

MONEYWEEK

Two dream holidays for nature lovers



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From São Tomé and Príncipe – “Africa’s Galápagos” – to the world’s largest water fall, Iguazú Falls, Alice Gráhns reports on some secluded holidays for nature lovers.

“As I fly the 180km from São Tomé – the big brother of the two-island country of São Tomé and Príncipe that attracts only a dribble of visitors – Príncipe erupts from the Atlantic, vertiginous incisors of jungle-clad rock spiking towards the gods,” says Ian Belcher in *The Times*. Sundy Praia (SundyPrincipe.com) is located on the northwest coast of Príncipe in a Unesco biosphere reserve and is “the planet’s... perhaps most discreet wilderness retreat”.

Sundy Praia’s 15 villas have “tasteful contemporary designs [and] clever local flourishes”. The infinity pool “is surrounded by walls of the island’s black basalt”, while the reception has a beautifully carved check-in desk. The surrounding forest has mango and coconut trees, alongside banana palms and fan-leaf bushes. São Tomé and Príncipe also has 28 bird species found nowhere else in the world, including the exquisite blue and gold conobias, along with unique amphibians and snakes. The country is sometimes called “Africa’s Galápagos”, but that short-changes these two small islands that have similar numbers of endemic species in just an eighth of the space.

The world’s largest waterfall

“There’s something very compelling about Iguazú Falls, a curtain of thrashing water nearly two miles long, which is claimed to be the largest waterfall system in the world,” says Sarah Marshall in *The Daily Telegraph*. The waterfalls spill over the Paraná Plateau, straddling southern Brazil and northeast Argentina, and are split between two national parks. Eco lodge Awasi Iguazú (AwasIguazu.com) recently opened in the wilder, more rugged Argentinian sector. The 14-villa property has a private guide system – with one adventure expert and vehicle allocated to each guest – tailoring a choice of activities to individual requests. Two hours from the falls is Yacui Reserve, “a swathe of forest flourishing with native rosewood and palm heart trees”. Here guests paddle along a quiet tributary of the Iguazú river, “where dragonflies and driftwood are the only passing traffic”.

Available through travel firm The Explorations Company (www.explorationscompany.com)