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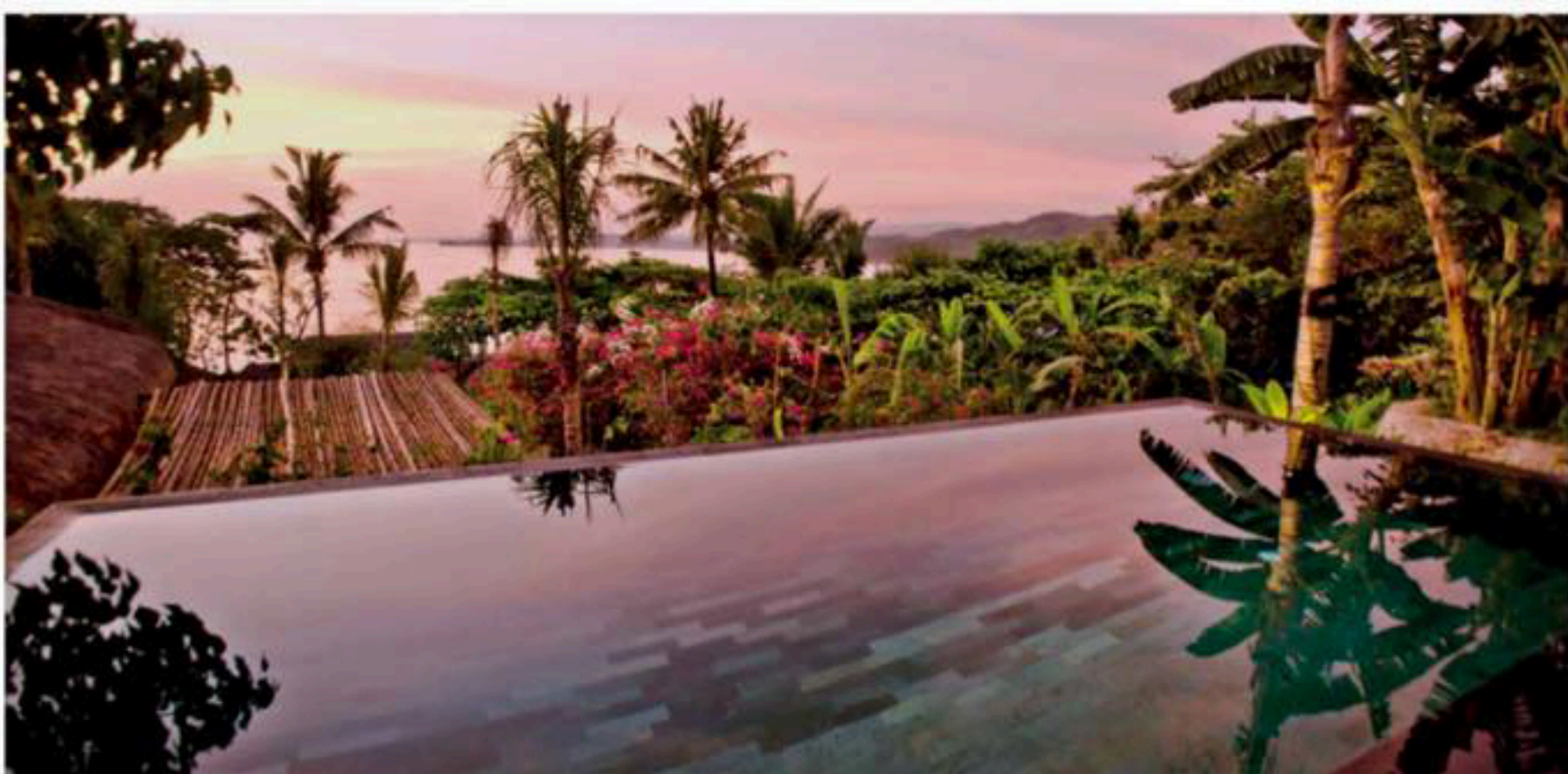
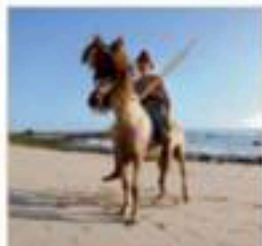
APR-JUN 2015

## GAME OF KINGS

FABERGÉ'S BRILLIANT ART  
TROPICAL NORTH QUEENSLAND  
ULTIMATE TEA TRAIL







# Perfect break

In this issue's review, Rod Mackenzie finds barreling waves and barefoot luxury in Indonesia's Sumba Island

**B**reathtaking. That's a travel cliché reviewers are wise to avoid, but it swept back ineluctably on Sumba. Twice the size of Bali yet with only a seventh of its population, this Indonesian island is home to a single solitary luxury resort nestled among thick jungle on its rugged southern fringes. In terms of remoteness and sheer exclusivity, Nihiwatu is a hard act to beat – but there's more. Its majestic 2.5km private beach roars to the sound of five-metre high

waves that tube perfectly from start to finish before barreling ashore.

While there's plenty of fun to be had getting churned in the shallows, skilful surfers head out to ride what is regarded as one of the best left-hand breaks on the planet, and one of the fastest rideable waves anywhere. In fact, Nihiwatu considers it so special that only 10 surfers are permitted here at one time.

Rumours about this legendary wave inspired American surf fanatic Claude

Graves and his wife to track down this secret spot in the 1980s. The intrepid couple camped on the beach for a couple of years before establishing a simple retreat known to only a few in-the-know surf aficionados from around the world. And a secret Nihiwatu remained until American retail entrepreneur Chris Burch dropped by in 2013 and made the Graves's an offer they couldn't refuse. He's now transforming the spot into a 240-hectare 'barefoot

luxury' estate with 21 bespoke pool villas, a tree-house spa and a spectacular hill-top yoga pavilion.

Key to the sale was an agreement to go on ploughing all profits back into a charitable foundation that supports the local community. That's important because a strong infusion of Sumbanese culture – an ancient animist tribal society that has survived virtually untouched by the modern world – is what makes Nihiwatu truly unique.

A guided trek to a nearby village to see the traditional thatched, steeple-roofed houses and giant megalithic tombs adorned with buffalo carvings is unmissable, like stepping into a mysterious Stone Age world.

Sumbanese elements are echoed throughout the resort, especially in the elegant hand-built villas featuring ikat textiles, teak decks and along-along grass roofs. Most impressive of all is the villa's *mori sena*, or butler, whose uniform comes complete

with a mighty *parang* (sword) strapped to his hip. If asked about the traditions of Sumbanese swordmanship, he'll waste no time giving a demonstration, flashing his blade like lightning above his head while fixing you with an equally steely glare. Breathtaking indeed. [nihiwatu.com](http://nihiwatu.com)

*Singapore Airlines flies four times daily to Denpasar, from where Nihiwatu can arrange private air charters to Sumba and transfers to the resort.*