

travelista

Frequent flyer Ondine Cohane **fast-tracks international intelligence on where to be and what to see.**

Hotel activity in the Indian Ocean has recently been concentrated on **MAURITIUS**, which late last year witnessed the unveiling of the expanded Shanti Ananda Maurice (www.shantiananda.com) and the openings of Starwood's Grand Mauritian (www.starwoodhotels.com) and Four Seasons at Anahita (www.fourseasons.com).

This month, however, the focus moves to **SEYCHELLES**, where Four Seasons (again) will be welcoming guests to its new property from January 19. Set on a verdant hillside planted with mango, jackfruit and cinnamon trees overlooking Petite Anse Bay, it's a complex of 67 villas and suites on stilts – some are virtually treehouses, though expansive ones with wrap-around decks, private plunge pools, outdoor showers and sea views (doubles from about £852). Located on the main island, Anse aux Pins, it's just half an hour by road from the international airport.

For a different perspective on **INDIA**, Cazenove + Loyd (www.cazloyd.com) is eschewing big branded hotels in favour of



Above: Punakha Monastery in Bhutan, one of the destinations offered by Remote Lands. Below: action from the horse race festival in Yushu, Qinghai Province.

stylish heritage properties and home stays. But these aren't any old homes. Rather, they are historic seats such as Shahpura Bagh with 10 elegant rooms set in 45 acres of gardens still run by the aristocratic Indian family who live in an adjoining property. The 10-day trips start from £1,800 per person at spots such as Shahpura and the Rawla Narlai's fortress hotel.

BRAZIL is another hot destination featured by C+L, which is offering four nights on Rio's Ipanema Beach at the Praia Ipanema followed by four just outside **PARATY** at the much less well-known Pousada Picinguaba (from £2,200 per person), which has a spectacular position just above a tiny

but atmospheric fishing village, overlooking its own 3km stretch of pristine sandy beach. Paraty itself remains under the radar despite being one of South America's true



sketches from his personal journals and on-set photography (www.oscars.org).

If you yearn to travel off the beaten track, however, but are deterred by the prospect of substandard accommodation, then consider Remote Lands (www.remotelands.com), as it takes no chances when arranging trips to far-flung or deeply rural locales and brings its own luxury tents.

