

BAROS
maldives

COUNTRY & TOWN
HOUSE

AUGUST 2010

**JADE
JAGGER**
A WOMAN
OF MANY
TALENTS

*Best
boutique
boltholes*

**THE GREAT
BRITISH ISSUE**

WITH
A delu
Jaqu
croquet s

**BACK TO
THE FUTURE**
WHY BR
DESIGNER
NEED THE PAS

HOUS
SWAI
All yo
need
kno

BAROS

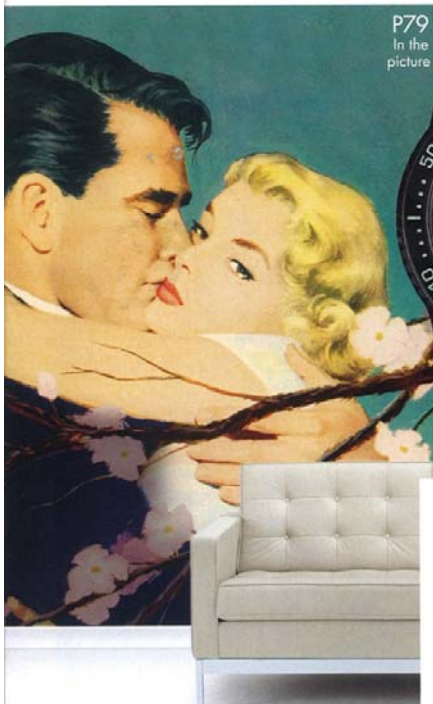
maldives

COUNTRY & TOWN HOUSE

AUGUST 2010



P106
The
marvellous
Maldives



P79
In the
picture



P73
British
design



P68
Jade
Jagger

AT THE START

- 22 THE GOOD LIFE *Alice B-B* finds her Mr Luck
- 24 THE URBAN RURALIST BBC Radio 4 presenter, Ed Stourton

UP FRONT

- 27 GRECIAN GODDESS We're loving Rigby & Peller's new swimsuits
- 28 HERE & THERE The latest in style trends and shopping
- 30 MALE PRIDE Men's style
- 32 LUXE LIST *Georgie Coleridge Cole* goes all red, white and blue
- 37 SKIN DEEP Beauty news
- 38 GREEN BRITISH BEAUTY Leading facialist, *Abigail James*, extols the new wave of British organic beauty brands
- 40 TALKING POINT *Ticky Hedley-Dent* vamps up vintage at Goodwood

- 42 LUST FOR LEATHER *Richard Hepton* talks royal warrants with Robert Ettinger of leather experts Ettinger

THE GUIDE

- 45 COUNTRY & TOWN HOUSE DIARY A sporting event with a difference in WC1 and *Love's Labours Lost* in Cornwall
- 53 IN THE SWING *C&TH* gets a croquet lesson, plus win a night (and much more) at The Goring hotel
- 54 ON THE PAGE Special extended summer book reviews
- 56 DIARY OF A CAR GIRL Three Brit car companies all have new launches this month, says *Vicki Butler-Henderson*

FEATURES

- 58 SECRET GARDEN Colours turn darker for autumn. Styling by *Kat A*
- 66 STATE OF THE NATION What makes us proud to be British today, muses *Adam Edwards*
- 68 BOHEMIAN RHAPSODY *Nancy Alsop* meets Jade Jagger, the ex-wild child who's just a country girl at heart
- 73 HISTORIC FUTURISM The secret of many a British design success story is the ability to look back as well as forward, finds *Sophie Grove*

THE INSIDER

- 79 IN THE PICTURE Surface View allows you to make pictures and photos into murals... just brilliant
- 81 BETWEEN THE SHEETS... with Jamie and Louise Graham from Graham & Green
- 82 FLYING THE FLAG Buying the best of British design
- 84 DESIGN NOTES News and views from the world of interiors
- 88 WINNING THE POOLS *Aidan Mortimer's* guide on how, where and why to build your swimming pool
- 90 GARDENER'S WORLD *Catbarine Howard* on planting in August for a winter vegetable supply



ON THE COVER
Amberly wears red silk shirt by Longchamp, trousers by Malene Birger, red, white and blue flag dress (held in hand) by Rützo. Photography by Rhys Frampton. Styling by Kathrine Agger. Location: Cowley Manor

4 / COUNTRYANDTOWNHOUSE.CO.UK / August 2010 ▶

BAROS

maldives



WHAT LIES BENEATH

The Maldives, with their powder soft sand, aqua blue sea and villas on stilts are all very well, but it's when you go under the sea that the magic really begins, discovers Alice B-B

Warning: if you're single, you've recently split up with your boyfriend or you're freshly divorced – do NOT go on holiday to the Maldives. Go anywhere else you can think of, but please avoid those tiny, perfect coral atolls off the south coast of India.

