

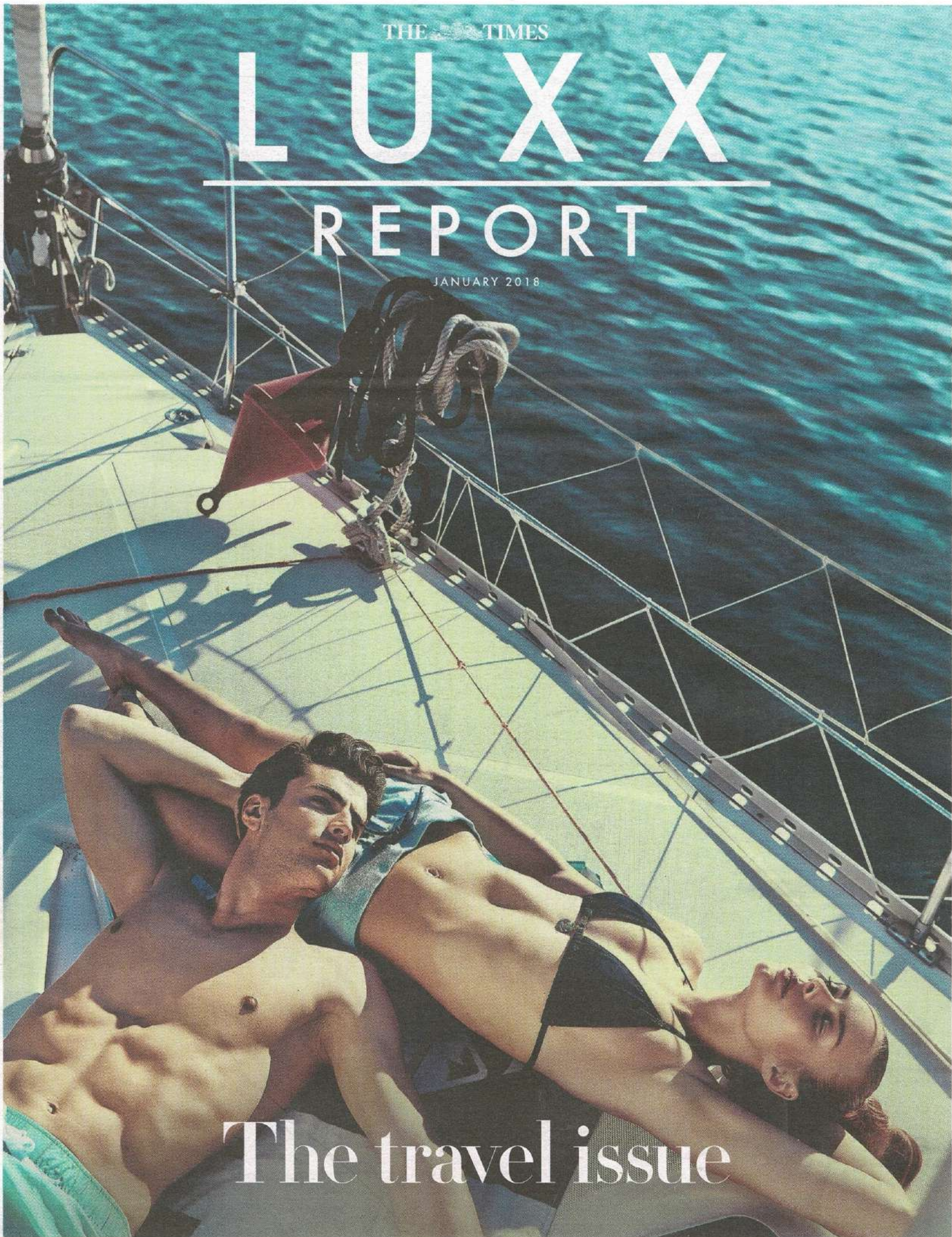
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The travel issue



Jane Knight



Not all companies are convinced by the call of canvas. Neil Jacobs, the chief executive of Six Senses, says: "There needs to be a reason to do a tented hotel. With safaris I get it. There is no purpose to it otherwise." Many, however, think the purpose is to stand out from the crowd of new hotel openings by offering what the chief executive of the Capella group, Nicholas Clayton, says is a dash of "bohemian luxury with an element of adventure".

Capella Ubud in Bali, which is due to open this spring, certainly does that. Set in the rainforest surrounded by paddy fields, all 22 of its beautifully decorated tents have a private plunge pool, while the spa will offer jungle bootcamps and mud Pilates.

While some critics say that tents are simply a way to erect a luxury hotel quickly and cheaply, Bensley points out that his Shinta Mani camp, due to open towards the end of the year in Cambodia's Cardamom Mountains, has taken more than a decade to come to fruition, and he has spent \$16 million building the 16 tents. It will be, says Bensley, a combination of "a luxury Cambodian safari and Jackie O".

The best thing? You can zipline into the camp, where activities include kayaking, mountain biking, boulder hopping, canyoning, expeditions and foraging. Then, after a day roughing it in the wild, you can spend the night in exquisite luxury. As Bensley says: "I love the wilderness, but I also love the comfort of a great bed, a hot shower and a fabulous massage every day."

I'll second that.

Jane Knight is the travel editor of *The Times*

Camping? I love the idea, but hate the reality. For a girl who likes a bit of comfort with her canvas, it's far too much like hard work. Glamping's getting there, with proper beds and ensuite bathrooms (I recently stayed at a US glampsite that even had electric blankets on the beds). But why stop at a glampsite when you can stay in a canvas hotel? This year there's plenty of choice, with a whole raft of tented hotel openings coming up.

In Africa, safari camps have already evolved into the most opulent of properties. And the architect Bill Bensley said it was camps in Botswana that inspired him when he transferred the idea to Asia, building the continent's first five-star luxury camp in 2006, the Four Seasons Golden Triangle Tented Camp in Thailand's Chiang Rai.

Bensley-inspired tented hotels are now being pitched all over the world. At India's Aman-i-Khas in Ranthambore you can book a 108 sq m tent on a tiger-watching expedition. The tented hotel concept has also reached Sri Lanka. On a leopard-spotting trip in Yala National Park you can stay at Wild Coast Tented Lodge, where elephants frequent the private pools.

If you'd rather have your feet in the sand then take a look at Praia Sundy on Principe, an island just off west Africa, where 15 tented beachfront villas are backed by the rainforest. Each villa has one to three bedrooms and each three-bedroom villa has its own pool.

Meanwhile, among a handful of luxury hotels going up in Laos, Rosewood's first luxury tented camp is due to open near Luang Prabang in April. As well as private villas, it will have six hilltop tents that have their own dining areas and oversized balconies.

I'm a canvas convert

If you yearn for the wilderness, but love the comfort of a designer bed and bathroom, then try a luxury tented hotel



Above: Capella Ubud in Bali. Far right: Shinta Mani in Cambodia. Right: Praia Sundy on the island of Principe

Wild Coast has also been included within a feature by travel editor Jane Knight on the rise of luxury tented camps in this weekend's issue of Times LUXX Report. LUXX Report is a regular luxury lifestyle supplement distributed with The Times newspaper, focusing on motoring, watches, menswear or gifts, including carefully curates and compelling articles by writers expert in their field.

The Times is the UK's most-read newspaper amongst the UK's biggest decision makers and delivers a complete curated package of the most important news and current affairs. It has a circulation of **446,164** and Louise Roddon's feature has an advertising rate of **£42,000**.