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buffs  
**D5**



# OFF DUTY



Dan Neil on  
Ford's ever-  
evolving  
Mustang  
**D12**

EATING | DRINKING | STYLE | FASHION | DESIGN | DECORATING | ADVENTURE | TRAVEL | GEAR | GADGETS

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Saturday/Sunday, November 28 - 29, 2015 | **D1**

North Island,  
Seychelles  
\$4,700  
per person  
a night

## One On The Isle

With private-island vacations for every taste and budget, you don't have to be a Silicon Valley success story to indulge your Crusoe fantasies

BY CHRISTIAN L. WRIGHT

**FOR A FEW DAYS** every summer, I have my family's remote private island in the St. Lawrence River all to myself. The house is ramshackle, overrun with spiders and has no staff, but watching the sun set in great brush strokes of pink over the river, I don't feel like I'm on vacation: I feel like I'm the queen of a small kingdom where my editors can't find me, the air isn't toxic and barbarians are not at the gate. Sometimes privacy is the best luxury of all.

More conventionally luxurious private

islands are the stuff of fantasies, the settings of James Bond hide-outs and royal honeymoons, the ultimate reward for the unfathomably famous who yearn to be left alone. Marlon Brando, for instance, had Tetiaroa, his secluded atoll in Tahiti, which he bought after filming "Mutiny on the Bounty" in the region. Mr. Brando had the island all to himself, but those of us with the bank accounts of mere mortals can enjoy a slice of it, now that his family last year opened it as the Brando, a 35-villa hideaway where a one-bedroom hut starts at \$2,500 per night.

"Private islands" come in two varieties:

Those you can hire for your exclusive use and those on which a sole resort welcomes just a handful of guests (even wealthy castaways can learn to share). Both types are growing in popularity, according to the travel agents who book them. "Demand for private island vacations has increased by 26.5% in the last two years," said Jack Ezon, president of Ovation Vacations in New York, which specializes in luxury getaways. "Demand for 'fancy' is very high," said Jay Johnson, president of Coastline Travel Advisors, a California agency that caters to Silicon Valley's power players.

It doesn't get much fancier than a place like Calivigny, an 80-acre island off Grenada that can accommodate up to 50 people and is rented only to one group of guests at a time. Included in the \$140,000-a-night rate are butlers, maids and private chefs available around the clock, and a full range of sea toys—from paddleboards to a 27-foot Boston Whaler.

Who rents a private island? The sort of people who "don't want a timetable, don't want to share a pool, hear other languages or listen to other people's children," said Ileana von Hirsch, co-founder of UltraVilla, Please turn to page D6

## ADVENTURE &amp; TRAVEL

## SPEND TIME IN SOLITARY REFINEMENT

Continued from page D1

a directory of grand palazzos around the globe. "If there's bad behavior, no one will ever know. That's the mystique of it."

But not all private islands come with a small army of staff, Italianate villas and price tags only an oligarch can afford. In fact, there's an island for every taste—from the barefoot luxury of Zanzibar's Mnemba Island, where the nearest other couple might be a pair of antelope, to the jet-set glamour of Parrot Cay in the Turks & Caicos,

'You meet people—like a baroness from Croatia—and become their friends.'

just a three-hour flight from New York City. And there's one for nearly every pocket book, too: You can take over all 74 acres of Richard Branson's Necker Island in the British Virgins for \$78,000 a night or stay in an A-frame lake house

on Laurel Island in East Hampton, Conn., for about \$125 a night—and plenty of can-do spirit (remember to bring your own sheets, towels and drinking water).

While nothing beats the privacy—and bragging rights—of having an island of one's own, there's also something to be said for the option of rubbing elbows with birds of a feather on the many private islands that are home to just one small resort.

The villa accommodations at Kamalame Cay, in the Bahamas, for

instance, allow guests to mix or remain cloistered on their own beach.

Margaret Gugelmann, a fashion and luxury consultant from Connecticut, goes to Kamalame Cay two or three times a year with her husband. They always stay in one of the island's secluded villas but are often invited to events by the family that owns the island. "Sometimes it's cocktails," Ms. Gugelmann said, "or a luncheon party outside. You meet amazing, really interesting people from all over the world—like the owners

of Soho House or a baroness from Croatia—and become friends." Even at peak season, there are never more than 60 people on the cay—many of whom stay in one of the villas, which are so private you can practice your downward dog en plein-air without worrying about being seen.

Here are a dozen fully or semi-private islands where you can hide out, play with a submarine or other fancy water toy or just revel in the solitude. Now, pick a place and get marooned.



#### FOR THE REKINDLERS & Beyond Mnemba Island, Zanzibar

There are never more than 20 guests on this island off the northeastern tip of Zanzibar, where the spoiling service and the small environmental footprint might convince even the most jaded that "sustainable luxury" isn't a contradiction in terms.

**Vibe:** *I had an island in Africa...*

**Accommodations:** Ten elegantly minimalist, thatched-roof accommodations done up in shades of sand and beige sit right on the beach, with plenty of room to practice the art of relaxation.