Because, unless you actually want to sob your eyes out for the entire holiday, if you're single this place will open up your wound and rub in handfuls of sea salt. Right now the Maldives is probably the world's top honeymoon destination and it's easy to understand why. Baros, the island I visited, is pretty damn near perfect; you can walk around the entire island in about five minutes, the sea is bluer than in the pictures, the palm trees are heavy with coconuts, the sand is that ridiculously white powdery stuff and, of course, they've got those villas on stilts.

Baros is just a 20-minute whiz in a speedboat across the ocean from Male airport, to which BA now fly directly. It was one of the first islands to be developed in the Seventies and is still owned by the same Maldivian family, which is why, despite having a total face-lift a year ago, the architectural style is local. Which is good. Because although I've never been to another island in the Maldives, I've had a good trawl around some of the websites and the ultra modern ones look all wrong. Philippe Starck-



TAKE THE PLUNGE
Alice B-B finds the meaning of true relaxation underneath the sea in the Maldives

style interior decoration has no place on a Robinson Crusoe island.

I imagine one of the reasons why Baros was one of the first islands to be developed was because of its proximity to the capital, which, back then I suspect, was fairly sleepy. However, now Male is quite built up, busy and bustling. From my bliss-spot on Baros reality would occasionally rear its head as the belch of a factory's fumes way off in the distance was not quite blocked from view by the water villas. Or one night at dinner (delicious food by the way), as I sat facing the wrong way, I could see the capital's lights a-twinkle, gently polluting the night sky, momentarily shattering my suspension of disbelief.

Despite the island being so tiny, there's an amazing amount of staff; 250 to, at most, 150 guests. But where is everyone? The beaches are empty, the rooms are cleaned without you ever seeing anyone and you rarely bump into another soul. It's as if the minute anyone arrives, they have donned a *Harry Potter*-style invisibility cloak. After a bit of investigation I discovered that all the staff live in the centre of the island, through a gate-way between the spa and the gym. I wondered if it was like *Dirty Dancing* where they're having a mad old time partying backstage, while front of house all the guests are a little stiff. Remember, if you're looking for a party on an island where 60 per cent of the guests are honeymooners, then you're in the wrong place. Lots of couples together are seriously boring.

The vibe on Baros is intensely relaxed. There's the usual lying on the beach, occasionally getting up to have a dip in that ridiculously aqua blue sea, or to wipe your hands on an ice cold towel that appears at your side.



BAROS

maldives

While it's lovely to sit around and do sweet f-a for maybe a day or two, after that it can get a little repetitive. But this is where the true value of the Maldives really kicks in. The whole point of this place is none of those supposedly peaceful things. The actual relaxation comes when you discover what lies beneath the water. Stick on a mask, pop your head below the surface and a whole magical world is sitting there waiting for you, like an underwater safari.

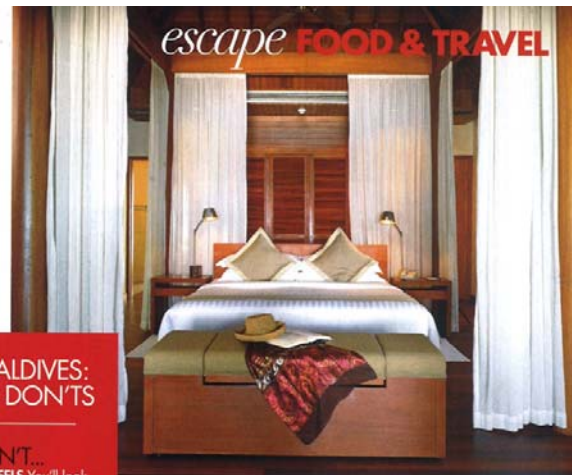
To be completely and crudely honest, I was shitting myself on the first day of diving. I hadn't used the equipment for ten whole years, but the pretty Japanese diving instructor nursed me through the basics. It soon came flooding back and before I knew it I was swimming on Baros' spectacular house reef with a turtle and a couple of reef sharks for company.

