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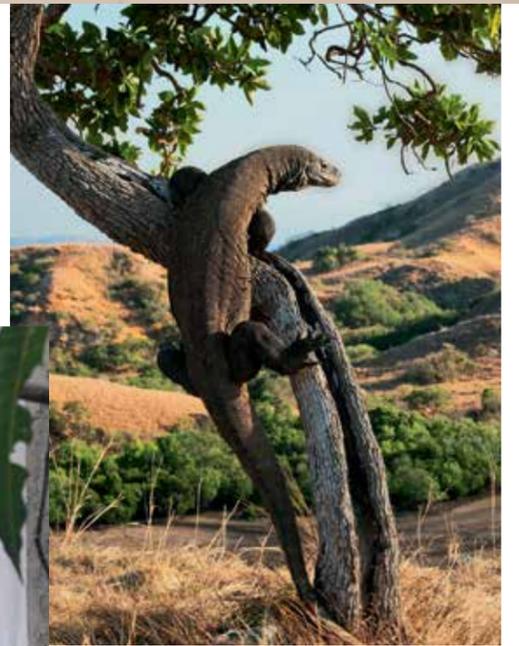
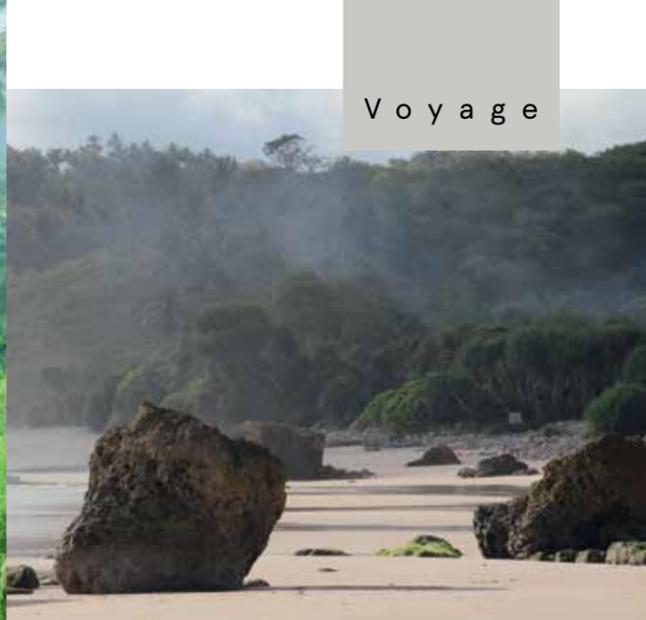
