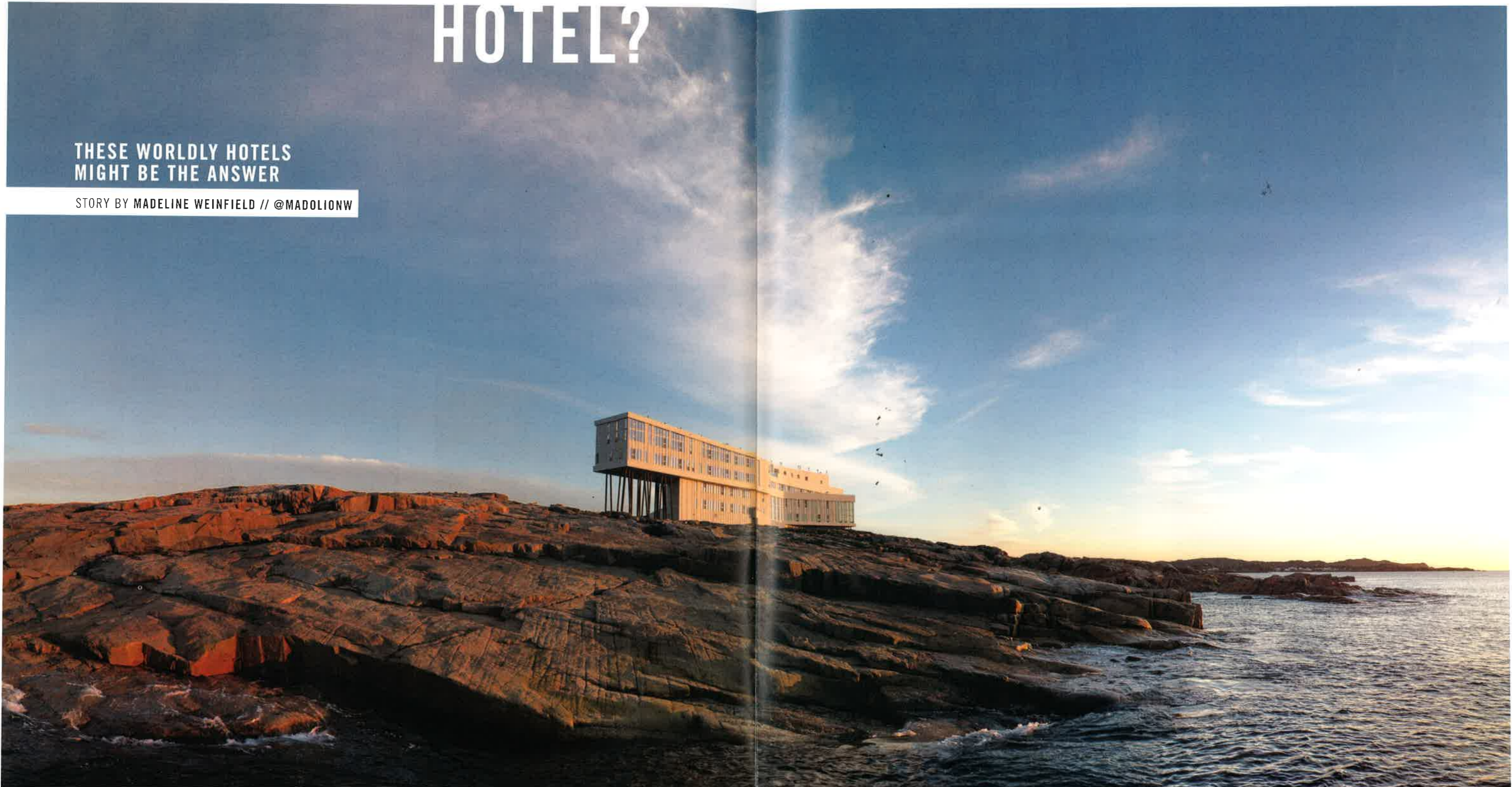


WHAT IS A SUSTAINABLE HOTEL?

