

# DEPARTURES

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WINTER 2012

ALPINE  
AGENDA

TIFFANY  
NOW  
& THEN

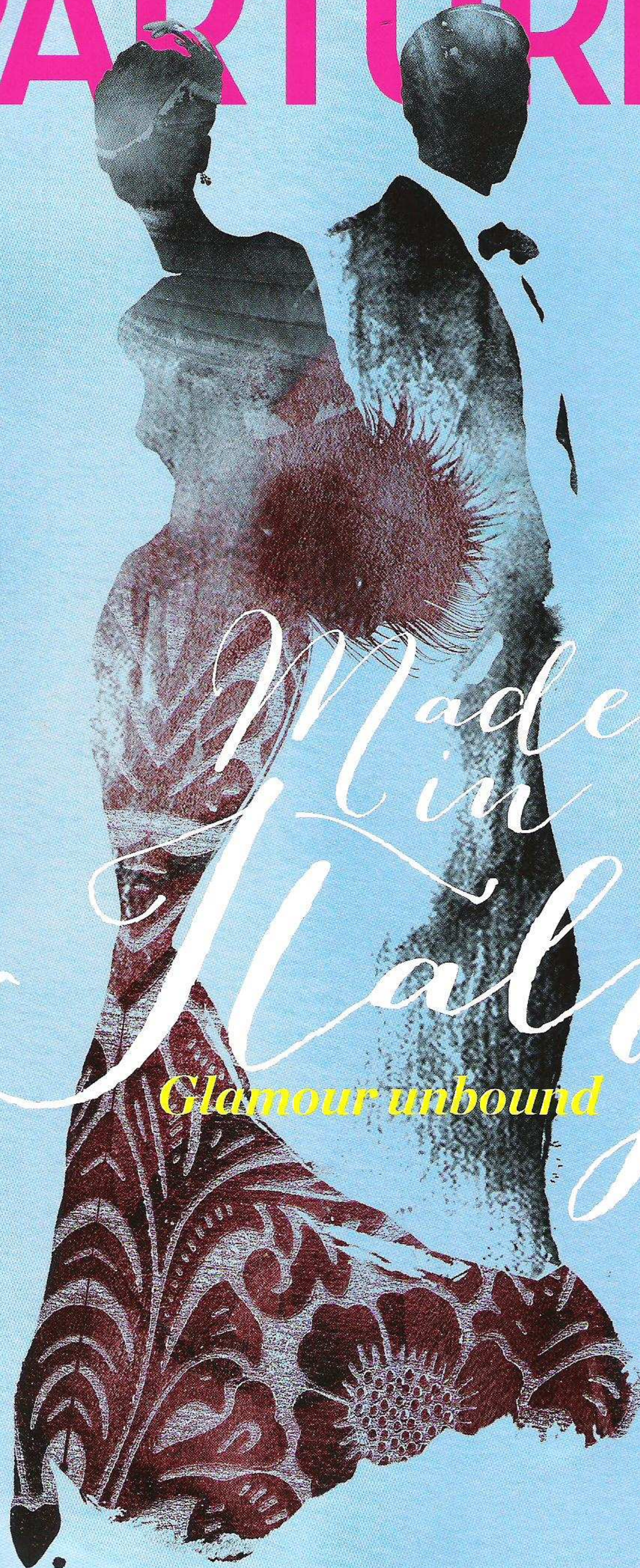
ART  
CONCIERGES

BRIGHT  
WHITE  
GEMS

VAMIZI:  
PARADISE  
FOUND

*Made in  
Italy*

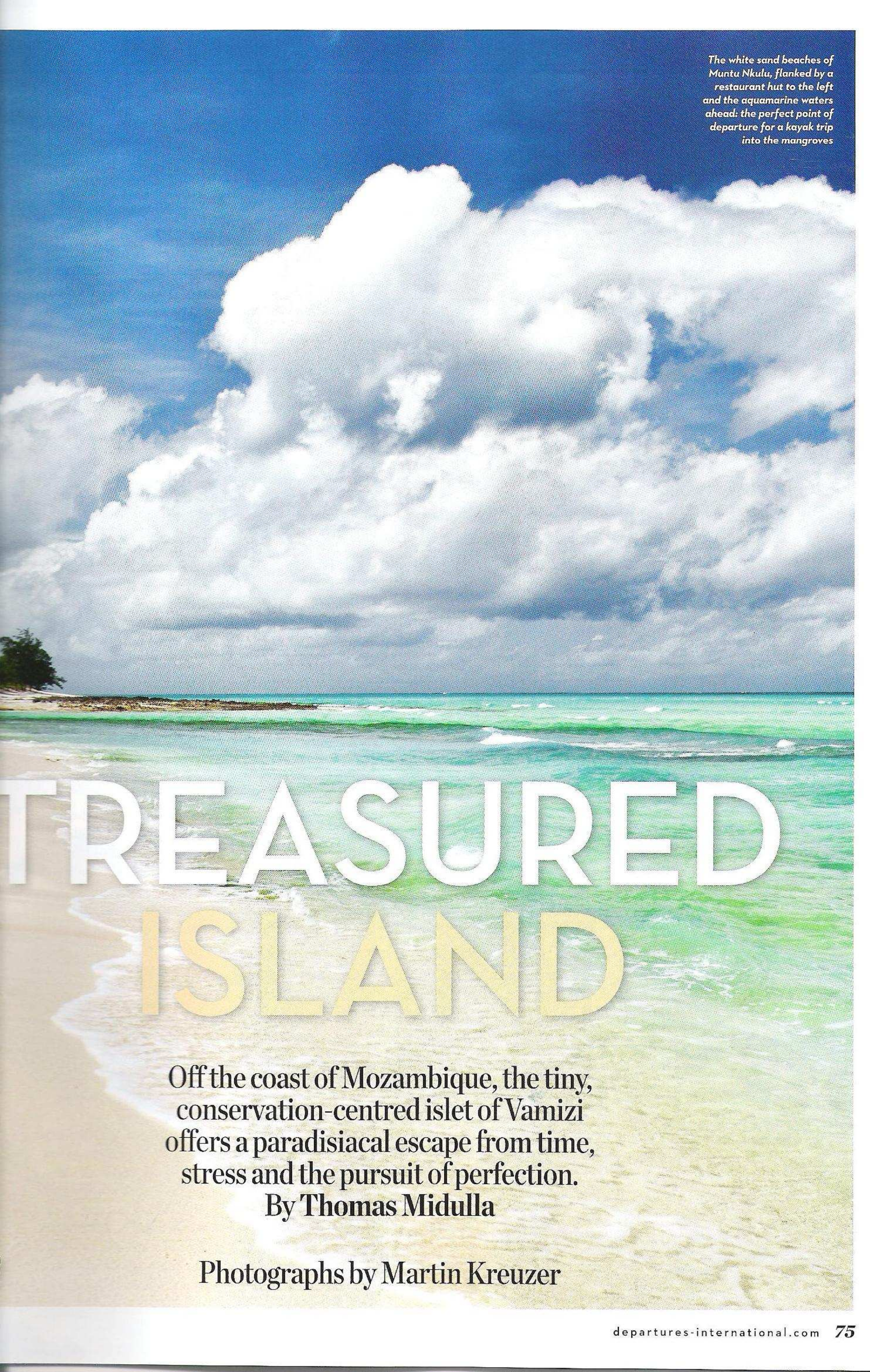
*Glamour unbound*











*The white sand beaches of Muntu Nkulu, flanked by a restaurant hut to the left and the aquamarine waters ahead: the perfect point of departure for a kayak trip into the mangroves*

# TREASURED ISLAND

Off the coast of Mozambique, the tiny, conservation-centred islet of Vamizi offers a paradisiacal escape from time, stress and the pursuit of perfection.