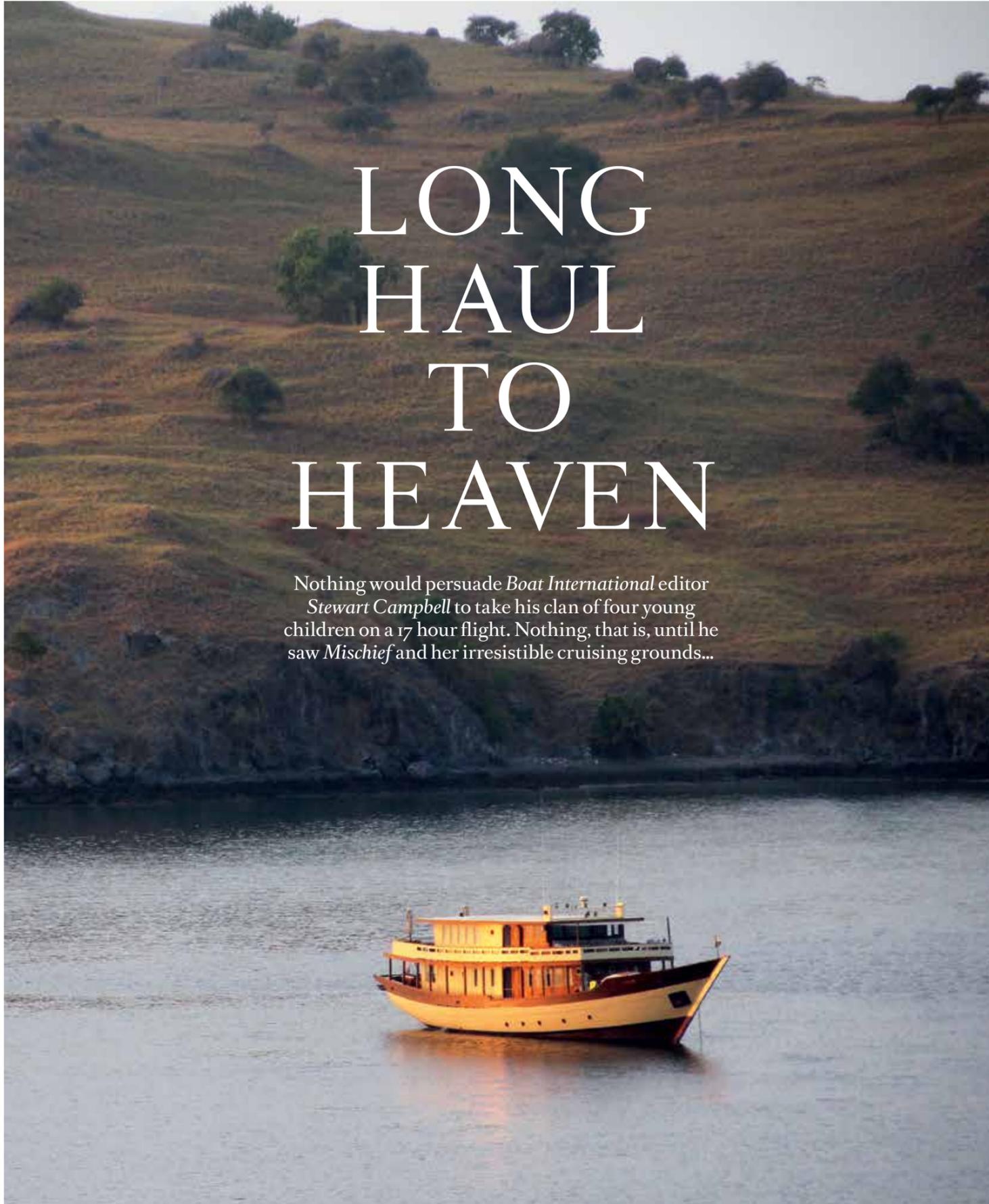
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# LONG HAUL TO HEAVEN

