

# TRAVEL

THE INSIDE STORY FOR BUSINESS TRAVELLERS

WORK FROM ANYWHERE

## Reach for the remote

Have laptop will travel? There's a growing trend for workers to combine business with adventure. **Marisa Cannon** reports

As the pandemic recedes and the world opens up again, you probably can't wait to feel the sand of some exotic beach between your toes. But as an increasing number of business people are discovering, that feeling doesn't need to be confined to your holiday entitlement. Shrewd travellers are finding ever more intrepid ways to blend business with leisure, take extended holidays that combine lengthy periods of work with play, or even uproot their lives to experience working remotely in distant destinations.

And it may well be that you have some cash stashed away to fund an extended trip if you were fortunate enough to keep earning during the last year and a half. According to the Bank of England's chief economist Andy Haldane, £250bn has been saved by Britons as a result of subdued spending during the pandemic. Perhaps this is one reason why prolonged holidays are now trending upwards, especially those where travellers can tag on a week or two of work in the wake of many companies' 'work from anywhere' policies.

According to Airbnb's 2021 Report on Travel Living, 42 per cent of consumers say they plan to take more longer-stay

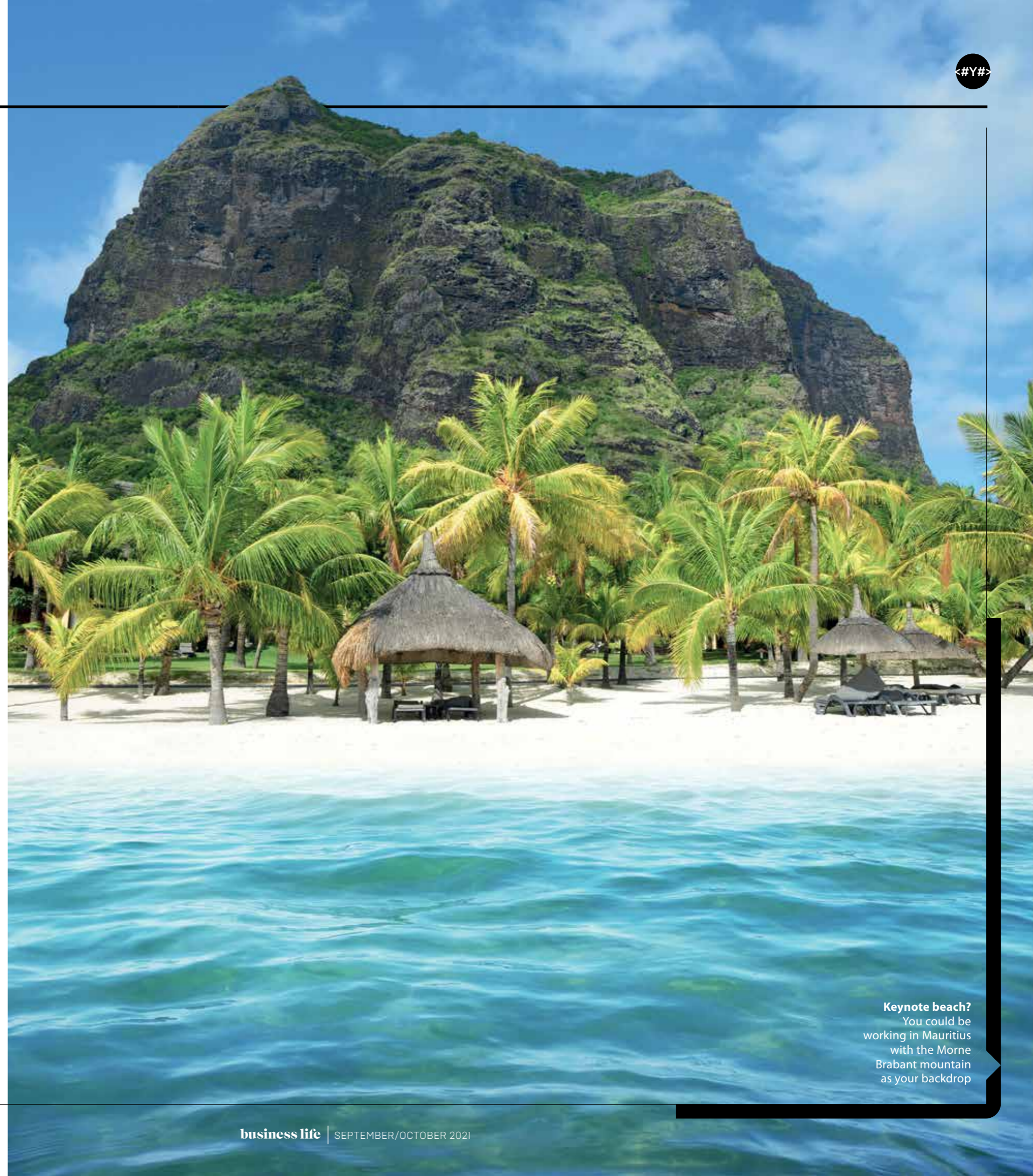
travel when the pandemic subsides. Many are already doing so, with stays of 28 nights or more doubling from 14 per cent in 2019 to 24 per cent in the first quarter of 2021.

