

WORLD TRAVEL

MAGAZINE

*OLD MEETS NEW IN
MADRID'S
FASHION SCENE*

Family favourites in
**Europe
& Beyond**

**THE
100
LIST**
Best Hotels
in the World

Central Otago
*As close to paradise
as you can get*

Singapore S\$8
Malaysia RM 20
Thailand THB 200
Indonesia IDR 75,000
All Others US\$6

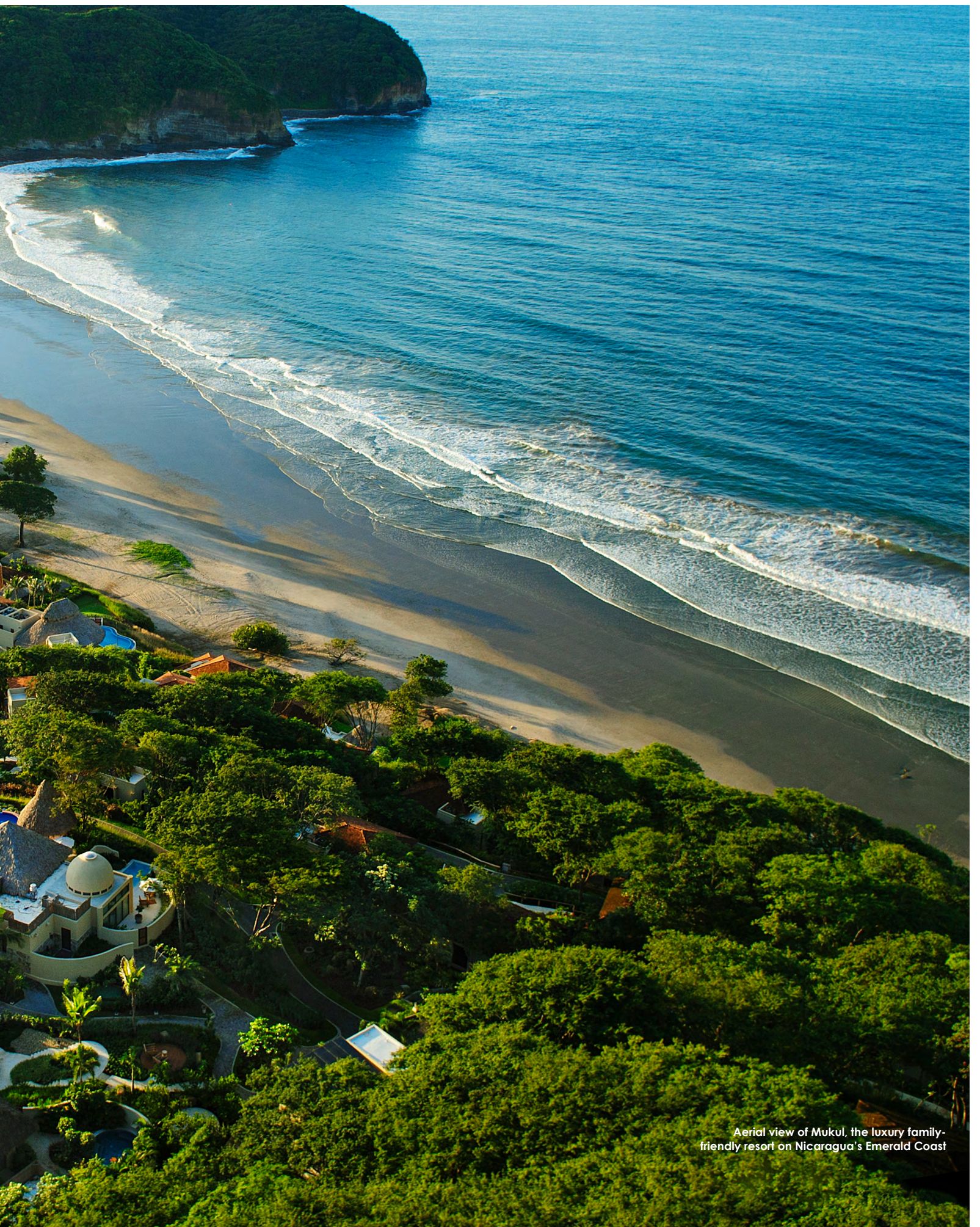


Off-the-grid destinations for **Summer**

UNFORGETTABLE ADVENTURES

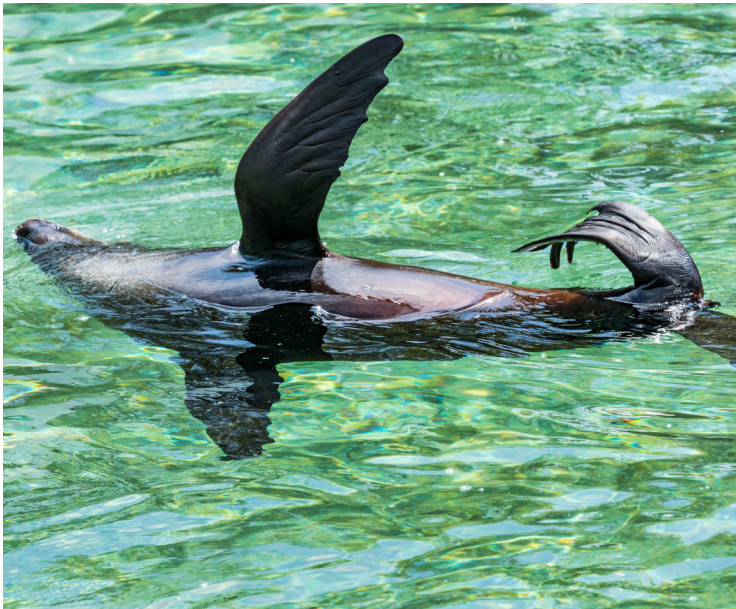
FROM COAST TO COUNTRYSIDE IN OFF-THE-GRID DESTINATIONS

Whether you dream of a deserted tropical paradise, a city getaway like no other or the ultimate adventure in a world where the wildlife is fearless, these magical, off-the-grid destinations offer endless unforgettable experiences and a lifetime of memories for your whole family. By Janine Clements



Aerial view of Mukul, the luxury family-friendly resort on Nicaragua's Emerald Coast





NICARAGUA

When people think about visiting Central America, Costa Rica and Peru usually spring to mind. Often missed but entirely underrated is **Nicaragua**, an unexpected but increasingly popular gem for families. This enchanting country is one of the safest countries in Central America and offers an exotic combination of fascinating culture, undeveloped beaches and awe-inspiring natural wonders.

In the southwest is **Granada**, the oldest city on the continent. Founded during the Spanish conquest, this utterly charming lakeside city is filled with rainbow-coloured colonial architecture, cobbled streets and horse-drawn carriages. Surprisingly, there are plenty of hip hotels and restaurants including *Hotel Plaza Colon* and *The Garden Café*. At the nearby *Mombacho Volcano*, you can zipline through the cloud forest, spotting sloths and howler monkeys along the way. Exploring the *Las Isletas*, an archipelago of 300 tiny islands, on *Lake Nicaragua* is a must. *Jicara Lodge* is divine.

On the Pacific Coast, there's endless beaches and the surfer town of *San Juan del Sur*. On *La Flor* beach, you can help release *Olive Ridley* turtles between July and January. The *Mukul*, an *Auberge Resort* is fabulous and has a kids club. As well as four miles of white sand beach and rugged coastline at your disposal at this Pacific Coast gem, you can surf, snorkel or hike nature trails. Tailormade experiences include a helicopter ride to a sugar mill and sugar cane plantation or to *Cerro Negro* for some volcano boarding, or a fishing trip with local fisherman in *Gigante*.