Nothing would persuade *Boat International* editor Stewart Campbell to take his clan of four young children on a 17 hour flight. Nothing, that is, until he saw *Mischief* and her irresistible cruising grounds...



Left: *Mischief* anchored in Komodo. Clockwise from above: horse riding on the beach at Nihiwatu; a classic scene in Ubud, close to Bolt's home in Bali; an empty stretch of beach on Sumba island; a Komodo dragon on Rinca; take your pick of the deserted islands and beaches in Komodo

PHOTOGRAPHS: GETTY; OLI ANDERSON



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I would normally move heaven and earth to avoid long-distance air travel with an eight year old, a five year old and a pair of two-year-old twins. It really lowers the divorce threshold – one snippy remark or badly timed grumble when you and your wife are both red-eyed and edgy, and your clothes are on the front lawn. Just the thought of getting all the Campbells through airport security sends a cold lance of fear right through me, not to mention the panic that comes with being away from the editor’s chair for so long – and the groaning inbox awaiting my return. What I’m trying to say is it would take a lot, a lure so sweet, to convince me to pack all six of us into a Garuda jumbo for 17 hours. So what was it? What made me walk these coals?

I had received the email a few months before. “Come to Komodo!” demanded Simon R Bolt, owner of the 30 metre beach-built phinisi *Mischief*: “I’ve started a new charter programme – no excuses.” The itinerary involves a few days to decompress in Bali at Bolt’s incredible cliff-top home, followed by a week’s cruise around stunning Komodo National Park and topped off with a few nights at the edge-of-nowhere Nihiwatu Resort on the island of Sumba. That meant 10 days for the Campbells, but Bolt is flexible and can work the programme around your requirements.

The cheerful 56 year old is the former captain of J Class yacht *Velsheda*, and is now enjoying a lucrative second career as a property developer, working between Auckland and his home in Bali’s interior. He decided to build *Mischief* because importing a large yacht into Indonesia attracts a heavy duty. “I actually shopped around and put offers on a few boats, but none of them surveyed very well. At that stage I decided if I was going to do it, it was a bit nonsensical not to use the skills I already had and to build something locally,” he says.

The yacht took two years to construct on a beach at Tana Beru in South Sulawesi, followed by another year of fitting out in the nearby harbour. Build times are long because, without a shed, construction is dictated by the seasons. “It’s not easy to get to,” Bolt says. “You fly for three and a half hours to Makassar, then get in a car with a phlegmy, chain-smoking driver who decides to stop at every restaurant, café

and mosque along the way and nine hours later you pour out of the car at the other end. By the time we finished the boat, we had it down to four hours, but it was still an enormously tortuous process. Every time we went we got food poisoning.”

For something built in the rawest possible manner, *Mischief* is an impressively finished and designed yacht. The main deck consists of a twin cabin and a double, while upstairs is an owner’s apartment, with incredible views and its own private lounging area. There’s two outside dining areas and a comfortable bar saloon. On the lower deck is an extra cabin that can be pressed into service for larger charter groups. The décor is easy on the eye – bright, welcoming and low maintenance. Perfect for four kids, in other words. Before we board, however, we have the run of Bolt’s home in Ubud, away from the noise and bars of Kuta and up in Bali’s rainforest hinterland.

It’s a novel way to start a charter trip and intensely relaxing, with a staff of five to make sure your every need is met.

After two nights melting into the landscape we’re back on a plane – to Labuan Bajo, gateway to Komodo. It’s a mercifully short flight to the island’s new airport, where we’re met by *Mischief*’s crew and taken down to the boat. From here the dragons are only a short cruise away, but there’s not a foreign superyacht in sight. The only boats are local fishing skiffs and other phinisi, with 51 metre *Dunia Baru* heading at anchor nearby and 50 metre *Silolona* riding out of port.