**Perks:** Sunset cruise in a dhow.

**Price Tag:** From \$1,155 per person per night, all inclusive ([andbeyond.com](http://andbeyond.com)).

#### FOR THE HARDCRABBLE HISTORIAN

##### Sanda Island, Scotland

This 400-acre outcrop is a long way from a tropical paradise, but Robert the Bruce used it as a hideout and, as wild and craggy sheep-studded landscapes go, it's got cred.

**Vibe:** Hardcore Celtic pastoral.

**Accommodations:** Four comfortable stone cottages with interiors that are a mashup of traditional and mod (it works). Each has sea views and a fireplace.

**Perks:** whiskey, bagpipes and radiant heating.

**Price tag:** From about \$280 a night for two, or about \$3,000 a night to take over the whole island, for up to eight people ([vladi-private-islands.de](http://vladi-private-islands.de)).



#### FOR THE THREE-GENERATION FAMILY Kamalame Cay, The Bahamas

This family-owned haven has perfected laid-back glamour: Mingle with an international cast at the "great house" or just hole up in your beach villa, which feels as if it's the only one on the island.

**Vibe:** As chill as Mustique used to be.

**Accommodations:** The eight oceanfront villas feature high ceilings, big fans, lots of French doors and vast porches.

**Perks:** Golf carts for those staying in villas.

**Price tag:** Resort rooms from \$250 a night; villas from \$1,100 per night ([kamalame.com](http://kamalame.com)).

#### FOR THE SERIOUS SCUBA DIVER Vamizi Island, Mozambique

One of the world's top diving spots, Vamizi is set on a pristine reef and has a resident coral expert.

**Vibe:** Remote and exclusive.

**Accommodations:** Six villas, spaced well apart, in haute timber-and-thatch style, each with its own pool, chef and dedicated beach.

**Perks:** The water's so clear that you might see a blacktip reef shark, even if you're standing on land.

**Price tag:** from about \$3,000 a night in high season ([www.vamizi.com](http://www.vamizi.com)).

## THEY WANTED TO BE ALONE

Where the rich and famous found their happy places apart

**1876 //** French composer Ambrose Thomas builds a château on Île Illic, off the coast of Brittany. In 1938, Charles Lindbergh buys the 4-acre island for \$16,000.



**1934 //** Standard Oil heir Marion Barbara Carstairs (who called herself Joe) buys Whale Cay, an 850-acre patch in the Bahamas to use as a fief of eccentricity, where she races speedboats, cross-dresses and entertains girlfriends including Marlene Dietrich—all beyond prying eyes.



Solitude in the Maldives for about \$3,500 a night

**FOR THE BABYMOONERS**  
**Cheval Blanc Randhell, Maldives**

Expectant parents can loll on their expansive, overwater deck and never see another soul (apart from staff, of course), or mix with other gilded birds at one of the five restaurants and three bars on Noonu Atoll, before the baby changes everything.

**Vibe:** Sequestered, sophisticated.  
**Accommodations:** Forty-five sleek, white villas (each with its own infinity pool) perched above pale blue shallows. The Owner's Villa—four bedrooms, big pool, and spa—sits on its own spit of land.  
**Perks:** A couple of Jim Courier Tennis courts on a nearby island.  
**Price tag:** From \$2,200 per night ([randheli.chevalblanc.com/en](http://randheli.chevalblanc.com/en)).

**FOR THE PEOPLE-WATCHER**  
**Parrot Cay by COMO, Turks and Caicos**

Parrot Cay is a favorite among A-list celebs, who can hide out in their own corner of this teak-detailed compound or head to the bar if they want to be seen.

**Vibe:** Like walking into the pages of InStyle.  
**Accommodations:** 72 rooms, suites and villas spread out across the 1,000-acre island.  
**Perks:** Yoga at the Shambala spa; complimentary flip flops.  
**Price Tag:** From \$550 a night ([parrotcay.com](http://parrotcay.com)).

**FOR THE VERY FANCY FISHERMAN**  
**North Island, Seychelles**

Eleven thatched-roof villas spaced to preserve privacy and staffed to meet every whim. Go by private boat to snorkel or fish whenever you like, maybe dropping anchor right where Will and Kate did on their honeymoon.

**Vibe:** Sloth deluxe in Louboutin espadrilles.  
**Accommodations:** The villas are vast—nearly 5,000-square-feet—with gauzy white curtains, big open decks and direct beach access.  
**Perk:** A cellphone to communicate with your butler.  
**Price tag:** About \$4,700 a night per person, all inclusive ([north-island.com](http://north-island.com)).

**FOR THE GAUGUIN IN ALL OF US**  
**The Brando, French Polynesia**

Unspoiled nature is on display at Marlon Brando's former hideaway, with 35 villas scattered along the beachfront. There are outriggers for the taking and a Tahitian pearl boutique, in case you can't find an oyster in the wild.

