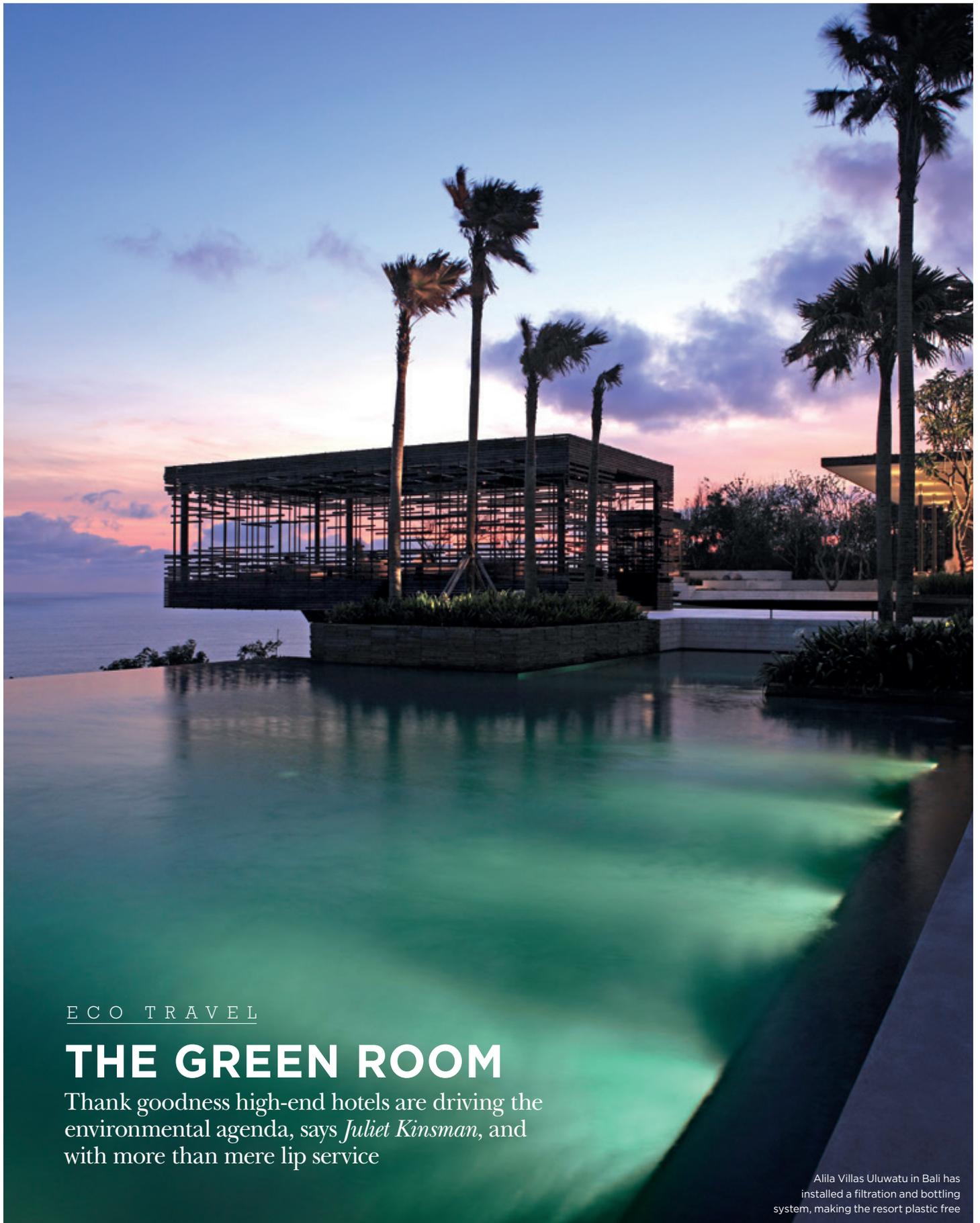


EAT
DRINK
ESCAPE

FOOD & TRAVEL



ECO TRAVEL

THE GREEN ROOM

Thank goodness high-end hotels are driving the environmental agenda, says *Juliet Kinsman*, and with more than mere lip service