THESE WORLDLY HOTELS
MIGHT BE THE ANSWER

STORY BY MADELINE WEINFELD // @MADOLIONW

The world is smaller and more accessible than ever, and a growing appetite for modern amenities in remote locations is seemingly insatiable. Is sustainable travel possible? Contemporary travel culture is increasingly labeling everything as sustainable, green, and eco-friendly. But who's thinking beyond simply changing sheets daily and using LED bulbs? Tucked into some of the most rural areas of the globe, or front and center in major cities, a few properties with visionary owners are leading a sustainable travel movement that cares about the land they're on as well as hosting guests.





Aldea Kuká

ISLA HOLBOX // MEXICO

More Bali than Cancún, Isla Holbox's bohemian aesthetic is ominously under threat as the island grows in popularity. Lodging options have grown likewise, with accommodations ranging from no-frills camping to five-star hotels. The unease is a concern Aldea Kuká, Hobox's newest boutique hotel, hopes to settle. The idea for Aldea Kuká was born during owner Marco Z. Garcia Marquez's childhood. His mother brought their family on a Yucatan-wide trip wandering through the peninsula. A love affair with the island began at first sight. After yearly visits, Marquez finally purchased a parcel of sandy, sea-facing land in 2013, which has been transformed sustainably into an eco-friendly boutique hotel, and one of Holbox's most beautiful. Opened in May 2019, Marquez sought to design the hotel as a cluster of bungalows reminiscent of a Mayan village. The design of seemingly simple bamboo and log structures topped with palm roofs which ring around a pool and look onto the sea beyond was executed seamlessly. Inside are lofty cocoons adorned with furniture and accessories collected during Marquez's travels through Mexico. Handwoven beach blankets and bags, hand-carved tables, and enormous soaking tubs with hollowed out gourd calabashes makes for barefoot luxury glamping at its most appealing. In sourcing the materials and décor for the interiors, Marquez built strong connections with artisans across the Yucatán and beyond. Aldea Kuká curates a monthly artist-in-residence program to highlight the region's cultural heritage. He hopes to be a leader in a movement to create hotels that leave the least possible footprint. With equal attention paid to mechanics and aesthetics, there's an extensive on-site water treatment facility, allowing the hotel to become fully plastic bottle free. Solar panels and a grove of trees are being added to the sandy courtyard to offset Co² emissions. The restaurant serves fresh local cuisine sourced from a small farm exclusive to the hotel in the port town of Chiquila. The seafood, pulled from viewable waters, is as fresh as it comes.

ALDEAKUKA.MX



1 Hotels

NEW YORK CITY & MIAMI, U.S.A.

"Earth Day every day" is the mantra of 1 Hotels, the luxuriously leafy oasis in Manhattan, Brooklyn, and South Beach. 1 Hotels have become the poster children of sustainable urban luxury. As their popularity grows, they plan to open offshoots in West Hollywood, Silicon Valley, Haitang Bay, and Cabo San Lucas. Entering their airy, open lobbies adorned with vertical gardens are more tropical oasis than urban hotel. Teslas take you anywhere within a three-mile radius and electric cars park for free. Sand-filled timers in the bathrooms encourage five-minute long showers, filtered spigots discourage bottled water use, and recycling bins are ubiquitous. Coat hangers are made from post-consumer recycled materials, room keys are recycled wood, chalkboards over notebooks, and iPads replace local attraction fliers and house menus.

1HOTELS.COM



The Linden Centre

YUNNAN, CHINA

Located in the town of Xizhou on Erhai Lake, The Linden Centre is an ambitious feat of social enterprise and sustainable tourism in a remote region of China removed from modernization and pollution's haze. Mindfully owned and run by Brian and Jeanee Linden, it's the gold standard in promoting tourism, infusing the local economy, and maintaining the integrity of the region's history, architecture, and sense of self. The Lindens began their Centre with the vision of incentivizing locals to stay rather than move to the city while restoring Xizhou's architectural gems and creating an exceptionally curated immersion into rural Chinese life for inquisitive travelers. The painstakingly restored Centre spans three century-old mansions of jaw-dropping monuments to past architectural grandeurs filled with an impressive collection of local antiques and art. The Centre employs over fifty locals, fostering pride in local heritage. More than an inn, the Centre serves as a base for American high school and university study abroad programs, focusing on first-hand cultural exchange and appreciation, where students undertake internships with local craftspeople and record oral histories with older Xizhou residents. The result is both a gem of an inn and a thriving small town where antique dealers, local craftspeople, enticing street food, famous black tea, and straight-from-the-oyster-shell pearls abound.

