

THE ULTRATRavel TOP 10 PRIVATE ISLANDS

6. NORTH ISLAND, THE SEYCHELLES

Six Senses has opened a 28-villa resort on Felicite Island, Oetker has taken over the exquisite 16-villa Frégate Island, and the newly revamped six-villa on Cousine Island is also available for private hire. But the island that still represents the barefoot beauty, exclusivity, privacy and expensiveness of the Seychelles remains this hilly, granite outcrop spread over two kilometres. A 20-minute helicopter ride from Mahé, it has 11 sprawling timber villas, each with 6,000 square feet of private space. Ten are two-bedroomed while Villa 11 is a one-bedroom enclave designed for maximum privacy and romance. Prince William and Kate Middleton, and George Cooney and Amal Alamuddin have honeymooned here. The chef is on hand to cook whatever guests fancy, and besides diving, kayaking, exploring with the resident nature guide by buggy or mountain bike, and lolling in the spa, there's absolutely nothing to do but lap up the utter loveliness. **North Island sleeps 22 and costs from €60,000 (Dh241,650) per night; north-island.com**

7. SONG SAA, CAMBODIA

Until its two Australian owners opened the remote, glamorously minimalist Song Saa in 2012, Cambodia had no five-star beach resort. This meant that after marvelling at the 11th-century temple of Angkor Wat, wealthy visitors usually disappeared to neighbouring Thailand. Now a one-hour flight from Siem Reap to Sihanoukville and a 30-minute bounce over crystal-clear water in the hotel's speedboat brings one to Song Saa, a beautifully conceived little world with 27 rustic villas – all driftwood and draped muslin, with a private plunge pool, shaded deck where the scent of frangipani hangs on the breeze, and vast ocean views. Days can be spent at the hilltop spa, kayaking through mangroves and snorkelling over the coral reef. At night in the overwater restaurant, a talented chef magics up spicy dishes by lamplight, which can be followed by a swim in bioluminescent waters. **Song Saa sleeps 50 and costs from US\$22,500 (Dh82,640) per night, including all meals; songsaa.com**

8. MUSHA CAY, THE BAHAMAS

Arriving in the Bahamas, the effect of unfiltered sunshine on blinding white sands and pristine ocean is dazzling enough. Add the private opulence of Musha Cay, 135 kilometres off Nassau, and one can feel quite overwhelmed. Illusionist David Copperfield bought the four-island, 500-acre resort in 2006 after drawing lines between spots he considered magical – Stonehenge, Easter Island, the pyramids of Giza and Yucatán – and discovering that Musha Cay was where they intersected. Five plantation-style villas sit on the 150-acre Musha, with the ocean-side Landings providing a clubhouse and Dave's Drive-In offering movies on the beach. A fleet of boats and water toys, including jet skis, kayaks, a banana boat, a catamaran and a 23-foot cruiser, lets one explore the little archipelago. A fireworks display costs an extra US\$25,000 (Dh91,800), while a pirate-themed treasure hunt is for \$20,000 (Dh73,450) – and apparently 60 per cent of hosts book both. **Musha Cay sleeps 24 and costs from \$39,000 (Dh143,245) per night; mushacay.com**

9. ISLA DE SA FERRADURA, IBIZA

A pirate hideout in the 17th century, this is now the most luxurious private-party destination in the Mediterranean. Located in the bay of Sant Miquel, and actually attached to Ibiza by a 100-metre-long path, the 14-acre island sold a few years ago for €33 million (Dh133m) and reopened in May this year. Its seven suites are in the central hacienda, 130,000 square feet of white-marbled extravagance where there's a surprise around every corner, from the rooftop dance floor and



cinema arranged with two massive daybeds, to the big seating area arranged around a circular fireplace and a terrarium stocked with tropical plants and coy carp. The cave, which was once used by pirates, has been turned into a spa with a Turkish bath, sauna, solarium and massage area. A wander about the island reveals all sorts of little spots for a private lunch or tea: terraces, bowers, even an Arabian-style tent. **Isla de sa Ferradura sleeps 14 and costs from €150,000 (Dh604,700) a week; privateislandsnline.com**

10. MNEMBA ISLAND, TANZANIA

Were he fast-forwarded into the 21st century, Robinson Crusoe might have built these 10 rustically thatched, open-sided lodges scattered under the casuarina trees. Positioned to look out over the ocean, each bed is a wood-framed four-poster, draped in mosquito nets. A carved chest supports a rattan-shaded lamp, a rattan picture frame hangs from the roof, wittily framing nothing but the surrounding vegetation, and the bathroom is Fred Flintstone – basic but spacious. Ultra-luxe Mnemba is not. But its barefoot simplicity makes for a relaxing retreat. Local fishermen and mainland farmers supply the kitchens. The diversions the water-sports centre can arrange – fly or deep-sea fishing, kayaking, paddleboarding and diving – all really thrill, since Mnemba (20 minutes by speedboat from Zanzibar) is surrounded by a marine nature reserve that's home to 600 species of reef fish, dolphins and, from July to September, humpback whales. **Mnemba Island sleeps 20 and costs US\$64,900 (Dh238,375) a night, including all meals; andbeyond.com/mnemba**