

THE SUNDAY TIMES

travel

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SECRETS - p.34

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It can work; see how on page 96

The Andamans

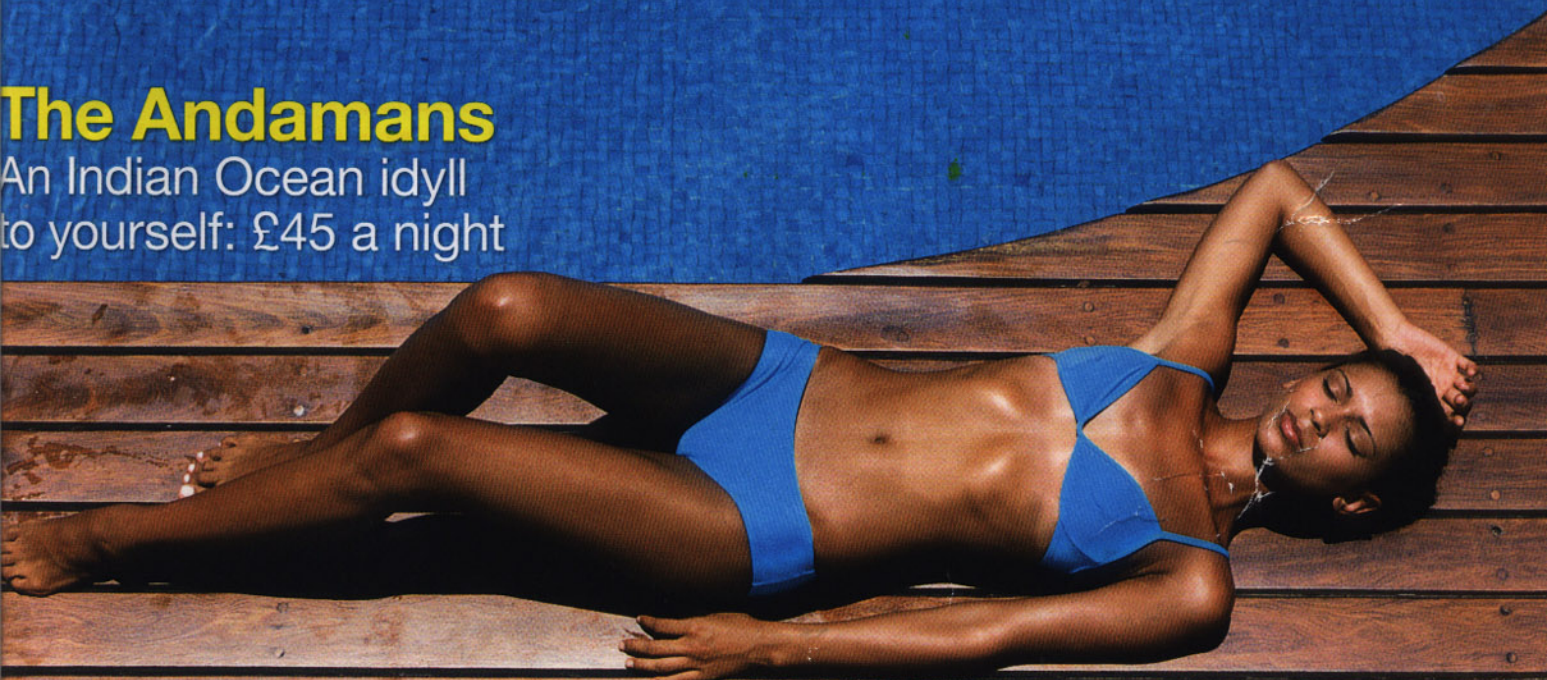
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4 Ohtel, Wellington

Good for: City-slickers.

Because: It's a clever blend of retro and new, with flatscreen TVs alongside '50s Scandinavian furniture design classics – all collected by the architect-turned-hotelier who opened Ohtel in 2008. Built at the foot of Mt Victoria, with stunning views from each of the 10 elegantly funky rooms over Waitangi Park and the Central Business District, Ohtel is not just one of the coolest boutique hotels in Wellington, it is also one of the best located. Situated in the exclusive seaside neighbourhood of Oriental Bay, right opposite the award-winning Waitangi Park, it's just a short stroll from Chaffers Marina and the superb national museum of New Zealand, Te Papa.

The details: Doubles from £113, room only (00 64 4 803 0600, www.ohtel.com).

5 The Woolshed, Waikato

Good for: Wannabe farmers.

Because: You'll stay slap bang in the middle of an expansive 160-hectare hill-country dairy farm in the Scotsmans Valley – in a lovely old timber woolshed conversion with about as much mobile phone reception as a submarine. Host John Cottle spins a good yarn over barbecue breakfasts, or over fishing and hiking trips on his farm – guests are invited to tag along. If neither activity grabs you, opt instead to relax in the nearby Te Aroha mineral spas, bubbling with water fresh from the mountain spring. Food at The Woolshed is also superb: John's wife, Sandra, was a chef in Wellington before escaping to this magical spot, equidistant between Rotorua and the Coromandel Peninsula.

The details: Doubles from £114, B&B (00 64 7 824 0992, www.thewoolshed.co.nz).

6 Mollies, Auckland

Good for: Chain-hotel haters.

Because: This quirky boutique retreat is the creation of a pair of bohemian opera nuts who stage regular soirée and opera recitals round the lounge piano. Unashamedly kitsch, decor at Mollies is a maverick mix-and-match of busts and buddhas, antiques and Victorian art. Not that it's not modern: there's a spa and gym, while the 13 suites are all plasma flatscreens and iPod docking stations, with clean, contemporary lines and balconies overlooking either the harbour or gardens. Superb Pacific-Rim cuisine – try the oven-baked hapuka fish with puy lentils and miso beurre blanc – and attentive service make this one of Auckland's hippest and most charismatic hideaways.

The details: Doubles from £228, room only (00 64 9 376 3489, www.mollies.co.nz).>