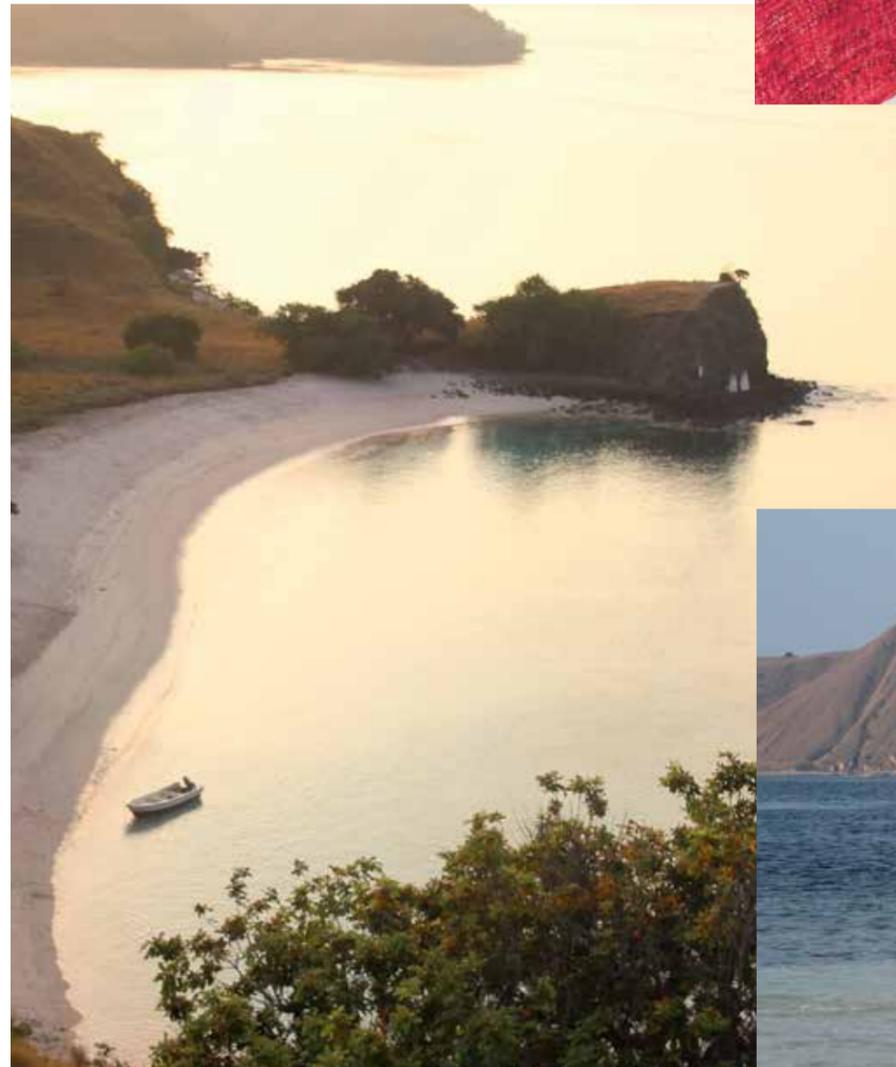
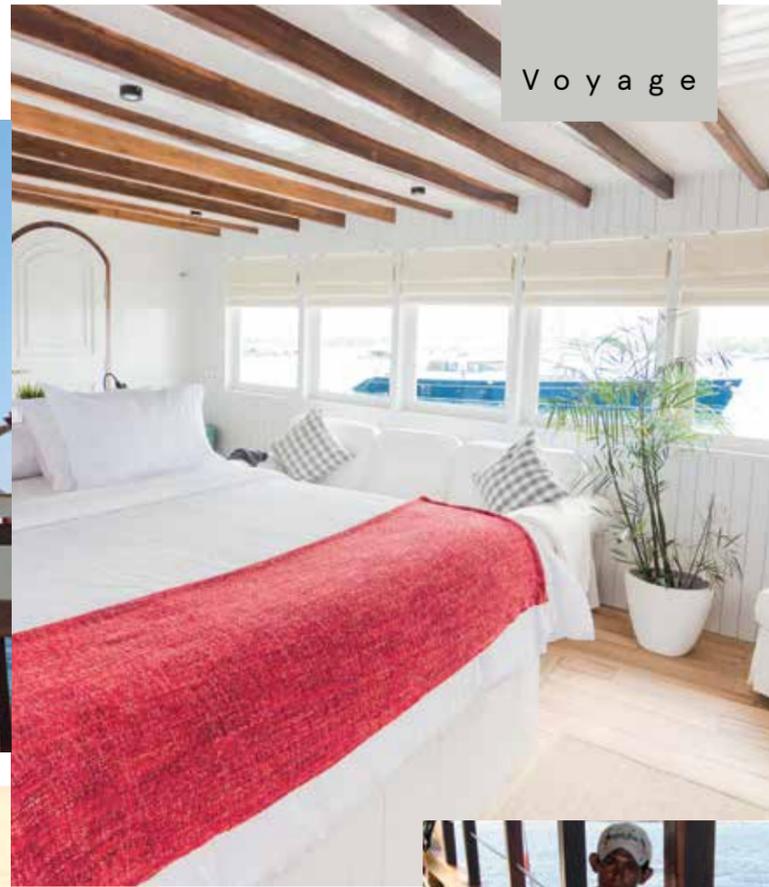
Despite its obvious beauty, Indonesia is still seen as an “explorer” destination, according to Bolt. “We’re very lucky that we’re still off the beaten track, but I still love being down in Flores and seeing a 60 metre sailing boat come in. It’s a double-edged sword. You don’t want to turn the place into another