Alila Villas Uluwatu in Bali has installed a filtration and bottling system, making the resort plastic free

Alila Villas Uluwatu in Bali practise what they preach when it comes to sustainability

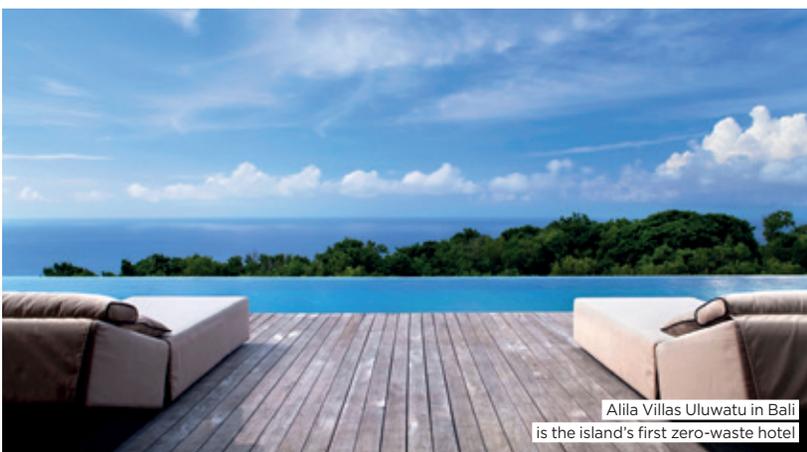


Imagine you're given the choice between two beautiful luxury hotels – both suit your budget, promise comfortable experiences in stylish surroundings and are in ideal locations. Yet one of your potential hosts seems to care that bit more about having a positive impact on the world. How do you know? There's a section on their website listing the wonderful ways in which they consider their energy consumption, plus they pay their staff a living wage and only use ethical suppliers. Maybe you notice the EarthCheck accreditation? And it's been recommended by a sustainability enthusiast you trust (see boxout). By contrast, the other hotel doesn't reference any corporate social responsibility, even in the small print. So which hotel do you choose? For increasing numbers of us, it's a no-brainer. The sustainable one.

We're all finally waking up to the need for hotels to be greener. Because that's what we hotel lovers are looking for – as long as the do-gooding doesn't come at a higher cost or compromise our comfort. Surveys say we're choosing hospitality that's kinder and more considerate. But is it responsible management of energy, carbon, water and waste that gets us clicking that 'booking' button? Sure – when the ethical option also involves treating ourselves to the finer things like sumptuous bed linens, delicious food, drink and interior design, that are worth Instagramming about.

I think we all know why hotels should be more sustainable – I don't need to dazzle/disturb you with statistics that evoke images of landfills spilling over, underpaid foreign staff or dolphins choking on straws. Nor do I need to paint a picture of how much nicer it is to stay somewhere that has a spirit of positivity and kindness. What we're grasping is the need to change the way we talk about all things eco – we need to language all that boring, geeky back-of-house operational stuff in a way that makes it interesting. When Alila hotels announced they were the first zero-waste hotel on the island, they did exactly that. So when I was at award-winning, architecturally arresting Alila Uluwatu in Bali, I left the selfie brigade posing by the infinity pool to go and nerd out with a peek at the island's first zero-waste hotel filtration and bottling system, which enables them to be plastic-free – and honestly, it was fascinating.

It's up to all of us to contribute to the sustainability conversation at a deeper level and ask how we really know who's doing good and how. Which hotels are really



Alila Villas Uluwatu in Bali is the island's first zero-waste hotel

PHOTO: © ALILA HOTELS & RESORTS; © ALEX FRADKIN



Canada's Fogo Island Inn is a place-making triumph

striving to have a positive social, environmental and economic impact? It comes down to transparency. The tourism industry is swimming in greenwash. Hotels are frantically trying to be seen polishing their halos – so it's becoming harder to tell who the true heroes are. Whose responsibility is it to ensure hotels walk their talk of having a conscience? Is it up to the government to legislate and regulate? Is it up to the hotel to prove responsibility when it comes to their sustainability? Or is it simply in the hands of

the consumer making the purchasing decisions to scrutinise and challenge? It's all of the above.

