

New experiences

Clients looking for unique activities can sample plenty of local culture while staying at these hotels, finds **Yolanda Zappaterra**

more and more travellers are looking for connection when they travel – and we don't mean fast Wi-Fi. The desire to explore local culture and make a genuine connection with local people is a growing trend – and it's driven by millennial travellers. Six out of 10 UK millennials think the most important part of travel is experiencing authentic culture, according to Expedia and consumer trend forecaster Future Foundation. So here are four hotels that offer clients just that – from indigenous art workshops in the Australian outback to Berber bread-baking in Morocco.

MAASAI LIFE AT COTTAR'S 1920S CAMP

Where: Masai Mara, Kenya

The hotel: As one of just nine accredited Global Ecosphere Retreats in the world, this family-run safari outpost takes sustainability and local engagement seriously, supporting initiatives including a school,

medical facilities, water supply and ambulance service. Its setting, across Maasai-owned land and 7,608 acres of the Cottar's-owned Oldkeresi Wildlife Conservancy, is stunning, and the safari camp's classic canvas tents have a beguiling vintage feel with en suite bathrooms and large verandas, while the Bush Villas are elegantly contemporary.

The experiences: The Explorer's Tent, which was added to the property last year, is a mini museum focusing on Maasai culture and the history of safari in the region. Guests can hear talks here on biodiversity, conservation and Maasai life. Numerous experiences (some of which are included in the stay) enable guests to engage with the community – including sessions with in-house Il Torobo hunter gatherer Letilet Ole Yenko, whose impressive knowledge of the conservancy's 300+ plants and their uses from medicine to poison is sure to engage. Jewellery lovers can try creating pieces ➤

Bow and arrow experience with Maasai people, Cottar's 1920s Camp, Kenya

PICTURE: Cottar's Safaris/Josée Debès

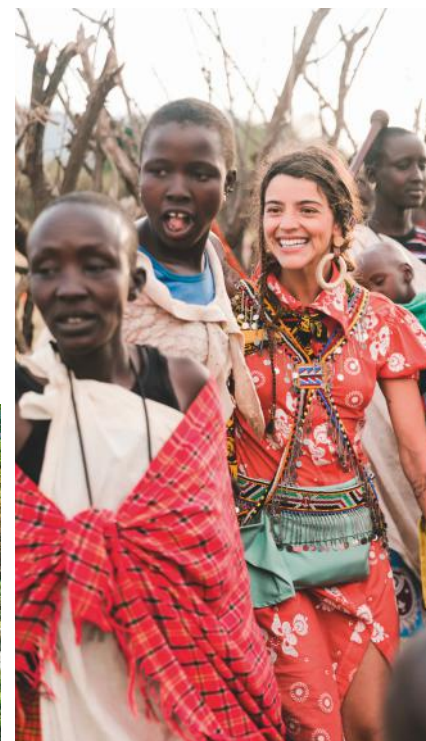
DESTINATIONS

MILLENNIAL TRAVEL | HOTELS



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: Bush food, Ayers Rock Resort, Australia; Maasai experience, Cottar's 1920s Camp, Kenya; Borgo Pignano grounds and swimming pool, Italy

PICTURES: Voyages; Valorie Darling Photography; Stefano Scatà



of their own with Mamma Naishuro Batian, an expert Maasai beader who leads one-hour classes in making bracelets as well as longer sessions on more-intricate pieces. Guests can also visit a local school to sit in on lessons or join in with a game of football; head to a Maasai village and market; turn their hand to Maasai spear-throwing and bow and arrow practice; or watch traditional Maasai singing and dancing while sipping a cocktail.

Book it: Full-board rates in a Cottar's 1920s tent start at \$963 per night and include most safari activities, with four nights for the price of three until December 2022. cottars.com

ART IN THE OUTBACK AT LOST CAMEL HOTEL

Where: Uluru, Northern Territory, Australia

The hotel: There are seven different accommodation options across the Ayers Rock Resort, and guests at

each can take part in hotel-based activities as well as resort-wide ones, many geared towards supporting the local community. The Lost Camel Hotel is the most boutique of the seven, with colourful rooms styled in a mix of urban and Aboriginal decor set in an appealing low-slung modernist building centred around a pool.