**Vibe:** No mutiny; bounty in spades.  
**Accommodations:** Thatched-roofed villas with massive baths and all the mod-cons.  
**Perks:** Outdoor bathtubs to watch whale migrations from July to October.  
**Price Tag:** From \$2,500 a night for two, all-inclusive ([thebrando.com](http://thebrando.com)).

**FOR THE EFFORTLESSLY CHIC**  
**Li Galli, Italy**

Once owned by Rudolf Nureyev, this island off the Amalfi Coast has been updated yet maintains its old-world allure. It has three villas (one of them a Roman watchtower with its own saltwater pool), a chapel and a helipad.

**Vibe:** La dolce vita.  
**Accommodations:** Each villa has its own style—from whitewashed and open to the sea air to crazily colorful, thanks to Moorish tiles.  
**Perks:** A skippered boat for trips to Capri and the whiff of a bygone era.  
**Price tag:** From about \$134,000 a week ([ovationvacations.com](http://ovationvacations.com)).



**FOR THE MEDITATOR**  
**Ratua, Vanuatu**

All of the profits from the resort on this 146-acre gem in the Vanuatu archipelago support the local community. Fifteen bungalows—refurbished 200-year-old Indonesian houses—are arranged in three villages. Horses wander freely, and kitchen staff will cook your catch for dinner.

**Vibe:** The real South Pacific.  
**Accommodations:** Authentic island refuges with wicker settees and canopied beds, unfinished wood floorboards, glassless windows, modern bathrooms and no TVs.  
**Perks:** Kayaking with turtles and riding a horse as it swims.  
**Price Tag:** From about \$356 per person a night ([ratua.com](http://ratua.com)).

**FOR MR. & MRS. PLUTOCRAT**  
**Laucala Island, Fiji**

Reached by private plane, this former paradise of Malcolm Forbes now has 25 villas and five restaurants and bars spread over its nearly 3,500 acres and a staff-to-guest ratio of 8 to 1.  
**Vibe:** We've definitely arrived.  
**Accommodations:** The villas sprawl, with big, open rooms, outdoor showers and private beaches.  
**Perks:** Golf carts, private yoga sessions and a submarine.  
**Price tag:** From \$5,520 a night for two ([laucala.com](http://laucala.com)).

**FOR THE MILLENNIAL EXPLORER**  
**Bird Island, Belize**

To get to this private islet surrounded by a coral reef, meet the owner at the hardware store on the mainland and he'll ferry you over in his boat. There's no staff, but you'll have an entire (tiny) island, a small turquoise house and a sleeping cabana all to yourself.  
**Vibe:** Gilligan's Island.  
**Accommodations:** Three charming, simply furnished bedrooms with windows that frame nothing but blue.  
**Perks:** The sea is visible from every angle, even at night, when bioluminescent marine life comes out to play.  
**Price tag:** About \$295 a night per couple ([airbnb.com/rooms/4869137](http://airbnb.com/rooms/4869137)).

**1950s** // Errol Flynn throws wild parties for Hollywood pals on Navy Island, his private isle in Jamaica.



**1961** // Marlon Brando discovers, and later buys, Tetiaroa—13 islets surrounding a lagoon—while scouting locations for "Mutiny on the Bounty."

**1968** // Jackie Kennedy marries Aristotle Onassis on Skorpios, the tycoon's personal plot in the Ionian Sea. In 2013, 23-year-old Russian socialite Ekaterina Rybolovleva buys the Greek island for a reported \$150 million.

**1976** // Scottish aristocrat Colin Tennant celebrates his 50th birthday on the Caribbean island of Mustique (which he bought in the late 1950s for about \$60,000) with Mick Jagger, Princess Margaret and other swells.

**2004** // Johnny Depp acquires Little Hall's Pond Cay, in the Bahamas.

**2007** // Larry Page, the co-founder of Google, marries Lucy Southworth on Necker Island, one of four private oases owned by Sir Richard Branson.



**2008** // The crown prince of Dubai gives the man-made isle called Atlantic, worth about \$7 million, to Formula One race-car driver Michael Schumacher as a retirement present.

**2014** // Tavern Island, in Long Island Sound, where then-owner and theater director Billy "It's Only A Paper Moon" Rose hosted Marilyn Monroe at a splashy 1950s soiree, goes on the market for nearly \$11 million.

**2016** // The Four Seasons Resort Lanai is scheduled to reopen in February after a \$75 million renovation that followed the purchase of some 97% of the Hawaiian island by Oracle founder Larry Ellison.

ANDREYOND (OWNERS); VLADI PRIVATE ISLANDS (SANDAL); STEFANO CANDITO (CHEVAL); LAUCALA ISLAND (SUBMARINE); DAVID SCHERMAN/THE LIFE PICTURE COLLECTION/GETTY IMAGES (CASTAIRS); HILSTEIN BID/GETTY IMAGES (FLYNN); RON GALELLA/GETTY IMAGES (KENNEDY); GETTY IMAGES (PAGE); CORBIS (