

# Condé Nast Traveller

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FAVOURITE  
VILLAS  
WORLDWIDE

THE WORLD MADE LOCAL

APRIL 2022

## Tune in Bliss out

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ALL ABOARD  
CRUISES TO  
HOP ON IN 2022

# Can you keep

THE UNSPOILT INDONESIAN ISLAND OF SUMBA IS STRIKING THE RIGHT BALANCE BETWEEN



# a secret?

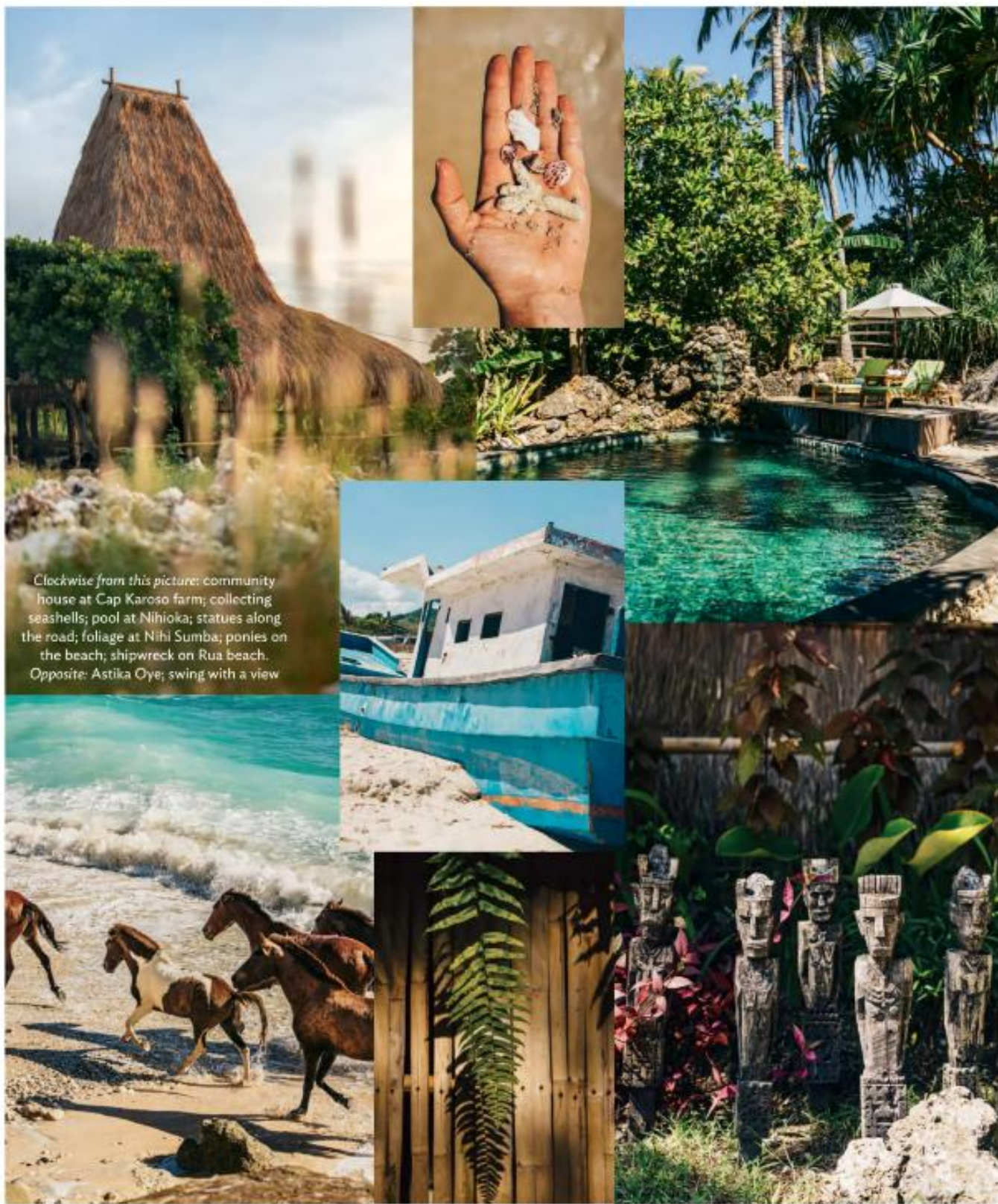
LIGHT-TOUCH TOURISM AND DEEP-ROOTED TRADITION. TOBY SKINNER GETS THE LOCAL SCOOP



Clockwise from this picture: surfboards, and villa at Nihi Sumba; local schoolchildren; pomelo salad at Nihi; Claude Graves' private villa; waterfall in the south-west; villa at Cap Karoso; local flora; cigarette-smoking islander; Sumba's south coast

PHOTOGRAPHS: ALEX URABCHILEV; CHRIS SCHALKS





Clockwise from this picture: community house at Cap Karoso farm; collecting seashells; pool at Nihioka; statues along the road; foliage at Nihi Sumba; ponies on the beach; shipwreck on Rua beach. Opposite: Astika Oye; swing with a view



Clockwise from this picture: pool at Nihika; Fabrice and Eve Ivara; lobby at Nih Sumba; surfboards; traditional fabric; fresh sashimi. Opposite, clockwise from top left: village in Kocli; Inge de Lathauwer; island portraits; catch of the day; inland on Sumba; tropical flowers; poolside at Nih Sumba



## The Hoteliers

### FABRICE AND EVE IVARA

**THE FRENCH COUPLE are behind Cap Karoso, an eco-focused resort and community which opens later this year.**

'In Bali, we'd heard whispers about this place an hour's flight east. When we arrived we felt like we'd landed on a different planet. Bali was all traffic and klaxons, but there was a total serenity to Sumba, where we barely saw another car. It felt like going back in time – to when travel really felt like travel. There was this emotional connection that compelled us to do something here – and a particular magic at Karoso, a six-mile beach backed by forest, with nothing around but tombs and the roofs of traditional houses poking through the trees.