**By Thomas Midulla**

**Photographs by Martin Kreuzer**





*For those who don't mind  
a ride in a jeep long past its  
best, Vamizi comes as a revelation*

Swimming pool  
at the private  
villa Suluwilo,  
and a look into  
its warmly lit,  
colonial-chic  
interiors

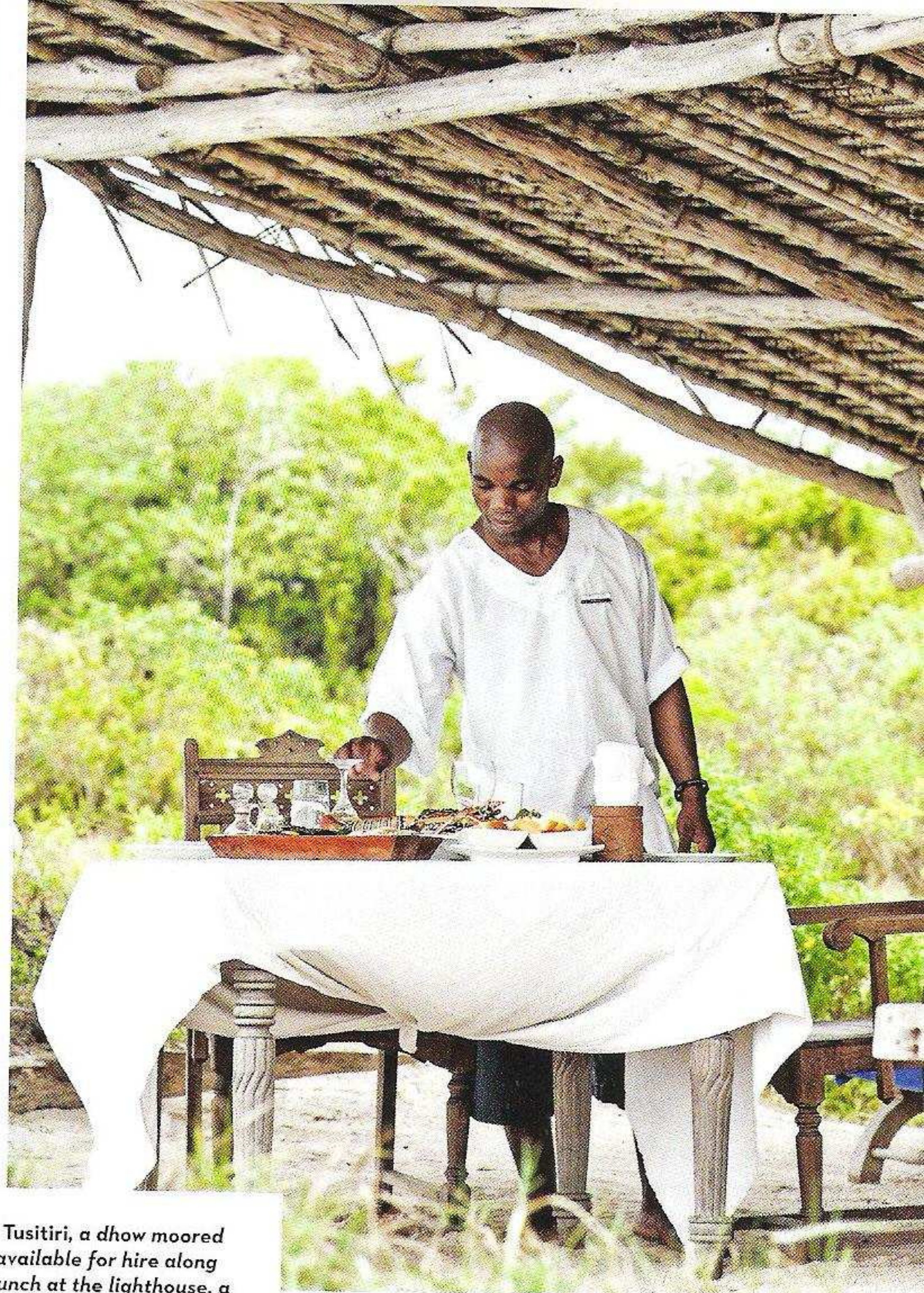
The 32 islands of the Quirimbas Archipelago off the northern coast of Mozambique might well be the Indian Ocean's best kept secret. Its coral reefs are among the richest and healthiest on the planet, and the beaches are on a par with those of the Seychelles and Maldives – it's a place whose prelapsarian natural splendour hasn't changed for thousands of years. There is even a lodge on the isle of Vamizi that could serve as the paradigm for a successful symbiosis of luxury tourism, conservation and involvement of the local population.