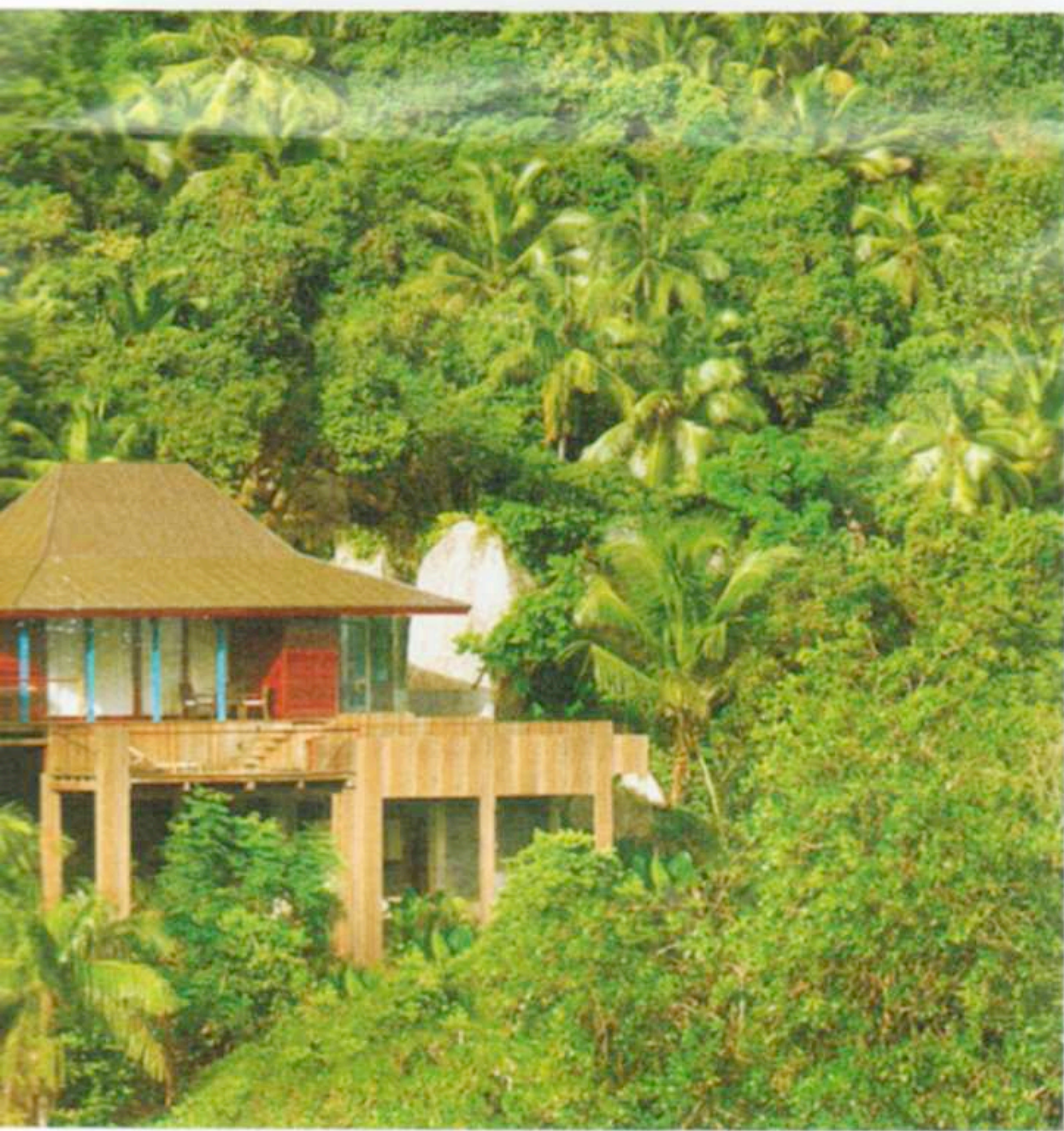
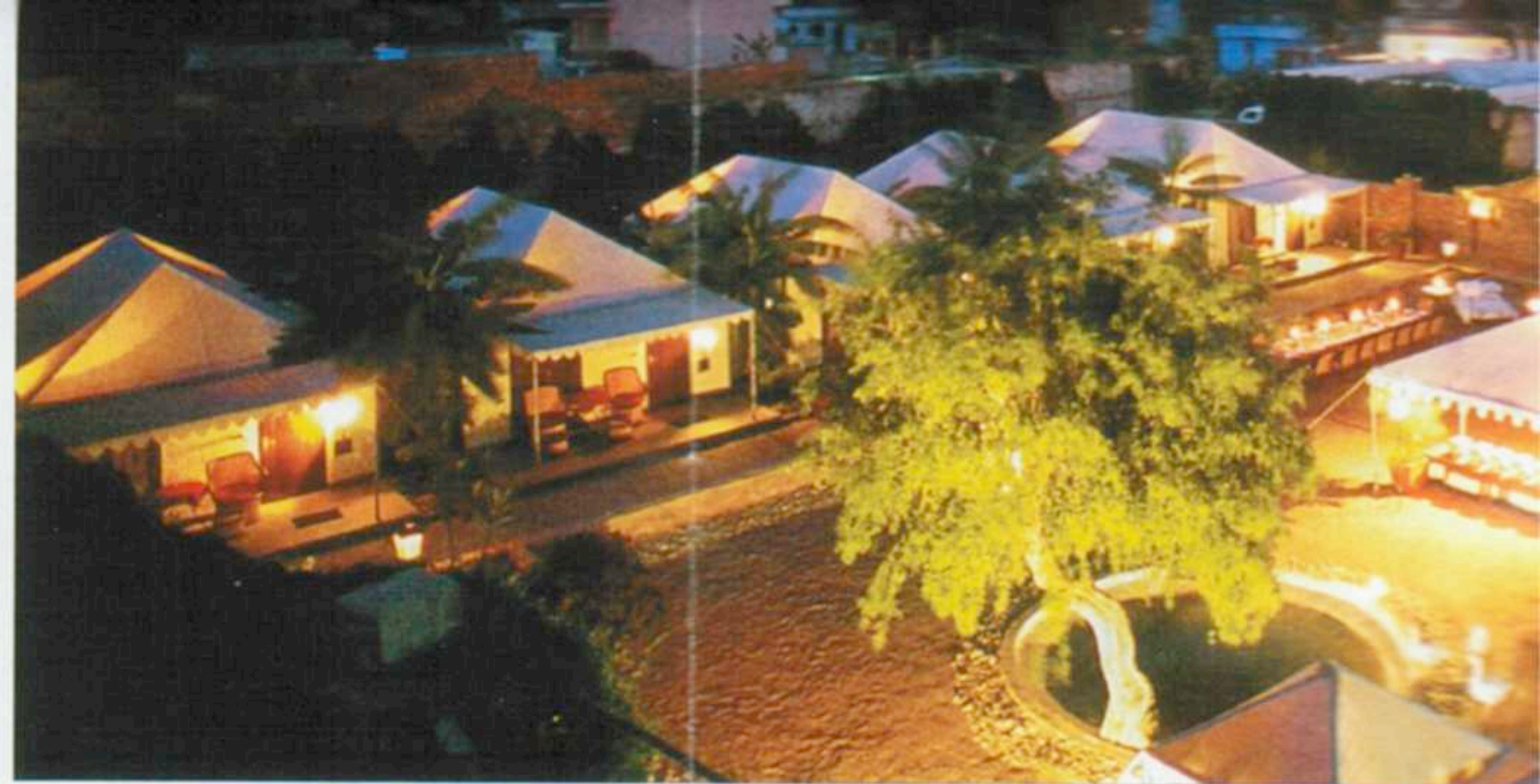
Destinations include the Punakha Valley of **BHUTAN**, **MONGOLIA**'s Gobi Desert and the Mindat township of **BURMA**, where sprung mattresses made up with fine linens await in yurt-like dwellings, all for about £600