**LIA CAMPBELL**  
**AGE: UNDISCLOSED**

**Biggest surprise?**  
I never imagined there would be so many secret little bays – each one more peaceful than the last. And the itinerary was so well planned that everywhere we stopped there was something for the whole family to do.

**Favourite memory?**  
Being able to go off as adults, knowing that every time we turned around there was a crew member with one of the kids. They even taught the big girls to snorkel.



Clockwise from left: Komodo’s pink beach at dawn; the crew of *Mischief* on the upper deck; the 30m phinisi’s owner’s cabin on the upper board; buying pearls on board; another view of the yacht, which took three years to build on a beach in South Sulawesi





Left: adventures at Nihiwatu. Top left: the beach on Sumba. Above: chef Andreas commands the beach barbecue

Clockwise from above: Mischief's main saloon, comfortably kitted out in light fabrics; your stay in Ubud isn't complete without a visit to the Sacred Monkey Forest; learning to snorkel with the crew of Mischief; drying off after a swim



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*"You don't want to turn the place into another Antigua, but at the end of the*

*day it's nice to share these experiences with other people"*

Antigua, but at the end of the day it's nice to share these experiences with other people."

According to Richard Lofthouse, Indonesia and Philippines director for Asia Pacific Superyachts, more superyachts are visiting each year. "Traffic to the greatest archipelago in the world has increased every year [since 2008]," he says. A recent decision to allow some access to foreign private jets, previously banned, will only accelerate this trend, but the charter market remains a closed shop: only locally flagged boats are allowed to operate commercially, hence the dominance of the ironwood-planked phinisis. Bolt isn't too concerned about being crowded out. "We've got 17,000 islands, so I don't think it's going to fill up any time soon!"

The first of those islands we visit in *Mischief* is a short cruise from Labuan Bajo, and a taster for what is to come – deserted beaches, warm seas and service to rival anything in the Med. *Mischief*'s nine crew basically adopt the children, taking huge delight in teaching them to snorkel and even walking them to sleep along the beach. Often serving for months at a time away from their own kids, they relish spending time with the four surrogates we provide. "Anyone that's been on holiday in Indonesia will know the country's biggest asset is the ability of the people to connect," says Bolt. "The crew is our greatest asset. We are able to take people to another place

with the interaction with the crew. That's something I'm immensely, incredibly proud of and the crew do it without any effort whatsoever. It's just totally natural to them."

The only non-Indonesian crew member is the German chef Andreas Hofman, and he proves his versatility by producing outstanding local cuisine using the freshest ingredients and less ambitious fare guaranteed to be eaten by the younger children. His masterpiece is a beach barbecue – cooked over half an oil drum on a deserted stretch of sand, with not another boat in sight, the only noise the lazily lapping wavelets and a distant "put-put" from some unseen long-tail fishing boat.

The landscape of Komodo National Park feels a little primordial, with its dry, random islands and absence of development. It's the perfect spot to see monsters. We tender in to a landing spot on Rinca, the second largest island in the park. After a quick safety briefing, within five minutes we're standing in sniffing distance of one of these living fossils. We spot five on our walk around the island, none doing anything worthy of a nature documentary, instead just lying around – but it's a hot day, so I sympathise. The weather throughout our week on board is superb, with only the slightest ruffle on the water. It allows us to take full advantage of *Mischief*'s toybox, with its stand-up paddleboards, kayaks and snorkelling gear. The reefs are superb

and the yacht has a dive compressor for those who want to scuba. "We've got more than 20 pretty dive sites in Komodo," says Harry Jeremias, the cruise director. "If you go north you can see pelagic fish and a variety of sharks. In the centre, there's manta rays, turtles and beautiful corals. The dive sites are very close and in 10 days you can cover the whole area." We stick to snorkelling and, by the end of the five days on board, the two older girls are pros, but are never left to swim off on their own without a wary escort of *Mischief*'s constantly attentive crew.