The experiences: More than 100 activities are on offer to guests of the hotel and the wider resort, many of them included in their stay. These include a Bush Food Experience, a didgeridoo workshop and guided garden walks. There's a daily Maruku Arts Dot Painting Workshop, led by a local elder who teaches participants about the different symbols used to create beautiful art depicting Tjukurpa stories about the beginning of time. Guests can connect with artists through the Gallery of Central Australia's artist-in-residence programme too, or have a go at

some art themselves in the animal painting workshop. There are also plenty of excursions to choose from, including a visit to Bruce Munro's Tili Wiru Tjuta Nyakutjaku (or Field of Light) exhibition, which illuminates the desert with 50,000 tiny orbs.

Book it: Standard rooms at the Lost Camel Hotel start from \$330 a night, with a minimum stay of two nights, including airport transfers and a complimentary resort shuttle bus. ayersrockresort.com.au

LIVING OFF THE LAND AT BORGO PIGNANO

Where: Tuscany, Italy

The hotel: As a founding member of Beyond Green, a hotel group that's committed to environmentally friendly practices that go beyond the basics, this 750-acre organic estate in Tuscany is a model of regenerative agriculture. Views from its infinity pool (carved from an ancient limestone quarry) stretch far across Tuscany's iconic

landscapes, while the 14 rooms and suites in the 18th-century villa feature marble and travertine bathrooms with toiletries made from estate-grown plants and flowers. Original architectural details, Italian fabrics and billowing white curtains above antique desks make the breezy spaces the perfect spot at which to start on that novel... a modern take on *A Room with a View*, perhaps. The "zero-kilometre" cuisine is produced using estate-grown ingredients – from free-range pigs and eggs to honey and heritage varieties of vegetables, fruits and grains, with cold-pressed olive oil, bread, pasta, cereals and even beer among the produce.

The experiences: Beekeeping is just one of the Borgo's regenerative agriculture practices, and guests can engage in a range of activities centred around it, including making honey and extracting beeswax. In the grounds, ➤



ABOVE: Moroccan tea courtyard and, inset, Berber kitchen, both Kasbah Tamadot, Morocco PICTURE: Jonathan Cosh/Visual Eye

they can join the in-house herbalist to gather wild herbs and flowers and learn how they're used in products, spa treatments and cuisine at the hotel. Other activities include learning how to produce organic cosmetics and wellness treatments, and cooking and painting classes. A recently opened art gallery shows work by local artists.

Book it: Rates start at £315 per night for a double room, including breakfast. staybeyondgreen.com

BERBER TRADITION AT KASBAH TAMADOT

Where: Atlas Mountains, Morocco

The hotel: Sir Richard Branson bought this multi-award-winning resort after flying over the area in a balloon, though the driving force was his mother, Eve. The pair bought it with the idea that it could give something back to the local Berber community, and it does so through a range of education, training, employment and healthcare initiatives. All the staff are from the local area, much of the food is produced on the hotel's grounds (including a whopping 24 varieties of tomatoes) and 30% of the revenue from the gift shop funds projects supported by

the Eve Branson Foundation. Kasbah Tamadot has all the pizzazz and luxury you'd expect of a Virgin Limited Edition property, with 28 rooms and suites filled with antiques and individually decorated to reflect the architecture of the building. An outdoor infinity pool and indoor heated pool, plus spa, gym, tennis courts and rooftop restaurant create the most perfect sense of wellbeing, and sitting under the stars watching a movie – *Casablanca*, maybe? – during the twice-weekly free movie nights is an unforgettable treat.

The experiences: Activities include a range of Berber-inspired experiences, with an in-hotel focus on food-related experiences such as a rooftop tagine cookery lesson, Berber bread-baking and Moroccan tea in the courtyard. Out in the community, a tapestry lesson in the Eve Branson Foundation craft centre is surely a must.

Book it: Prices start at around £515 per room per night on a B&B basis, with full-board and half-board options available. An Authentically Berber Experience, comprising five activities, can be added to any package of two nights or more for around £98.

virginlimitededition.com/en/kasbah-tamadot **TW**

BEST of the REST

At Dominica's **Fort Young Hotel & Dive Resort**, guests can take lessons in baking cassava bread, learn about medicinal plants or try basket weaving with members of the Kalinago, one of the Caribbean's last pre-Columbian populations. Plans are under way for art classes and an on-site art gallery showcasing the work of Dominican artists. fortyounghotel.com

Musically minded guests can try their hand at plucking a viola campaniça, a traditional Portuguese string instrument, at the idyllic rural retreat of the **Herdade da Malhadinha Nova** in Portugal's Alentejo region. The impressive range of workshops takes in Alentejo pastries, bread baking, clay pottery, bullrush craft and even bootmaking. malhadinhanova.pt/en