



THE  TIMES

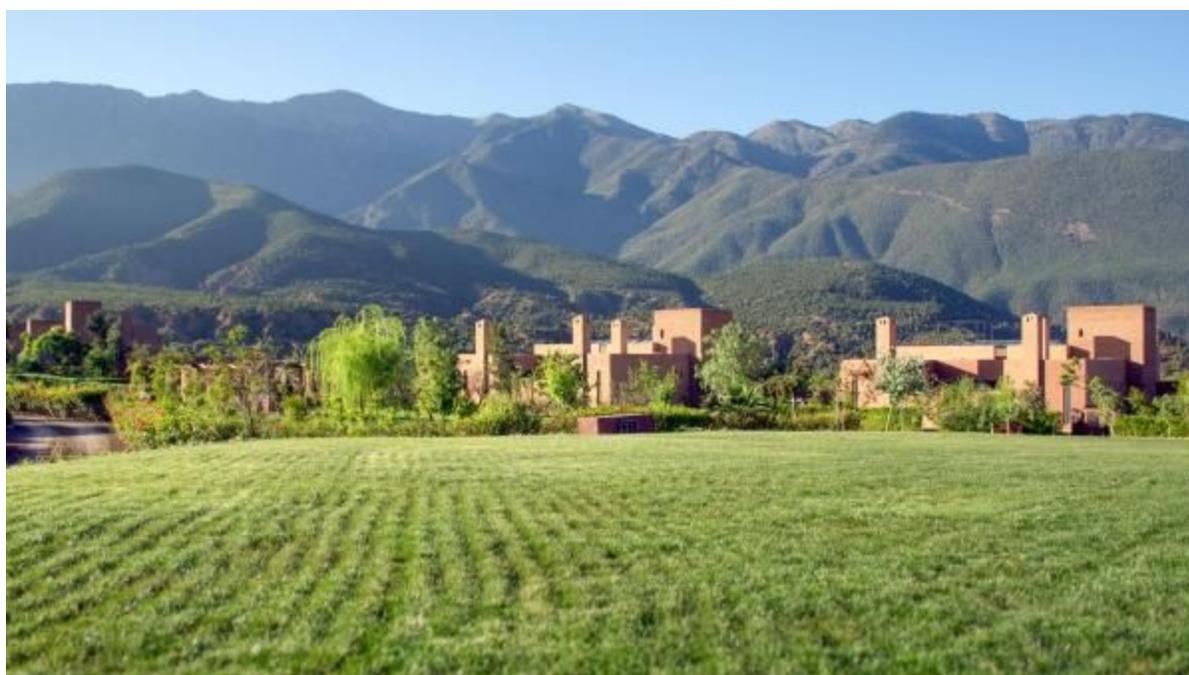
OVERSEAS

Ultra-luxe holiday homes that come with unforgettable experiences

The beach, golf, a pool and a spa don't cut it any more

Emma Wells

June 26 2016, 12:01am, The Sunday Times



Morocco: When you tire of your three-bedroom villa with private pool terrace at L'Amandier, in the foothills of the Atlas Mountains, you can seek out the hotel's Berber guide for a hike or enjoy an al fresco yoga session. 020 7754 5563, lamandierhotel.com

It used to be simple. A kidney-shaped private pool, a beach and a round of golf a stroll away, a tennis court and a Swedish massage at the local health club were considered the luxurious perks of owning a second home abroad. But then came all the other



must-haves: concierge and butler services, infinity saltwater pools and fancy cosmetic treatments on tap (including the odd sneaky Botox tweak) at an on-site branded spa. Today — led by ultra-wealthy buyers, of course — we are making our holiday homes work even harder. These sleek mansions of leisure are no longer places where we simply unwind and recharge. Yes, size still matters: the more square footage the better, and starchitect-designed trophy homes with features such as air-filtration systems and museum-standard art-hanging pulley assemblies are high on wanted lists. Yet more important than tangible treats such as the helipad or stabling for the palominos are features that will add a frisson to your Instagram feed: it's all about adventure and experience rather than sheer excess, whatever your budget.

“We are increasingly finding that multiple buyers are looking for so much more than just a holiday home,” says Sergio Greco, sales manager at Italy Sotheby’s International Realty. “Any holiday destination can offer a beach or a luxury spa within its resort, but a property with a special something — whether it’s an experience that is truly indulgent or particularly exciting— gives its owner extra kudos among their peers. Buyers want a home where they can create unforgettable experiences with their friends and family.”

Canny developers and one-off housebuilders are now far more ambitious in their offerings — whether in terms of cutting-edge design or of assessing unique possibilities beyond just the beach, the golf course and fine dining — and are luring prospective purchasers to road-test them.

“We call these ‘destination experiences’, and they are becoming increasingly important,” says Robert Green, managing director of Sphere Estates. “Expert guides help to prepare bespoke itineraries, make restaurant reservations or offer guided tours. The aim is to sell the destination first, so the buyer understands the benefits of owning a home there.”

Buyers at a development of 15 villas in the IS Molas golf resort, on the southwest coast of Sardinia, can start the day with a round of golf on one of the most technically challenging courses in the Mediterranean, before a spot of waterskiing or a scenic cycle through 300 acres of wild private parkland, simultaneously genning up on the native flora and fauna. They can follow all this with a visit to a Bronze Age burial site — which will tick the culture box. Organically shaped two-bedroom villas here start at €2.15m (£1.6m; 00 39 028 707 8300,[sothebysrealty.com](https://www.sothebysrealty.com)).



Owners of the Residences at Four Seasons Chiang Mai, in Thailand, can take this a step further. When they need to escape their two- or four-bedroom homes, which have private pavilions and luxury amenities on tap, as well as use of a 65ft infinity-edge pool, they can head to the local market with the resort’s master chefs to choose fresh ingredients, then return to the kitchen to learn to cook Thai dishes that will dazzle their friends at home. (Artisan tableware can be shipped directly to their kitchen, naturally.)

Once they’ve perfected their *khao soi*, they can borrow a traditional *mor hom* costume and spend a morning with local farmers, learning how rice is cultivated and harvested. Residences start at about £2.8m (00 66 22 0779 1321, residences-chiangmai.com). If sampling Michelin-starred snacks is more your idea of a holiday, there are plenty of options. Buyers of the vast range of homes at the pink-hued Ritz-Carlton Abama resort, in Guia di Isora, Tenerife, get good reductions if they want to use the five-star hotel’s amenities, which include two Michelin-starred eateries: MB, the signature restaurant of the celebrated Basque chef Martin Berasategui; and Kabuki, which serves Japanese fusion cuisine. Swish one-bedroom “terrace apartments” with views of the Atlantic start at €600,000 (020 3617 1360, sphereestates.com).

Other big overseas buying trends include conservation — especially for those with deep pockets. Having bought Blackadore Caye, off the coast of Belize, with plans to create an eco-resort, the Oscar-winning actor and heart-throb Leonardo Di Caprio is leading a new wave of environmentalists, preservationists — and plain old tree-huggers. If you have a fantastic \$100m to spare, Islas Cayonetas, a trio of islands a 30-minute helicopter ride from Panama City, is for sale. A haven for endangered sea turtles and a dozen species of birds and trees that are no longer found in mainland Panama, it has 19 miles of coastline and 50 unspoiled white-sand beaches (00 1 310 858 5476, christiesrealestate.com).



New York From \$2.65m

Here's the ultimate boho crib, designed by the art-gallery starchitect Annabelle Selldorf. One-bedders in this chichi Greenwich Village development start at £1.8m.

00 1 212 982 2112, 2least12.com