The next day, I was deemed safe enough to go on a trip with the big boys to a dive site about 20 minutes away. The pull apparently was the table coral. I was buddied up with the dive master called Sepp. (Picture a German version of Patrick Swayze in *Point Break* mixed with the scuba instructor in *Along Came Polly* (who runs off with Ben Stiller's newly married wife 'Are you for scuba, Lubin?') Got it? Well that's Sepp.)

With Sepp as my buddy, I was in safe hands. But all the same I had that slight feeling of anxiety of putting myself out of my comfort zone, as I pulled on the thick rubber suit, did all that spitting into my mask business and plopped into the sea. We shot down quite deep and for a moment I felt a bit sick. Actually not just a bit sick, but properly technicolour-yawn nauseous. I started to panic about what to do if I was sick. Would it just shoot through the regulator, or should I take the regulator out of my mouth, puke, then pop it back in. Or would I be sick, choke and surface too fast and get the bends.

Then right at the moment where I was properly winding myself into a state, a tiny Nemo-like fish shot past my mask. I could have sworn he grinned at me, and if I could understand 'fish' then he was probably saying, 'You bloody fool, stop stressing out and follow me.' So that's what I did. I swam after my pretty little friend as he ballet-danced around the beautiful coral. I got so distracted I forgot all about the chundering.

So if it's relaxation you're after, whether or not you're on honeymoon, then here's the thing; it's only when you're weightless, underneath the water, where all is quiet except for the noise of your own bubbling breath,



THE MALDIVES: DO'S & DON'TS

DON'T...

TAKE HIGH HEELS You'll look like a twit. It's sandy so either go barefoot or wear flat sandals. If you really can't be seen without a heel then wear a wedge.

TAKE SILK CLOTHES It can be humid and they'll just stick to you.

WEAR BLACK It looks wrong in a place that's bursting with colour. If you have to wear dark clothes, stick to navy, grey or brown.

BOTHER WITH WATERPROOF MASCARA It never works and invariably leaves you with hard-to-remove panda eyes.

CHANGE INTO YOUR PLANE CLOTHES ON THE RETURN JOURNEY, until you're in the air-conditioned airport.

DO...

BRING SARONGS, dresses and shorts in linen or cotton.

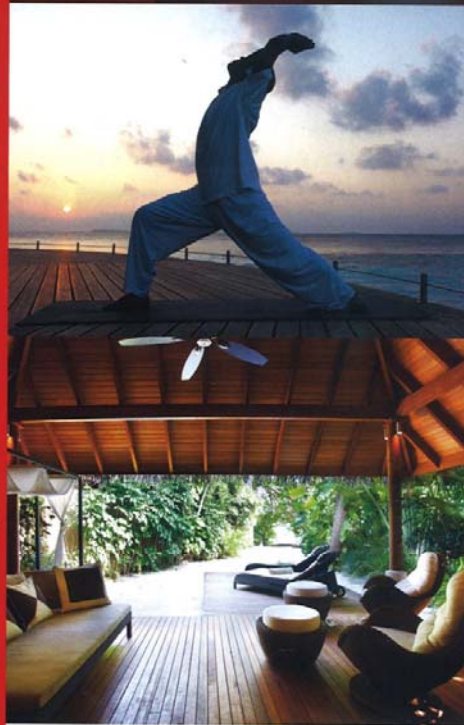
ASK FOR A THERAPIST CALLED ARSINI if you have a massage. She gave me the best I've ever had.

PLAN IT BEFORE YOU GET THERE, if you want to island hop.

GETTING THERE...

Rates at **BAROS MALDIVES** start at \$550 (£374) per night, including breakfast, staying in a Deluxe Villa. For reservations, call +960 664 2672; baros.com.

BRITISH AIRWAYS flies directly to the Maldives from London Gatwick three times a week. Prices start from £653 return including all taxes, fees and charges. Book online at ba.com.



and the only communication is via hand signals. That's when you properly relax. Because if relaxing is about shutting off your mind from the grind of daily life, work, family, relationships, stress, iPhones and Blackberries - then this is the sure fire way to get there.

So if you are at the beginning of a new romance, happily in love or just one of those blasted honeymooners, then get yourself to Baros in the Maldives lickety-split. It's a luxury paradise with spectacular diving but, at the rate the sea level's rising, the islands might not be around for too much longer. So go soon. But just don't go on your own. ■

August 2010 | COUNTRYANDTOWNHOUSE.CO.UK | 107