

THE FUTURE OF TRAVEL

For the travel world, 2021 is not just a year for recovery – it's also an opportunity for the industry to come back stronger, and more environmentally and socially conscious, than before. Sustainability will permeate travel trends in the coming year as hotels, travel companies and tourism destinations plan for a brighter future of responsible tourism in which community and preservation of the natural world is key

Words: Lauren Jade Hill

GOING REMOTE

As the need to socially distance lingers and we seek out an antidote to over-tourism, travellers are looking to remote pockets of the world for landscapes that encapsulate escapism.

Luxury travel operator Cookson Adventures specialises in intrepid journeys to far-flung spots. Going one step further than isolated locations favoured by an increasing number of travellers, the adventure specialist is focusing on less-visited 'new remote' destinations.

Join an expedition to gargantuan Greenland, travel far off the coast of Central America to the volcanic Revillagigedo Archipelago and venture to the rarely travelled Kuril Islands between Kamchatka and Japan. Best explored by yacht, each wilderness combines natural wonders such as flooded calderas with wildlife ranging from reindeers to narwhals.

Elsewhere, from spring 2021, WILDNIS brings the focus closer to home with luxury expeditions in the Scottish Highlands. Founded by former British Army majors, the new tour operator immerses travellers in the untouched environment through exploration by restored Land Rover Defender, outdoor activities such as scrambling, and a mobile tented-camp experience topped off with open-fire feasts. Totally wild...

cooksonadventures.com; wildnis.co.uk



Clockwise from left: Fjord cruising in Greenland, remote islands (both Cookson Adventures); Varty camp deck and Elephant built at Londolozi (Ker Downey); Tracking at Phinda (andBeyond)



CONSERVATION CONNECTION

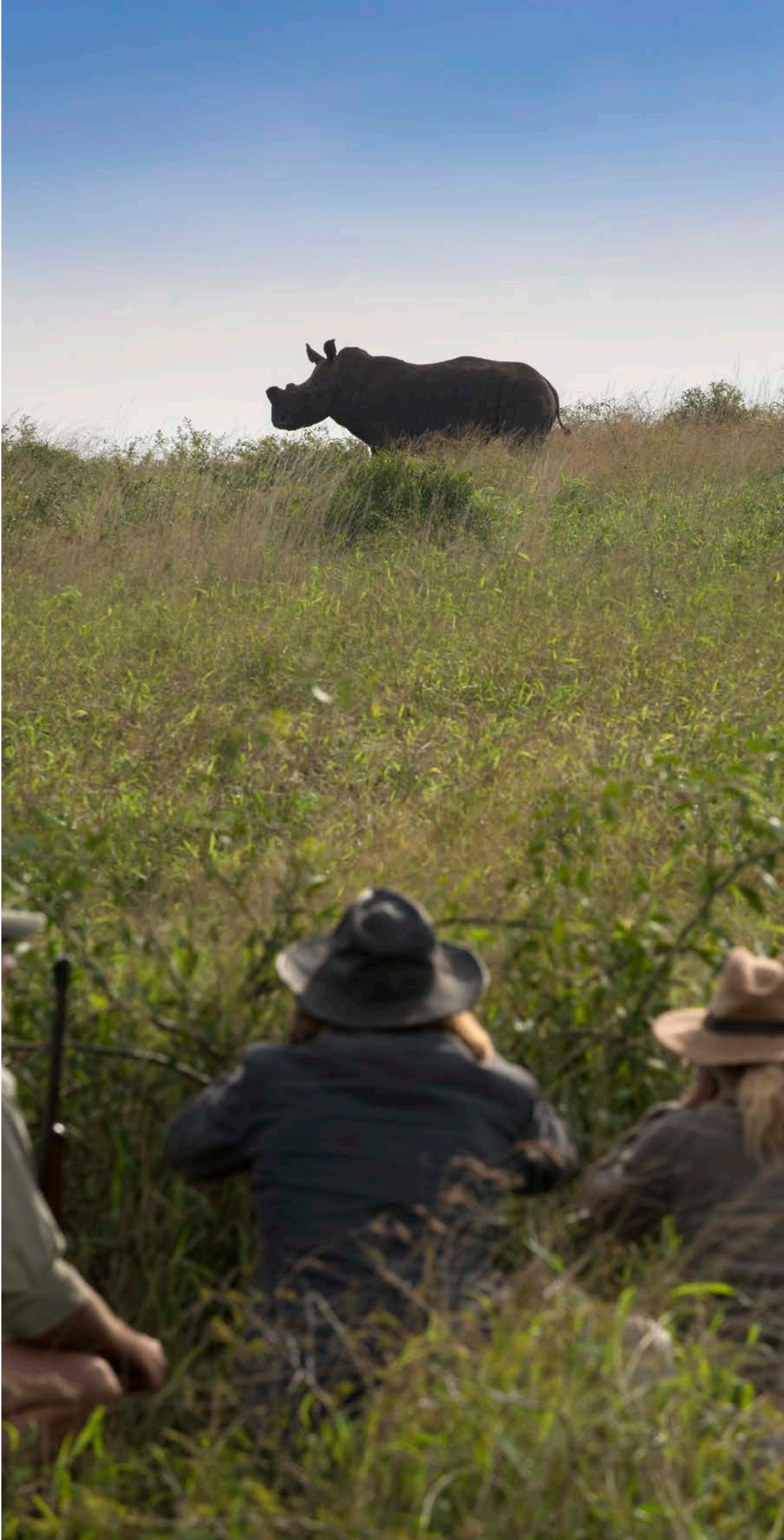
If there's a positive to take from the challenges of 2020, it's the world's renewed appreciation for nature, with new challenges in protecting areas of wilderness and their resident wildlife without the presence of tourism.