per person per day, inclusive of gourmet meals. Book now for the July expedition to **CHINA**'s Qinghai province and experience the local horse racing where warriors on Nangchen horses (the stocky native breed from Tibet) show off their speed and gymnastics (handstands in the saddle aren't uncommon). Nearby, Kumbum monastery, one of China's most important monasteries, and the Dalai Lama's former home, are among the points of interest.

For a ski holiday in **CANADA**, it's worth noting that the Peak 2 Peak Gondola (www.peak2peakgondola.com) has opened just in time for this year's season. The longest gondola system

in the world, it links Whistler with Blackcomb mountain, 4.4km away, in just 11 minutes. As it powers over Fitzsimmons Creek, it's a heady 435m above ground. If your preference is for Alpine skiing, consider a trip to **VERBIER**. CK Verbier (www.ckverbier.com) has just added a third chalet, Bella Coola, to its portfolio. It may look traditionally Swiss from the outside but it has a discernibly Indian style within. The chalet, which sleeps 10 or 11, costs from about £22,300 a week including meals, staff (from a chef to a chauffeur) and open bar.

But if you are in search of sun, on **ST BARTHS** a new quartet of white-on-white suites at the Hôtel Saint-Barth Isle de France (www.isle-de-france.com, from about £1,875) has opened on Flamands beach – arguably the best on the island. Each has its own sea-facing infinity-edge plunge pool and stone bathtub.



A villa at the Seasons Seychelles. Anita Ekberg and Franco Zeffirelli during production on *La Dolce Vita* in 1960, both part of *Director's Book of Dreams*.