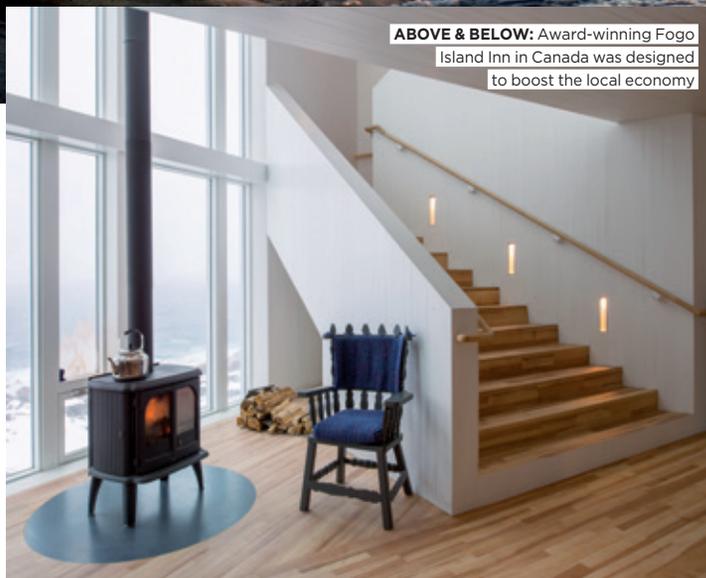
For me, the poster star for the new generation of sustainable design-led hotels is Fogo Island Inn in Canada. This award-winning 29-suite hotel was created by the visionary and iconoclast, Zita Cobb, who devised the place as part of a forward-thinking business model to create an economic engine for a dwindling fishing-reliant community. In the process, the ethical entrepreneur made an unlikely tourist destination out of an outlying North American isle in the Atlantic. Yes, it was born from her initial philanthropy, which launched the project through an arts foundation, but having a purpose higher up their agenda meant profit soon followed. There was investment in excellent design and true integrity shown through the highest-quality, hand-crafted furniture. Cobb's approach to rebuilding an economy affected by embargos on cod fishing resulted in a place-making triumph.

It's not just altruistic independent hotels that deserve to take a bow. Some of the big chains are demonstrating they're – well – nicer. If you call yourself an eco-warrior, Hilton might not be the first accommodation provider to spring to mind. Yet the hotel and resort behemoth has long since had a sense of ethical purpose. One of the first to banish plastic straws, you can't accuse them of greenwashing when anyone can track the environmental impact of their 570 hotels around the world through their dedicated corporate responsibility performance measurement platform, LightStay. Transparency, honesty and intelligent discourse is what we need from everyone.

HOTELS ARE FRANTICALLY TRYING TO BE SEEN POLISHING THEIR HALOS – SO IT'S BECOMING HARDER TO TELL WHO THE TRUE HEROES ARE



ABOVE & BELOW: Award-winning Fogo Island Inn in Canada was designed to boost the local economy

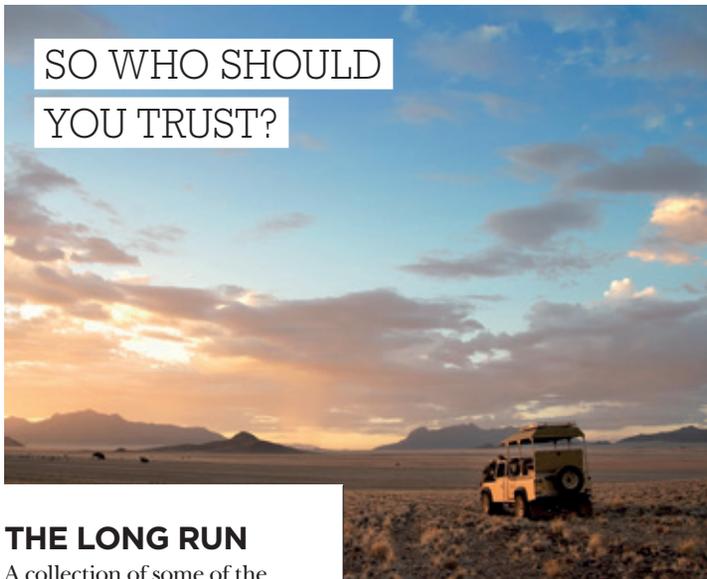


BOOK IT

Alila Uluwatu
From £547 per night per room.
alilahotels.com

Fogo Island Inn
Rooms from \$1,975 CAD.
fogoislandinn.ca

SO WHO SHOULD YOU TRUST?