More conscious travellers are expected to embark on conservation journeys that make a direct difference and safari specialists across Africa have curated itineraries giving luxury travellers this opportunity.

Ker & Downey Africa has launched its conservation safari with the Tracker Academy, a non-profit organisation offering training to youth from disadvantaged backgrounds. Guests signing up for this itinerary join academy students and graduates at Tswalu Kalahari and Londolozi game reserves, to participate in wildlife tracking and conservation management.

Experiential travel company andBeyond, known for conservation initiatives such as Ocean with Borders, hosts Impact Journeys with immersive itineraries around conservation and community development. Join the Phinda Impact Journey for experiences such as pangolin tagging and rhino notching. Now that's animal instinct. »

ker-downeyafrica.com; andbeyond.com





COMMUNITY FOCUS

The past year has also boosted community involvement and the importance of local business. Support for those forging an industry in the local area extends to where we travel, with hotels and travel companies endeavouring to connect guests with local people.

In October, leading galleries from across Italy established the ITALICS Art and Landscape artist collective and digital platform to introduce travellers to less-visited sites across the country and connect them with the cultural community. Its platform gives tips on where to go while telling the stories of local creatives and businesses.

In Marrakech, luxury boutique hotel El Fenn is to emerge from a major expansion that sees it now spanning 12 interconnected riads of the medina. The hotel is also pledging a greater commitment to supporting the community and sharing that experience with guests through everything from the art to the food.

Several hotels in London are also supporting local business. When Hyatt Regency London – The Churchill reopened in September following a refurbishment, the hotel also launched a Discover Marylebone package, partnering with small businesses and artisans in the neighbourhood including a local candle-maker. Local heroes, indeed.

italics.art; el-fenn.com; hyatt.com



Clockwise from left: Italy's Galleria dello Scudo and Galleria Continua, Italy (both ITALICS); Ultima Corfu; Villa La Fonte, Borgo Pignano (both ©Mark Bolton)



HOME FROM HOME

With increased desire for exclusive-use accommodation and longer stays, it's no surprise villa specialists have seen a dramatic increase in interest – in October, Tuscany Now & More reported a 500% rise in bookings and enquiries.

This comes as several ultra-luxury villas make their debut, including the new Villa La Lavandaia, welcoming guests from April 2021, and the refurbished Villa La Fonte at the celebrated Tuscan estate of Borgo Pignano.

Ultima Collection has added to its portfolio of properties designed to bridge the gap between five-star hotel and private home with the summer launch of the seven-suite Ultima Corfu property and December debut of a 13-chalet Ultima Courchevel resort.

Embracing this move towards exclusive-use accommodation, more hotels have also started to offer buyouts. You can book a camp in Rwanda, Zimbabwe or Botswana with Wilderness Safaris or stay at a lodge in Peru, Argentina or Chile with Explora, safe in the knowledge you'll have the entire place to yourself. The world really is yours. »

tuscanynowandmore.com; ultimacollection.com; wilderness-safaris.com; explora.com

IMMERSIVE WELLNESS

Holistic wellness is to become an even higher priority at luxury properties around the world as we yearn more than ever for restorative travel. Hotels first responded to the changing travel landscape by creating digital wellness platforms. Holistic wellbeing brand COMO Shambhala launched its new digital wellness companion, COMO Shambhala By My Side, while health resort Chiva-Som debuted its online intensive wellness series. These offerings complement wellness retreats with pre- and post-travel sessions, while resorts develop new programmes that make self-care a greater part of your stay. In September, St Lucia's Windjammer Landing Villa Beach Resort launched an underwater breathwork programme combining meditative breathwork, yogic postures and diving. And, in Myanmar, remote island resort Wa Ale is preparing to launch of its new ayurvedic jungle.

The coming year also promises new wellness resort openings. Stay at the luxury hideaway Kagi Maldives Spa Island, venture to the Middle East's first full-immersion wellness retreat, Zula Wellness Resort in Qatar, and stay on the jungle island of Bangkok's Chao Phraya River at the fully integrative health retreat, RAKxa. Now that's good news – and good health – for the new year. 

comohotels.com; chivasom.com; windjammer-landing.com; waaleresort.com; kagimaldives.com; zula.com; rakxawellness.com

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Island dreaming:
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