THE GALAPAGOS

Located off the coast of Ecuador are the **Galapagos Islands**, a bewitching archipelago that continues to be a top destination for families wanting to follow in the footsteps of Darwin.

The best way to explore this hauntingly beautiful natural wonderland is on a boat cruise. One of the best companies is *Lindblad Expeditions* who launched their family programme National Geographic Global Explorers in 2017, aboard the newly refurbished 48-passenger *National Geographic Islander* or 96-passenger *Endeavour II*

They'll take you to *Isla Bartolome*, where you can swim with Galapagos Penguins, to the *Charles Darwin Research Station* on *Isla Santa Cruz*, home of the legendary giant tortoises, and see the bizarre mating ritual of blue-footed boobies on *Isla Espanola*. You can even snorkel with sea lions and summer is prime whale-watching time as they migrate to the area to feed.

ICELAND

Renowned for its lunar-like landscapes, colossal volcanoes, bubbling hot springs and mesmerising waterfalls, **Iceland** is fast becoming a family hot spot, and in the summer, you can expect warmer temperatures and up to a mind-blowing 24-hours of sunlight. The trendy and child-friendly capital, **Reykjavik**, is filled with cool shops and attractions such as the *Whales of Iceland Museum* and the *Family Park* and Zoo. A relaxing swim in the famed *Blue Lagoon's*

This page, from top left, a fearless Galapagos sea lions enjoys a swim; a fur seal pup snoozing
Opposite, from top, a rooftop view of the cathedral in Granada, Nicaragua; Cerro Negro, one of Nicaragua's active volcanoes





thermal waters is a must. There is a thriving bar and restaurant scene and top spots are *Glo* and *Kaffivagninn*. *Hotel Borg* is ideally located in the centre.

Further south is the famous *Golden Circle* route with some of the country's most spectacular sights including *Thingvellir National Park*, the exploding *Strokkur* geysir and the jaw-dropping *Gullfoss* waterfall. *Hotel Ranga* is a fabulous boutique hotel in the area. *The Langkokull* glacier offers hiking and snowmobiling even in the summer, while on the *Westman Islands*, you can see the country's famous puffins and spot minke, blue and humpback whales and quite possibly orcas. *Reynisfjara*, the famous black sand beach and the stunning *Lake Myvatn* are also worth a visit.

