besiktas neighbourhood, on the edge of the Bosphorus, has a new bauble: W Istanbul. Set inside a row of renovated, 19th-century apartments, the sassy bolthole embraces the east-meets-west vibe that pervades the magnificent part-European, part-Asian city. The W's look is contemporary Ottoman, with lots of luscious, deep-red fabrics and cushions, giving the 137 rooms an exotic boudoir feel. The 80 duplex suites also come with private gardens. Mindful of guests who expect 350-count Egyptian cotton sheets and a New York-style can-do concierge to get problems sorted at any hour, the hotel has some killer specs: a buzzy late-night bar, a Bliss spa and an in-house destination restaurant, Spice Market, courtesy of New York celebrity chef Jean-Georges Vongerichten. Doubles from £225. starwoodhotels.com

THE BACK-TO-NATURE SAFARI

The latest addition to the select group of well-appointed camps in the NamibRand nature reserve is the stylish four-tent desert getaway, Boulders Camp in Namibia. Situated 20 miles south of Wolfedans in 45,000 hectares of spectacular wilderness, predators roaming the area include leopards, hyenas, black-backed jackals, bat-eared foxes and aardwolves. The camp's main areas – the dining tents, breakfast deck and open fireplace – are concealed in the midst of granite boulders. At night, guests are near a sundowner spot overlooking the reserve. A 17-day self-drive brown hyena safari, including a stay in Boulders Camp and British Airways flights, from £3,626pp with Expert Africa. expertafrica.com

THE EXTRA MILE

There is little worse than getting to the end of a novel on holiday when you've brought nothing else to read. How is one to fill those empty hours on the sun lounger? The Amathus Beach Hotel in Paphos, Cyprus, has found a solution. Armed with an index of all the titles available on the hotel's shelves – a collection that includes classics like Evelyn Waugh's *Decline and Fall* and prize-worthy primers such as Zadie Smith's *On Beauty*, as well as the latest thrillers and romances – the Book Boys (a team of literary-minded bellboys) patrol the poolside, ready to hand-deliver a new paperback as you turn the final page of your airport fiction. Doubles from £260. amathus-hotels.com/paphos

THE HOT TABLE

After her run as chef-patron at London's grand Connaught hotel, highly regarded British chef Angela Hartnett is set to head a new restaurant in Mayfair. Opening later this summer, fine-dining restaurant Murano will offer Italian food

with Sicilian leanings. When Hartnett's not putting finishing touches to bowls of *stuzzichini* (small tapas-style pasta dishes), she will be dashing across town to the York & Albany, a new Marylebone restaurant with hotel rooms that she is also overseeing. If that's not busy enough, Gordon Ramsay's right-hand woman will continue to advise on the menus at Cielo, an upscale Italian restaurant at a golf resort in Boca Raton, Florida. gordonramsay.com

THE CLUB NIGHT

What exactly is missing from Cabo Azul Resort & Spa in Los Cabos, Mexico, the all-villa resort that's straight out of a coffee-table book? It already has 12 acres of gorgeous, white-sand beaches, a three-level infinity pool with a swim-up taco bar, candlelit beach cabanas, an indulgent spa and even a graceful open-air wedding chapel complete with billowing white drapes. If that's not enough to ensure a sparkling, fashionable crowd, this summer the super-sophisticated spot on the Sea of Cortez unveils a state-of-the-art dance floor. It won't be long before superstar DJs are clamouring for week-long residencies, just so they can ride a horse along the seafloor and sample high-quality tequila at the new tasting bar. The Grand Penthouse Suite from £1,000 per night. caboazulresort.com

THE SUMMER EVENT

Imagine being able to view the most expensive cars in the world all at once, including a first glimpse of the fastest production car on the planet and Steve McQueen's Ferrari Lusso 250, worth a cool £1.1million. Well you can at Salon Privé, the glamorous three-day luxury and supercar event at the Hurlingham Club in London, which has become a permanent fixture on the British social calendar. Taking place 2–4 July this year, the Salon Privé daytime and evening events include the inaugural Summer Ball, in association with the Prince's Trust. There's also a daytime garden party and a glittering awards ceremony. salonprivelondon.com

THE FAMILY GETAWAY

The opulent resort of Amiranides in Crete recently opened, featuring a design that echoes the grand palaces of Minoan kings. It's sure to make a splash with water-babies of all ages. Located on the edge of the Egean Sea, the aquatic amenities are impressive. There's an Olympic-sized sea-water swimming pool, a play zone for children and a watersports centre offering instruction on windsurfing, canoeing, sailing and water-skiing. The grounds are dotted with palm-fringed saltwater lagoons, while the guestrooms and family villas come with their own private pools. For some grown-up pampering, there's the vast Elixir Spa, featuring

Ayurvedic and Greek treatments involving natural ingredients, including locally sourced honey and essential oils. The Amiranides Dream Villa is available from £1,150 per night. greccotel.com

THE FITNESS RETREAT

If you're feeling out of shape after a dozy winter, kick-start your fitness regime with a motivational holiday. This summer, Purescapes is offering week-long energising wellness retreats in European destinations to detox, revitalise and point the way to better urban living. From June, up to 12 guests will stay in a luxurious Algarve villa surrounded by citrus groves and be treated to one-on-one fitness sessions and group classes in qigong (an ancient Chinese system of exercises and breathing techniques), yoga and boxercise. Meals are organic, and there's plenty of free time to indulge in massages, swim in the pool and go on organised hikes through the beautiful Monchique mountains. Doubles from £1,810 for seven nights. purescapes.com

THE OUTDOOR CHALLENGE

The only marathon set in a game park, the Safaricom Marathon in Kenya is also one of the world's toughest. It's not just the unpredictable climate (marathon day, 28 June, is at the end of the rainy season) or the loneliness of the open dirt track. It's the constant distraction by elephants, giraffes, buffalos and the world's largest single population of Grevy's zebra. You'll be hard pressed to keep your eyes on the track as you gasp through 26 miles of the country's Lewa Wildlife Conservancy. The annual event raises money to benefit Tusk, a conservation charity working in Africa, which is supported by British Airways. With entries limited to around 1,000 people, it attracts serious athletes, so if you're merely spectating, at least you can be sure that those approaching rhinos aren't just fun-runners in foam suits. To take part in this year's race, contact Tusk. tusk.org

THE PRESIDENTIAL SUITE

Not to be put in the shade by shining tower blocks springing up in Beijing for the Olympics, Shanghai is unveiling a skyscraper with a hotel to outshine them all. When the Park Hyatt Shanghai opens in July, stretching from the 79th to the 93rd floor of the 101-storey Shanghai World Trade Centre, it will take over from the nearby Grand Hyatt as the world's tallest hotel. The highlight of New York designer Tony Chi's rooms are the impressive bathrooms, with oriental bathing areas, vast monsoon showers and vanity mirrors with embedded flatscreen TVs. Visitors to the 92nd-floor twin bars, one Western-themed, the other with a traditional Chinese feel, will have awesome views across the Huangpu River. But if you really want to spread out, book the State Guest House suite. It occupies the 86th floor and has ▶