

BAZAAR

JOURNEYS OF A LIFETIME



Rutundu

BEST AIRBORNE SAFARI

1 A helicopter flight into the Rift

The Great Rift Valley is the Earth's greatest fracture – a giant gash more than 6,000 kilometres long that runs from Lebanon to Mozambique. Soaring over the Rift's Kenyan valleys, highlands, plateaus and lakes is one of life's most unforgettable experiences. With fewer flying restrictions than anywhere else and a massive diversity of breathtaking terrains, this is the ultimate destination for helicopter safaris.

Laikipia Plateau, for instance, stretches 9,500 square kilometres. This wild and expansive landscape spanning the Equator is spectacularly scenic, with grasslands, hills and forests bounded by Mount Kenya and the Aberdare Range. From any of the outstanding camps and lodges here, you can take helicopter safaris, lasting anything from half a day to a weekend or more, into the Samburu heartland.

In a single morning, from, say, Lemarti's Camp on the Ewasu Nyiro River, you could find yourself taking in an undulating desert

Star-gazing on New Zealand's peaks, trekking to Machu Picchu or stepping out on the Vegas Strip – follow your fantasy for a trip you'll never forget

Wild times

PHOTOGRAPH: MARK PILLAI

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of dunes, hovering over volcanic craters and above pink clouds of flamingos, swooping through magnificent cedar and gum forests ghostly with dangling lichens, and, like a zip down a sweater, parting herds of zebra on the plains and rivers thick with giant crocs before you touch down for lunch. Your picnic spot might be the sparkling green waters of great lakes such as Lake Turkana, or high on a rocky escarpment with nothing but the sensation of space and silence all around.

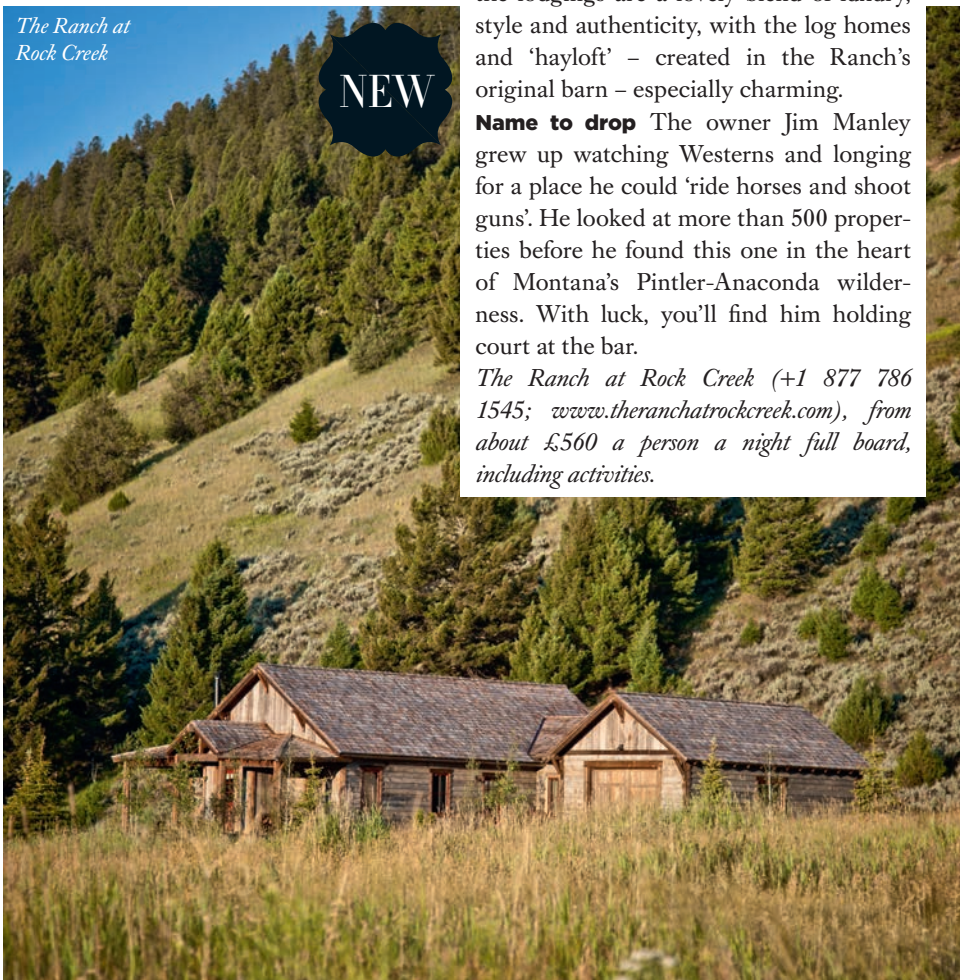
What's hot The ride on horseback from Borana Lodge, in the shadow of Mount Kenya in Laikipia, to the remote log cabins of Rutundu (www.rutundu.com), a magical retreat with log fires and kerosene lamps, where you draw your drinking water from the spring. Or visit baby cheetah Sheba at the wonderful Sirikoi Game Lodge in the heart of the Lewa Wildlife Conservancy (www.lewa.org). The lodge sits on a watering hole, so wild animals can be watched from the private verandah of your extravagant tent.

Names to drop Rutundu's most famous guests, Prince William and Kate Middleton, who respectively made and accepted a marriage proposal here.

For more information on lodges, visit www.thesafariandconservationcompany.com. Journeys by Design (01273 623790; www.journeysbydesign.com) runs Lady Lori helicopter safaris, from about £900 a person a day, including food and drink.

Guide Lemarti with the Lady Lori helicopter on Laikipia Plateau

The Ranch at Rock Creek



BEST FOR COWBOY COUNTRY 2 Riding and fishing on a Wild West ranch

For many people familiar with films of cowboy heroes, the concept of riding through the great open spaces of Colorado and Montana conjures up the essence of freedom and romance.

So for fans of Westerns, the chance to ride out with the genuine article and live as a cowboy will be a dream come true. The Ranch at Rock Creek in remote Montana was established in the 19th century as a cattle farm, but relaunched in 2010 as a vacation wilderness lodge. Its 6,800 undulating acres are bisected by a valley and four miles of pristine river. This is a varied terrain in which to ride the 60 horses; hike; cycle; spot elk, moose, deer, wolves, mountain lions and bears; shoot; fish; hone your archery skills; and, in winter, ski.

What's hot Staffed by a team of accomplished, personable guides, many of them cowhands, the Ranch has the atmosphere of a comfortable private home, where everything is inclusive (except treatments in the excellent spa). Not that this is an excuse to relax indoors, although the lodgings are a lovely blend of luxury, style and authenticity, with the log homes and 'hayloft' – created in the Ranch's original barn – especially charming.

Name to drop The owner Jim Manley grew up watching Westerns and longing for a place he could 'ride horses and shoot guns'. He looked at more than 500 properties before he found this one in the heart of Montana's Pintler-Anaconda wilderness. With luck, you'll find him holding court at the bar.

The Ranch at Rock Creek (+1 877 786 1545; www.theranchatrockcreek.com), from about £560 a person a night full board, including activities.