HAVANA

The popularity of **Cuba** and its colourful, Instagram-worthy capital, **Havana** is on the rise. As well as iconic sights such as *The Plaza de la Revolucion*, famous for the giant sculptures of *Che Guevara* and *Camilo Cienfuegos* on the ministry buildings, there are a host of family-friendly attractions including *Museo del Chocolate* and the *Parque La Maestranza* amusement park. It may be a Cuban cliché, but the best way to experience Havana is cruising around in a vintage convertible. A horse and cart or cyclo can be equally fun. Old Havana's cobbled streets and historic squares are best explored on foot. *Plaza Vieja* is particularly popular with families at dusk, when children gather to play and watch street entertainers.

Havana has a thriving restaurant scene, although eating out can still be hit-or-miss. Top spots include *Paladar La Guarida*, made famous by the Oscar-nominated film *Fresca y Chocolate*, *Café Bohemia* and the *Coppelia Ice Cream Parlour*. In the centre is the historic *Hotel Nacional de Cuba*.

IRELAND

Ireland is topping travel lists this year, largely thanks to the release of *Star Wars* and *Game of Thrones*. *The Emerald Isle* is home to castles, mesmerising landscapes, little leprechauns with pots of gold and of course, *Guinness*. It is easy for families to navigate due to its relatively small size.

In the lively capital city of **Dublin**, kid-friendly attractions include *Imaginosity Children's Museum*, the *Leprechaun Museum* and *Dublin Zoo*, famous for its endangered species breeding programme. There are plenty of superb restaurants such as French bistro *Chez Max* and *Hugos* for some good old Irish food. *The Intercontinental Hotel Dublin* is wonderful.

Outside Dublin, alongside iconic sights such as the *Cliffs of Moher*, arguably Ireland's most impressive natural attraction, there are colourful fishing villages, rolling fields and white sand beaches. *Blarney Castle* in *County Cork* is where you'll find the fabled *Blarney Stone*. Legend has it that if you kiss the stone, you will be bestowed with the gift of the gab - be prepared to





balance precariously upside down though. The picture-perfect seaside village of *Cobh* - the last port of call for the doomed Titanic, the charming town of *Killarney* and the bewitchingly beautiful *Dingle Peninsula* are also worth a visit. Of course, no visit to Ireland would be the same without staying in a castle. One of the best is *Dromoland Castle Hotel*.

THE AZORES

About 1500km west of Lisbon, in the Atlantic Ocean, lies **The Azores**, a remote Portuguese archipelago of nine volcanic islands known for their bubbling geothermal springs and first-class whale-watching, especially in the summer months. Dubbed the Hawaii of the North Atlantic, these islands have remained under the radar, but this is changing thanks to direct flights from major cities into the island of *Sao Miguel*. *The Azor Hotel* in the capital, **Ponta Delgada**, makes an ideal starting point for families seeking the ultimate adventure.

One of the most spectacular sights on the island is *Sete Cidades*, a dormant volcano with a twin lake set deep in its enormous crater. Here you can hike to the top, go kayaking or paddle boarding, or explore the surroundings by bike. The town of *Furnas* is famous for its hot springs, but one of the most amazing is *Ponta Da Ferraria's* thermal pool that lies in a cove alongside the ocean. Other highlights are the 10,000-year-old *Gruto de Carvao* lava tunnel that you can walk through, the *Priolo Environmental Center* and the *Cha Gorreana* tea plantation.

For surfing and black sand beaches, head to *Santa Barbara* and stay at the hip *Eco-Beach Resort*. *The Tuka Tula Bar* has a stunning setting and is a great place to eat. Other highlights are the 10,000-year-old *Gruto de Carvao* lava tunnel that you can walk through, *Lagoa de Fogo*, the *Priolo Environmental Centre* and the *Cha Gorreana* tea plantation.

FIJI

Almost two years after Cyclone Winston caused around \$1.4 billion in damage, **Fiji** is back on its feet. This South Pacific tropical archipelago of over 300 islands is known for its endless white sand beaches, vibrant coral reefs and rugged volcanic landscapes. It offers families the perfect mix of Robinson Crusoe-style R&R and adventure year-round and maximum sunshine in the summer months.

The southern Coral Coast on *Viti Levu*, Fiji's largest island is a beachcomber's paradise with luxury accommodation such as the *Outrigger Fiji Beach Resort*. It's close to Kula Eco Park where you can encounter the island's exotic wildlife. Other highlights include bathing in mud at the *Sabeto Hot Springs*, rafting down the *Sigatoka River* and zip-lining above the lush rainforest canopy.

For a dreamy desert island experience, the exquisite *Mamanuca Islands*, where the Tom Hanks' blockbuster *Castaway* was filmed, are easily accessible from *Viti Levu*. The swanky *Six Senses Fiji* has just opened on *Malolo Island* and has a fabulous kids' club. A visit to world-famous *Cloud 9*, a two-storey floating bar and pizza hangout is a must.

This page, from top left, Blarney Castle, home of the fabled Blarney Stone, Co. Cork; A desert-island paradise, Malolo Island, Fiji **Opposite, from top left**, Lagoa de Fogo, a crater lake in San Miguel; The reef system around Castaway Island in the Mamanuca Islands