'Immersing ourselves in the local culture was an education. As part of the process, we had to get the blessing of village elders, which

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involved a lot of rituals and very sugary coffee. We had two blessing ceremonies on the land at Karoso, with shamans, dancers and sacrifices. There were more than 600 people at the second one in 2019, and I remember watching this 90-something shaman in a deep trance and speaking this strange dialect, feeling the tears well up in my eyes. When I read out a short speech I'd learned in the local dialect, there was a round of applause after every phrase. There was a very emotional sense of being accepted into a special place.

'Cap Karoso will be built around sustainability and community, with guest chefs using local ingredients – a big part of a living community. We don't want it to feel like you're cut off from the place, but immersed in it. Sumba is not frictionless like the Seychelles or the Maldives. It's a journey to somewhere else entirely.' [capkaroso.com](http://capkaroso.com)



PHOTOGRAPHS: IRENE PEROLA; FABRIC FROM THE WOODS; ALEX GRABCHELEV; CHRIS SCHALIX



## The waterman

ASTIKA OYE

**BALI-BORN OYE is a former national-level windsurfer and kitesurfer, who heads up the watersports department at Nih Sumba, which was the island's first luxury resort when it opened in 2012.**

'I grew up in Sanur, and I always say that Sumba reminds me of the Bali I knew when I was at elementary school: before the traffic and the plastic bottles. My first love was the sea, having learned spearfishing with my father when I was six, to sell our catch in the local markets. When I originally came to Sumba in 2017, it was the water I fell in love with first: so clear, with lots of fish and the kind of empty surf breaks you don't get in Bali these days.

'I'd first been invited by the sons of [Nih Sumba co-owner] Chris Burch. I just remember surfing, spearfishing and kitesurfing all day. Chris ended up inviting me to dinner,

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where he offered me a job as a waterman at the resort. Nih is right in front of Ocey's Left [named after the Australian surfer Mark Occhilupo], one of the best barreling left-hand breaks on the island, and I'll take guests out on the jet ski so they don't even need to paddle out. We'll go spearfishing on beautiful Konda Maloba beach, where we'll slice sashimi from wahoo or Spanish mackerel, or grill dorado right on the white sand. We'll kitesurf at Marosi, where the waves break a long way offshore, leaving this beautiful flat water around a little rocky island, surrounded by nothing but palm trees and sand. So many locals work at Nih, and it's a happy place to be. For me, it's a job, but I've never felt closer to my passions. It's like I'm a child again. [nih.com](http://nih.com)

PHOTOGRAPHS: ALEX GRABCHILEV; CHRIS SCHALKX

## THE DETAILS

Most visitors stay in the west of the island, where it's a 90-minute drive along quiet, dusty roads from little Tambolaka Airport to resorts such as Nih Sumba to the south and Cap Karoso to the west. There are magical beaches around here, from the limestone stacks of Bwana in the south-west to the semi-lagoon of Mandorak in the far west and the Pero estuary, where the fishermen's wooden outrigger canoes congregate in limpid waters. At the Weekuri Lagoon near Mandorak, locals rent rubber rings and float serenely as the Indian Ocean bursts through blowholes at one end. It's worth exploring the drier east of the island, too, with its sandal trees and cashew plantations. Natural highlights on the way include the tiered Lapopu waterfall, the Waikelo Sawah falls and caves, and the Waimarang swimming hole, which recalls Mexican cenotes. Traditional *kampung* villages are dotted across the island, such as Ratenggaro in the west, where the thatched houses and megalithic tombs look over a beautiful estuary of white sand and calm turquoise water.

### WHERE TO STAY

**Nih Sumba** ([nih.com](http://nih.com); doubles from about £1,215) is still the island's most famous stay – 28 thatched villas among the frangipani trees, with infinity plunge pools and private butlers to organise sunset horse rides on the beach. Also on the south-west coast, **Alamayah** ([alamayah.com](http://alamayah.com); doubles from about £155) is a surf-facing boutique hotel with six suites, rooftop yoga and a plant-based restaurant. Later in the year, **Cap Karoso** ([capkaroso.com](http://capkaroso.com); doubles from about £185) launches with 47 clean-lined bedrooms and 20 villas, including beachfront homes with lagoon pools. Closer to the airport and gorgeous Mananga Aba beach in the north, **Maringi Sumba** ([maringi-sumba.com](http://maringi-sumba.com); doubles from about £105) is the lush bamboo eco-resort of the Sumba Hospitality Foundation, with newly trained local staff, nine bedrooms and villas, and excellent Sumbanese food from the foundation's permaculture farm.