Two-thirds of Vamizi, the largest island in the archipelago, was leased in the late 1990s to a British-French consortium, which developed it with the Zoological Society of London as the Maluane Project, whose stated goal was to offer long-term protection for the islands' unique wildlife. It is a noble purpose shared by many similar schemes – which all too often turn out to be mere lip service. Here, they believe it. And it still shows, seven years after more than a dozen freestanding, teak-and-palm-frond beach villas were first unveiled.

Much of the success can be attributed to the initial consultation held with the roughly 1,000 residents of the western third of the 12km-long island, whose input was sought in the course of the decision-making process and whose involvement in determining the extent of the venture meant that they were empowered to find opportunities for themselves – a crucial link missing in so many conservation projects. Another is the single-minded focus on the environment. Those who can't do without jet skis, air conditioning, wifi and luxe hotel service standards should steer clear of the 12-seat Cessna Caravan that makes the one-stop 2-hour-15-minute journey from Dar es Salaam. For those, on the other hand, who don't mind a wineglass just a little too full or napkins less than clinically white or a bumpy ride in a jeep long past its best, Vamizi comes as a revelation.

The loneliness of the Indian Ocean, which washes coral fragments ceaselessly across the pristine white beaches and back again, quickly cuts through the anxious rhythm of urban life. Barefoot mornings involve catching tuna for the freshest sashimi of all time; a secluded lunch of lobster and South African chardonnay inspires almost indecent bliss; waterside afternoon walks extend for hours without sight of a single overwater bungalow, umbrella or even another