"People can travel anytime, they are travelling to more places and they are staying longer," says Airbnb CEO and co-founder Brian Chesky. "The lines between travel, living and working are blurring and we are upgrading our service to make it easier for people to integrate travel into their lives."

The enhanced flexibility of our working lives has not only led to extended 'working' holidays, but also to footloose travellers seeking experiences living and working away from home. So-called 'digital nomads' with no strings attached, or who can absorb the cost of a prolonged stint overseas, are capitalising on flexible work arrangements, with one in 16 Britons declaring they are either 'fairly', or 'very likely' to work from abroad this year according to research by PagoFX and YouGov. Twitter, Salesforce, Revolut and Siemens are some of the companies that have introduced permanent 'work from anywhere' policies, and hotel

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**Keynote beach?** You could be working in Mauritius with the Morne Brabant mountain as your backdrop

brands are now in hot pursuit of workers looking to hit the open road.

CitizenM is one of them. Last summer it launched its Global Passport programme offering subscribers hotel stays for €50 per night when purchasing a block of 30. Stays can be used at any of the group's 21 hotels for a minimum of seven nights in cities such as London, Amsterdam, New York and Seattle, and include dining discounts. "The work-from-anywhere lifestyle is now more than a trend – it's a global movement, a shift in the way work is seen and done," says CitizenM's chief marketing officer Robin Chadha. "Decentralisation in work and life has been talked about for many years, but the pandemic has given it a big push towards reality."

Last October, Selina, a global hospitality platform with properties in 19 countries, acquired Remote Year, which organises 'work from anywhere' programmes for digital nomads. "The rise of digital nomads is going to be one of the biggest movements hospitality has ever seen," says Selina co-founder and CEO Rafael Museri. The company offers subscription packages for one-, three-, or six-month stays, as well as a corporate programme that allows companies to purchase passes for their employees, with a desk at a coworking space as standard with each package.

Destinations and hospitality groups are embracing the movement by building remote work-friendly infrastructure and communities. A new initiative at Japan's major national parks has seen the installation of workstations for travellers to hire at campsites and hotels, each



**Take a view**  
The rooftop bar at CitizenM New York Bowery. Left: Madeira has its own Digital Nomad Village



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offering high-speed Wi-Fi and access to adventure-based activities. Marriott, Hyatt, Mandarin Oriental and InterContinental are among hotel groups offering drop-in packages, where travellers can take advantage of luxury workspaces and facilities for periods during the day.

This summer, St Lucia encouraged travellers to take working holidays to the island as part of its 'Live It' programme, which paired them with an 'island specialist' who acted as a personal concierge and guide both before and during their stay. In Belize, a similar scheme was launched at the Umayá Village, the Caribbean's first designated community of its kind, catering exclusively to remote teams and digital nomads, with 60 waterfront apartments, 'community meals' twice a week, and group activities, exercise classes, adventure trips and personal development sessions on offer for residents. Madeira, meanwhile, debuted its own Digital Nomad Village on the island's southwestern coast, hosting up to 100 people with free communal workspace, Wi-Fi and exclusive events, as well as a Slack community and hosting team to help foster relationships with the locals.

But for those who want to make life in a tropical paradise a more permanent fixture, many governments are now offering temporary visas and incentives. More than 24 territories so far offer programmes for

**Business is good**  
Dubai offers a one-year virtual working scheme

digital nomads, including new schemes in tropical destinations such as Anguilla, Barbados, Bermuda, Costa Rica and Mauritius, where, for a fee, workers can stay up to a year. Business cities such as Dubai have also rolled out the red carpet. The Emirate's one-year virtual working scheme was launched in October 2020 for workers who have at least a year left on their contract or have been running their own business for the same period, with the hope that an influx of lucrative nomads will support the city state's economy. In addition, all visa holders are eligible for a free Covid vaccine.

"On the whole, it is a positive and proactive step by the government," says Dubai resident Katherine Squires. "The economy took a massive hit last year, not only from loss of tourism but also from the large number of expats that left, so enticing wealthy westerners over to work is going to be a massive boost. If adding the vaccine to the list of benefits helps, then why not?"

As governments continue to lift restrictions, the benefits of marrying work with leisure over extended periods are likely to become ever more attractive. Why not give it a try? ■

