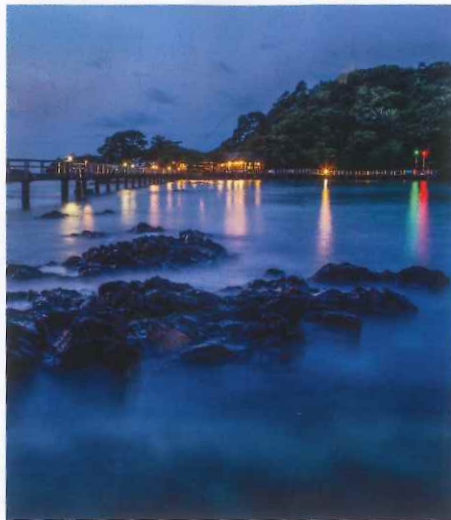


DEEP-CHILL ON
THREE DREAM ISLANDS...**38 Chumbe Island, Zanzibar**

Coral cities spread beneath you in terraces, fish clump together on their patios and dog-sized crayfish lurk in alleys. The water is warm and clear, about three metres deep, and you can dip down to inspect anemones, mushroom coral, clams and sea cucumbers, and hear whale song if you're lucky. Guides explain what you're seeing – somewhat like an underwater safari. On land, the tropical dry forest grows on a bedrock of fossilised coral. Rare Aders' duikers flit between shadows and coconut crabs crawl across the ground in the moonlight. Both day-trippers and overnight guests are assigned one of seven eco-cabins, a short stroll from the beach. For those who stay on, a magical three-course dinner is served below the lighthouse. – TC

DO IT Day trips cost R1 100 pp, staying overnight is R3550 pp. chumbeisland.com

39 Príncipe, West Africa

Príncipe Island in the Gulf of Guinea, nestled in the curve where Africa bulges out westwards, just above the Equator, measures only 20 by 12 kilometres and is home to 6 000 people and two outrageously beautiful hotels. It will cost you to get there but engender no regrets. I arrived in an old twin-prop Dornier from Douala, Cameroon, and got whisked off to Bom Bom Island, a resort owned by SA tech entrepreneur Mark Shuttleworth. There are no tourist shops. It's quiet. People walk. They cook on open fires and fish from dugout canoes. The sea is warm, the beaches have no footprints and the volcanic peaks of this magical Lost World are wreathed in clouds. – DP

DO IT Bom Bom bungalows from R2765 pp sharing. bombomprincipe.com. Roça Sundry around R3 400 for two. hotelrocasundy.com (Both hotels will organise your flights.)

40 St Helena, South Atlantic

The 'Island at the End of the World' is now a little closer. For years, St Helena was only accessible via a five-day voyage from Cape Town on a mail ship. In October 2017 the island's airport finally welcomed its first plane full of tourists. And the six-hour flight from Joburg or Cape Town (via Windhoek) is just one reason to visit now. Hikers will discover a string of 'postbox walks'. Divers can see hawksbill turtles, whale sharks and humpback whales. And that's just the start – it's a place of primordial forests and black-sand beaches, sunken ships and peculiar creatures, vintage cars and bygone treasures and quirky characters. – TJ

DO IT Return flights from Joburg are around R14000 pp (a bit more from Cape Town). flyairlink.com. Stay at B&Bs and guest houses run by locals, or the brand-new Mantis St Helena Hotel. sthenatourism.com