

The Red Pepper House

LAMU ISLAND - KENYA

Escape from the crowds

INSTEAD OF: Seychelles

TRY: Lamu, Kenya

Winter high: 32C

Why? A mere four days of rain per winter month, compared to the Seychelles' 18.

For hot, cloudless days on pristine beaches it's hard to beat Kenya's Lamu archipelago, favoured by celebrities such as Sienna Miller, Mick Jagger and Ewan McGregor.

Only six of the islands are inhabited, with locals and tourists mingling happily.

Lamu Old Town is the oldest and best preserved Swahili town in East Africa and a Unesco World Heritage site with a mix of African and Arab architecture.

There's also a donkey sanctuary, the much-loved animals being the main form of transportation on the island.

The unspoilt nature of Lamu means you won't see highrise hotels or touristy eateries. Instead, pristine near-empty beaches await.

Until recently Lamu has been the preserve of intrepid backpackers so accommodation is mostly of the basic guesthouse variety.

However, tucked into a beachfront rainforest, with sea views and butler service, Red Pepper House is the hotel of choice for stylish travellers.

With only five thatched houses that blend seamlessly into the forest canopy, it feels more like a small village.

To Escape To (0207 060

6747/www.toescapeto.com)

offers four nights at the Red Pepper House from £1,685pp (two sharing), full board.

Price includes return flights from Heathrow to Nairobi with Kenya Airways and all transfers.

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