THE LONG RUN

A collection of some of the world's most committed conservationists, lodges, retreats and parks, The Long Run is guided by the four Cs – Culture, Community, Conservation and Commerce. Director Delphine Malleret-King loves the **Wolwedans** luxury camps in southern Namibia (*above*), whose aim is to support NamibRand Nature Reserve – over 400,000 acres of undisturbed nature, making it one of Southern Africa's largest private reserves and also one of the most unspoilt places on the planet. **Lapa Rios** (*below*), is a 1,000-acre private nature reserve and ecolodge in Costa Rica, owned by John and Karen Lewis. 'No matter how you slice it, a rain-forest left standing is worth more than it is cut down,' they say. Quite right. Just above the point where Golfo Dulce meets the wild Pacific Ocean, the Osa Peninsula contains 2.5 per cent of the world's biodiversity.



BOUTECO

Pardon the flagrant self-promotion of my eco-venture, Bouteco, but it recommends hotels I know to have big hearts, as well as great taste in interiors and design. I love ecolodge **Kasbahdu Toubkal** in Morocco for its work empowering the local Berber community, the **Datai** in Malaysia for its permaculture gardens, **Mashpi Lodge** in Ecuador for its scientific research centre, **Bankside** in south London for its artists-in-residence and **Shinta Mani** in Cambodia for its anti-poaching work and hospitality school.

PEBBLE MAGAZINE

This digital lifestyle magazine is dedicated to making you live a greener life, from organic homeware to ethical skincare. Creator and editor Georgina Wilson-Powell's hotel picks include **The Scarlet Hotel** in Cornwall, which 'feels too luxurious to be good for the planet', proving sustainable doesn't always have to mean quirky, thanks to a reed-filtered natural pool and every measure taken to cut carbon emissions and waste. Plus **The Gallivant**, in Rye, East Sussex, for its award-winning commitment to local fare.

CONSIDERATE HOTELIERS

Xenia zu Hohenlohe, founding partner of Considerate Hoteliers, recommends **Heckfield Place**, Hampshire, with its composting system, biomass centre powering water and central heating, and anaerobic digester. She notes that Oetker Collection's **The Lanesborough** in London upholds over 25 Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Standards plus the UN Global Compact. Their Green Pearl team recognises CSR staff work, while the Library Bar staff won an award for salvaging the peel from fruit for cocktail garnishes.

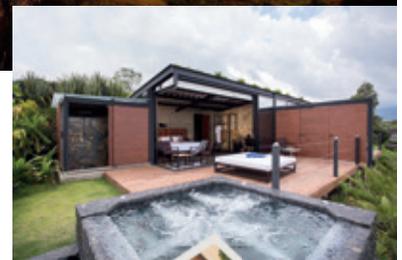
NOW FORCE FOR GOOD ALLIANCE

NOW curates a collection of hotels showing genuine commitment to sustainability, raising the bar on accountability and transparency. Co-founder Alexa Poortier says, 'The Soneva brand is an inspiring leader on sustainable luxury but I also love **Genghis Khan Retreat** in Mongolia, where 100 per cent of revenue supports the nomad community and young people, in helping them get an education in a place where the indigenous culture is at risk of disappearing due to climate change.'



REGENERATIVE RESORTS

These boutique eco-hotels and resorts are committed to environmental and social impact, which encourages people and places to coexist in harmony. Amanda Ho, co-founder, recommends **Reserva do Ibitipoca** in Brazil (*above*) for its organic agriculture and historic preservation. Larger than the state park that borders it, there's also an 18th-century farmhouse and a stable of Mangalarga horses. **Bio Habitat** in Colombia (*above right*), invites you to get lost in its natural beauty and revel in biodiversity. ■



Bon Voyage Boutique Hotels For The Conscious Traveller is a coffee-table book published by Gestalten that showcases new generation green-but-glam getaways.