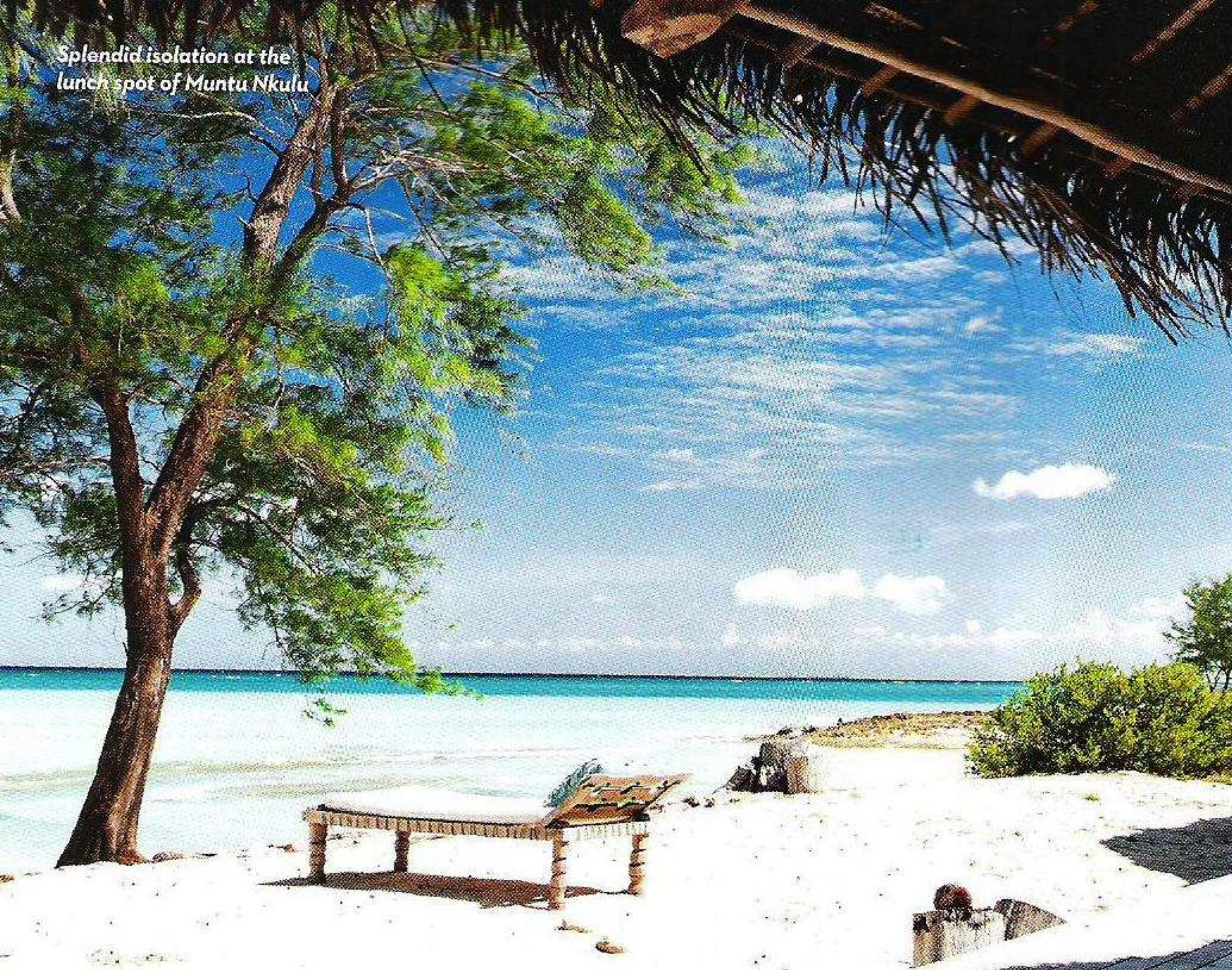


*Clockwise from top left: the Tusitiri, a dhow moored right in front of the resort, available for hire along with its entire crew; private lunch at the lighthouse, a serene location facing an isolated beach; ethnic art in the resort's al fresco lobby; a local woman*





