



Morocco

There's never a dull moment in Marrakesh as the hotel bandwagon careers relentlessly on. It's been three years since the famous **Mamounia** (left) closed her doors, during which time the city has changed dramatically. She's back now though,

sumptuously spruced by Jacques Garcia, to reclaim her place as *la belle de la cité* - the garden alone is worth a visit. Competition is tough, however, not just from Marrakesh's myriad riads, but from two other imminent newcomers - the **Royal Mansour** and the **Mandarin Oriental**. The former, owned by King Mohamed VI, opens soon with 53 individual, supremely luxurious riads designed to create a new medina within the city's old medina. The latter, located in the Palmeraie, will be a palatial resort with all the trimmings set against a backdrop of the Atlas Mountains.

Lebanon & Egypt

It may have taken a while to complete, but **Le Gray** in Beirut is finally with us, masterminded by hotel maestro Gordon Campbell Gray and designed by Mary Fox Linton. There are 87 sleek, sophisticated rooms and suites, a rooftop swimming pool and views of the Mediterranean. Also new to Beirut is the **Four Seasons**, located in a sail-capped tower that rises above the Corniche, with interiors by Pierre-Yves Rochon (see 'Style council'). Adventure and eco-luxury are rolled into one at **Al Tarfa**, a desert haven set within Egypt's mighty Dakhla Oasis. Yes, it may feel like the back of beyond, but this is desert life with more than a twist of chic. Traditional materials - mud, straw, sand and wood - are beautifully combined with Provençal-style furniture, rustic artefacts and billowing Egyptian cottons. There are many opportunities for adventure - camel-trekking, riding, walking and guided excursions through the ancient landscape - and at the end of a hot Saharan day, a pool and spa to come home to.

United Arab Emirates

Banyan Tree Al Wadi, recently launched in the northernmost Emirate of Ras Al Khaimah, is a super-luxury desert resort where each of the 101 villas - 31 of which are tented - has its own pool. For sybarites, the hotel's private beach club is only a 20-minute drive away; for the energetic, the famous 'stairway to heaven' mountain trek is nearby too. Across the border in Dubai, Giorgio Armani has scaled new heights with the opening of **Armani Hotel Dubai**, his first hotel within the Burj Khalifa - currently the world's tallest building.

Uganda & Kenya

Clouds Mountain Gorilla Lodge sits on the edge of Bwindi Impenetrable Forest in Uganda. With eight stone cottages, personal butlers and several hundred gorillas, this is a once-in-a-lifetime experience. **Olarro** is the most recent addition to Kenya's Art of Ventures properties, among which is also **Shompole** (see 'Who goes where?'), and shares a similar combination of natural materials and African artefacts. The main lodge has seven cottages, then there's Little Olarro with two rooms and the luxury camp with four en-suite tents.

The Seychelles

In 2009 the new **Four Seasons** hotel stole the show in the Seychelles. 2010 is set to be all about the **Constance Ephelia**, a new resort also on the main island of Mahé. All singing, all dancing, this hotel has more than 200 rooms, five restaurants, five bars, five boutiques and five stars. There are, however, only four pools. Surely some mistake?

Mauritius

On the south-west of the island, what was formerly the Taj Exotica is now **Maradiva Villas Resort & Spa** (below) - new name, new look, but the same standard of luxury. Villas, some of which interconnect for families, come with butlers and private plunge pools, and there's an Ayurvedic spa, too. **Dinarobin** on the lovely Morne peninsula - one of Beachcomber's flagship hotels - had a major facelift last year. This year it's the turn of sister property **Trou aux Biches**, on the west coast, which has been completely demolished and redesigned from scratch. It reopens in the autumn. For plantation-house-style splendour, look no further than **Sugar Beach**, set in enormous, tropical landscaped gardens with a great beach. Guests can also enjoy all the facilities of sister-hotel **La Pirogue**, a short walk away next door. ▷



Tanzania & Zanzibar

Off the beaten track in the northern area of Tanzania's Serengeti National Park is **Sayari Camp**, where eight permanent tents ooze comfortable style and luxury. With king-size beds, huge baths and lashings of hot and cold water, there ain't no slumming it here. Furthermore, the game viewing is superb, particularly when the Great Migration rolls through between July and November. Tired of the bush? Then head for the beach on Tanzania's very own jewel of an island - Zanzibar. Choose between **Baraza** - deeply elegant, delightfully African - on beautiful Bweju Beach; or chic **Kilindi**, perfect for stylish eco-warriors (see 'Eco fabulous').

South Africa & Mozambique

2010 is South Africa's big year as it leaps into the limelight with the World Cup. Johannesburg isn't the greatest venue for the final, but **The Peech Hotel** is a treasure. Just 16 simple, modern rooms, a pool and a Champagne bar - what more could you ask for? In Cape Town, for the semi-final, you can either go big, central and exciting at the brand new **Taj**, or forget the footie altogether and chill out at glamorous Camps Bay in the new **Sea Five** (below left), a pretty, eight-room hotel



designed in the style of a cool and breezy beach house. Mozambique has perhaps the finest stretch of Indian Ocean coastline in the world. We know and love **Vamizi Island** and **Azura**, but a new arrival is **Coral Lodge 15.41**, a Dutch-designed thatched beach retreat near the beautiful old capital of Ilha de Mocambique.