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SUMMER 2008/SPECIAL ISSUE

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Saving the Best for Last

*The cake's been eaten, the Champagne's been drunk.
Now it's escape time.*

BY CINDY AUGUSTINE AND DAVID KAUFMAN

The Exotics

*Fantasy newlywed vacations,
both near and far.*

GUANACASTE, COSTA RICA



HOURS FROM NYC
6



Ecoconscious couples have always sought refuge in Costa Rica. And though the past few years have seen much development in the tiny Central American country—smaller than West Virginia—it's still as earth-friendly as ever. Skip hectic San Jose and go straight to Guanacaste on the Pacific West Coast. The province is known for its volcanic peaks, cascading falls, and abundant flora and fauna. Check in at the just-opened **Recreo** (from \$6,900 for a three-bedroom villa; recreocostarica.com or 631-298-0414), which has 25 villas; each is outfitted with a pool, chef, and butler. Organic bath towels, linens, and raw botanical toiletries are nice touches, but do-gooders will be pleased to know that hotel owners contribute funds to community education and housing programs.

MOUNTAIN PINE RIDGE, BELIZE



HOURS FROM NYC
5



Pedal through the 300-square-mile Mountain Pine Ridge Reserve's rocky trails where howler monkeys, iguanas, and butterflies provide company along the way. Return the bikes to the Blancaneaux Lodge (from \$180; blancaneaux.com or 501-824-4912), director Francis Ford Coppola's hillside rustic retreat, before sinking into a hammock on the deck of your thatch-roof villa. Honeymoon cabanas are perched on the gentle rapids of the Privassion River; make sure to watch the sunset while sipping the filmmaker's eponymous vino. Later on, the friendly staff can arrange a dive along the Belize Barrier Reef, which Jacques Cou-

teau once declared one of the best underwater exploration areas in the world.

DURAL, UNITED ARAB EMIRATES



HOURS FROM NYC
12.5



There's nothing subtle about Dubai. With its sprawling malls and glittery resorts, it evokes a grander Vegas. Avoid the flash and head to the Arabian Desert. The Al Maha Desert Resort & Spa (from \$900; al-maha.com or 971-4-303-4222) is 45 minutes away from the city and set on a conservation reserve modeled after a traditional Bedouin encampment. The suites have private, temperature-controlled pools and all the modern comforts you'd expect from a luxury resort. Embark on a complimentary camel trek or a four-wheel-drive expedition across the desert dunes. Recover from the journey back in your suite with a soothing bath, fragranced with a blend of cardamom, mandarin, and frankincense.

FEZ, MOROCCO



HOURS FROM NYC
10



Get lost in Fez's massive Fez el Bali, a medina built in 1913 with nearly 10,000 alleys and a plethora of leather goods, carpets, and spices worth bargaining over. If you'd rather not get sucked in, peer at the stalls from the Palais Jamai Hotel (sofitel.com or 224-340-060); the Ambassador Suite has a bird's-eye view of the bustling market without any of the temptations. The former royal residency of the Grand Vizier of Jamai is fittingly palatial with canopy beds, carved woodwork, ceramic mosaics, and the scent of fresh rose petals in the air.



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