LINDEN-CENTRE.COM





The Brando

TETIAROA, FRENCH POLYNESIA

Few places conjure private luxury quite like The Brando, a resort on the French Polynesian island of Tetiaroa, so named for the island's one-time owner and legendary actor Marlon Brando. Brando first came to the island while filming *Mutiny on the Bounty*, purchasing it in 1967 with a goal to preserve its Polynesian culture, beauty, and biodiversity. Built on such vision and passion, few places—luxury or otherwise—are so thoroughly dedicated to sustainability. Brando conceptualized the idea of a self-sustaining luxury resort and research center to meet the goals of preservation wherein the resort was constructed to leave the smallest possible footprint with guest villas built exclusively from local, renewable, and/or recycled elements. The air conditioning uses a deep seawater air conditioning system. The first of its kind, the system utilizes cold water from the bottom of the ocean to supply extremely efficient and low-energy cooling, reducing energy demands by nearly 70 percent. What energy and water heating needs remain are produced from photovoltaic panels that line the airstrip (The Brando is only accessible by private plane). The resort is now very close to reaching its goal of being completely self-sustainable and carbon neutral—no small feat for an immaculate retreat set on a private island.

THEBRANDO.COM



The Sanctuary at Ol Lentille

LAIKIPIA, KENYA

What impact do luxury safaris have on the communities in which they're built? That's a question British couple John and Gill Elias sought to answer in developing The Sanctuary at Ol Lentille, a compound of four private villas in a remote stretch of the northern Kenyan bush that is largely considered to have some of the most beautiful views in all of Africa. The Eliases developed the concept of the Sanctuary with the goal of preserving the culturally and ecologically rich land while also supporting the Masai and Samburu communities who live there. The resulting retreat features unparalleled privacy, solar heated water, and solar generated electricity. The lodge not only employs over 100 locals, but since the Sanctuary opened in 2007, the Ol Lentille Trust has raised over \$5 million to support grassroots community development projects, public health initiatives, and conservation efforts, reaching over 10,000 people in an area spanning 1,000 square kilometers. The Trust currently supports a small government-run hospital, a dozen mobile health clinics, and a dozen local schools, all while conserving 40,000 acres of land.

OL-LENTILLE.COM



Fogo Island Inn

NEWFOUNDLAND, CANADA

The visually striking Fogo Island Inn lies at the crux of one of the four corners of the earth. The crown jewel of a remote, tiny island in Atlantic Canada, the Fogo Island Inn has earned an Instagram reputation due to striking design with a backdrop of caribou and icebergs. Designed by the Newfoundland-born, Norway-based architect Todd Saunders, Fogo Island Inn sits upon stilts that minimize the building's footprint atop jagged rock, berry patches, and lichen, with a composition that neatly embraces its otherworldly landscape. Saunders designed the building to be of maximum energy-efficiency, with insulated steel windows and frame. Rainwater is collected on the roof and used for the inn's laundry, kitchen, and toilets. The rooms have been constructed using only natural wood, linen, cotton, and wool: The only plastic you'll find is the telephone. Soundproofed guest rooms mean the only sounds one hears is the ocean. But how and why did this modern beauty wind up in the middle of a remote Newfoundland fishing village? The Inn made its debut after the collapse of a once-thriving cod export industry. Through the Shorefast Foundation, the inn provides direct employment for the people of Fogo, while shifting their economy from fishing to tourism, supporting local crafts and vocations. The Inn's Woodshop on Fogo Island sells furniture and textiles designed by artists the world over and made by those who call Fogo home. The Inn seeks local suppliers for nearly all of its needs, with 100 percent of operating surplus funneled back into the community. Giving back is so central to the inn's philosophy that nightly prices are broken down by the percentage of where your money goes, 15 percent of which is dedicated to the Shorefast Foundation.

FOGOISLANDINN.CA