The last – and longest – passage undertaken is an overnight from Komodo to Sumba, a nine-hour crossing of the Savu Sea. It stays settled and we wake on the final approach to a ramshackle port on the northern shore of the huge island. Someone has spray-painted "Welcome to bandit country" on a nearby building, but our first impressions don't tally: Nihiwatu has sent a couple of cars, with fresh coconuts to drink from and a fruit plate to work through for the two-hour drive across the back of the island to its southern coast. If Komodo feels off the map, you're Livingstone on Sumba.

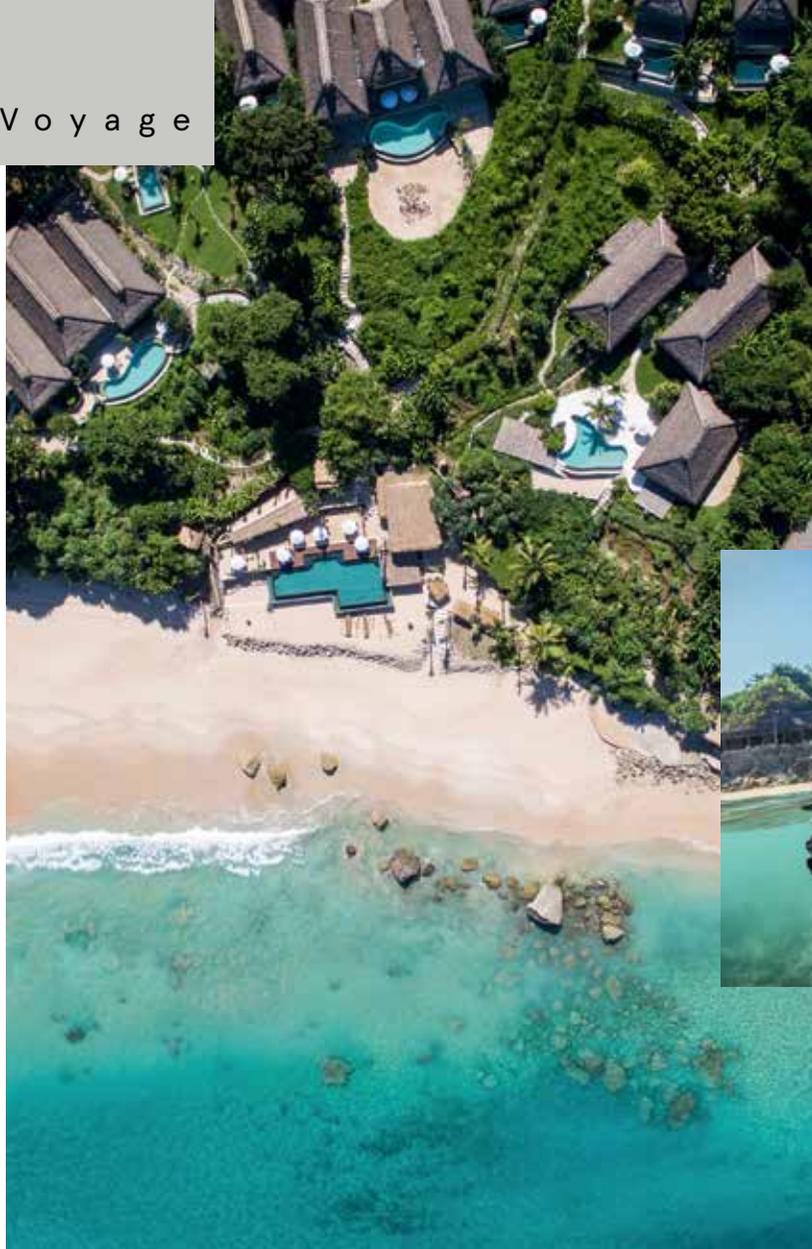
It's jarring when you do emerge from the trees to

