

THE PRIVATE JET LIFESTYLE MAGAZINE

ELITE

T E L E R

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THE ULTIMATE
**HOLIDAY
GIFT GUIDE**

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BVI BOUNTY

Balinese spirit has echoed throughout the 74 magical acres of **Necker Island** (\$60,000 a night for up to 30 guests) ever since Richard Branson completed his ultimate private island in the British Virgin Islands almost 30 years ago. The debut of the brand new **Great House** this fall proves neither fire nor lightning can stop this Virgin Island from becoming even more intoxicating than before. Located on the island's most elevated point, The Great House is still the resort's highlight, as it was when Harrison Ford, Oprah Winfrey, and the Rolling Stones were on shore. Eight rooms, each complete with en-suite bathrooms and private balconies, celebrate Balinese lifestyle and design, while the 1,500-square-foot upper level **Master Suite** stuns with panoramic views of the BVIs. Other accommodations on Necker Island include six **Bali Houses** and the **Temple House**, which has its own pool and views of a flamingo-filled lake.

Whether it's the healers at the spa anticipating your call or the surprise flower-decorated kayaks floating sushi in the pool at lunchtime, the Branson/Virgin vibe—cool, casual, and luxurious—will truly define your stay.

Contact: General Managers Kenton and Leesa Jones, (212) 984-3070; enquiries@virginlimitededition.com; www.virginlimitededition.com



ESTATE OF GRACE

Sir Charles Coote and his Lady Caroline built their lavish Irish country estate **Ballyfin** in the 1820s as a showplace intended to impress, and, perhaps, intimidate guests. The guest of honor would be hosted in the grand house's grandest suite with a large bow window overlooking a fountain and the lush **Pleasure Grounds**. Following the estate's extraordinary renovation and its reopening as a boutique hotel in 2011, the room was rechristened the **Sir Christopher Coote Suite** (from about \$1,600 a night), named for the 15th baronet and elder Coote ancestor who has closely followed the restoration of his great-great-grandparents' country residence. The 430-square-foot suite is decorated in creamy shades

with accents of crimson and sage that complement fragments of 18th-century Chinese wallpaper panels. A marble fireplace, Chinese Chippendale antiques, and a canopied four-poster bed create a relaxed residential ambience and a long marble bath spies the roof of the glass conservatory. Following a day of country living—hiking, fishing, and horseback riding on the estate's 610 acres—and a delectable gourmet dinner in the **State Dining Room**, you can retire to your suite feeling like the lord and lady of the manor. Contact: General Manager Aileesh Carew, 353-5787-55866; info@ballyfin.com; www.ballyfin.com



CONFIDANTE

BY MARY GOSTELOW

It seems everyone is getting into the private jet market. **Emirates**, the airline that first turned its first class "seats" into private cabins with Hollywood-style mirrors and much else beside, is considered by many to be the leader when it comes to luxury aboard scheduled carriers. Now it is launching **Emirates Executive**, a customized A319 with a maximum capacity of 19 guests.

Dubai-based Ali Alwardy is a polo-loving supermarket king who is also into resorts. Back home, he owns **Desert Palm**, which has four working polo fields. He is big on Africa at the moment. Last year he put a different label on his **Bilila Lodge**, a luxury safari resort in the Serengeti that is now, following extensive renovations, a **Four Seasons**. He rather likes the brand; he co-owns **Four Seasons Resort Seychelles** and is working on the transformation of the historic, village-like **Westcliff** in Johannesburg, also to become Four Seasons. But the entrepreneur does not put all his eggs in one basket.

Per Aquum, in which colorful American entrepreneur Bill Heinecke's Minor Hotel Group recently acquired a sizable stake, manages Desert Palm. Similarly, Alwardy gave the venerable **Kilimanjaro Hotel** in Tanzania's commercial capital, Dar es Salaam, to **Hyatt** who, it is rumored, may well run the project Alwardy has just purchased in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

Heinecke is also getting to know Africa well. From his Bangkok base he seems to roam the world piloting his own Gulfstream V. In September, he arrived in Paris as a passenger on another G550, as part of a 10-strong group of Bangkok-based wine connoisseurs, most of whom hail from Scandinavia. The group had been invited to France by Per Enevoldsen, Danish-born founder of **PANDORA** jewelry, which in 2010 achieved an IPO of \$2.1 billion. Enevoldsen is now also based in Bangkok, where he successfully bid, at a charity auction, for a lavish week in France. The lucky group devoured a Danish smorgasbord courtesy of **The St. Regis Bangkok** on the initial flight, ate at Michelin-star spots in Paris, where they were based at **Le Meurice**, and drank nothing but the finest champagnes when they were hosted by LVMH at various cellars in Epernay and Reims.

Private planes were in their element at the recent wedding of Elle Macpherson and Jeffrey Soffer at **Laucala Island**, on the 12-square-mile island of the same name in Fiji. The Laucala airstrip conveniently—at least for keeping paparazzi away—only takes private jets. Laucala, which has just 25 villas but a staggeringly large workforce of 329, is owned by Red Bull mastermind and co-owner, the Austrian Dietrich Mateschitz.