see the resort for the first time. It seems so improbable that something like this could be here – but it is, and it's incredible, voted best hotel in the world by *Travel + Leisure* magazine. The place was started in the 1980s by a couple of surfers searching for the perfect wave, and has since been developed into an exclusive hideaway for celebrities and business leaders, albeit one with a distinctly boho vibe. We're quartered in the sprawling, two-bedroom Lantoro villa. The private infinity pool is huge and the views even huger, since Nihiwatu is perched on the most perfect sweep of golden beach. Big waves crash on to the broad stretch of sand later that day, as the older girls go horse riding along its length, while the twins chase the advancing and retreating water. It's an emptying sensation being here – you reach a profound level of calm and relaxation. Our butler, Simpson, takes care of everything. Feel like a couple's massage in a hut overlooking the beach? Just tell him. The kids want to learn how to make chocolate at the resort's chocolate factory? Say the word. Nothing is too much trouble and since there are so few people able to stay here (just 66 in 28 villas), everything is constantly available, from surfing to spa safaris. ▶

**ISLA CAMPBELL  
AGE: 5**

**Biggest surprise?**  
When Mummy jumped off the top of the boat. The dragons were a bit scary, too.

**Favourite moment?**  
When we got to release baby turtles into the ocean at the end of the holiday. I raced my turtle against my sister's. I also liked going swimming every day, and knowing that I couldn't sink because I had a lifejacket on.



From top: Nihiwatu Resort is perched on the edge of nowhere and was voted best hotel in the world by Travel + Leisure magazine; the resort rescues baby turtles, which guests can release into the ocean each day; taking in the views at Bolt's impressive home in Ubud; an evening horse ride on the beach on Sumba



**EMMA CAMPBELL**  
**AGE: 8**

**Biggest surprise?**

When chef Andreas gave me a *Minecraft* cake for my eighth birthday, which we celebrated on a pink beach. He had brought the cake with him all the way from Bali.

**Favourite memory?**

I loved seeing the dragons and snorkelling. I saw Nemo and Dory in the coral reefs, and a huge puffer fish. Chef Andreas made us three-course dinners every night, and one time he made the meal look like an Angry Bird. It was delicious.



It's a wrench to leave after two days but Nihiwatu keeps things smooth – escorting us through airport security and straight into a lounge at the little airport on Sumba, ready for the flight back to Denpasar. There's even someone at the other end to help us with our bags. The beginning-to-end care provided by this unique charter experience makes it perfect for the chaos of four children, but it would work just as well for couples or smaller families. Rather than packing too much into an itinerary, by including time in Bali, Komodo and Sumba in a single programme you see more of Indonesia than you usually would and the time spent in each feels about right. But flex it if you want. That's the beauty. The only thing you can't change is the flight home. The less said about that the better. ■

*It's an exclusive hideaway for celebrities and business leaders, albeit one with a distinctly boho vibe*



**DETAILS**

*Mischief* is available from \$7,500 (plus 10 per cent tax) per night in Komodo and \$7,500 (plus 20 per cent tax and surcharge) in other areas. Not included in price: diving for non-certified divers; alcohol; crew gratuity

**Seasons**

**Komodo and Flores:**  
March/April to September/October  
**Raja Ampat:** November to April/May

Other cruising areas, such as the Forgotten Islands, Banda Sea and Togian Islands are also available in the shoulder seasons.

Contact: enquiry@voyagemischief.com