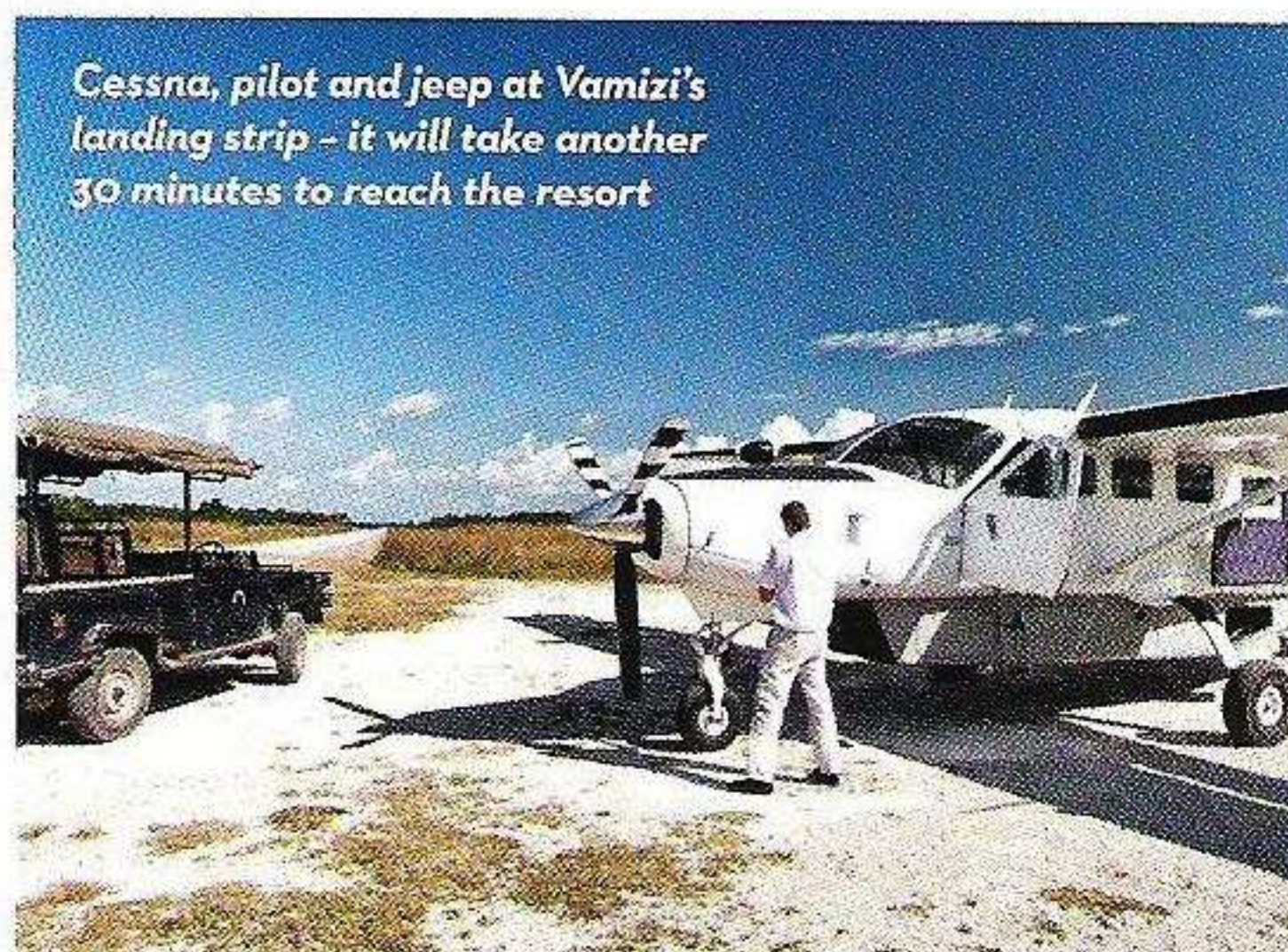
Splendid isolation at the lunch spot of Muntu Nkulu



person – nothing more than the waves, the lush greenery and the occasional crater-like nests of green turtles. Isabel da Silva of the WWF Vamizi Island Project station (the only such outpost in a resort anywhere) raves about the richness and diversity of the coral. Her daily dives into the depths of Babylon or Neptune's Arm are never routine. "To maintain this, we work closely with the management of the lodge. Fishing zones have been established by the community, but without the help of the villagers, we couldn't protect them," says the Portuguese native. "The fishermen of Vamizi drive the patrol themselves – they are our reef police."

It takes considerably less protection for the 100 turtle mothers to lay their eggs and still less for the 40 part-time Robinson Crusoes to enjoy their cottages, which are spread at least 50m from each other, tucked between mangrove trees and shielded by the bush. Still more privacy and comfort have recently materialised, with this year's opening of a pair of private villas – called Kipila and Suluwilo – for up to 12 people. All told, four such dream homes will be built per year, 150 metres from each other, until there are no more than 16 in total. The sale was divided between the shareholders, investors and close friends, and all plots have already been sold. With occasional rentals of these villas, the number of guests to Vamizi will almost quadruple, a commercial necessity to meet the huge logistics costs. But yet during our stay, both villas 3 and 4 were being built and from the beach, I could neither see them nor hear even faint hammering – just the cries of Samango monkeys and the gentle susurrations of the surf under my feet. ■

*"The fishermen of Vamizi drive the patrol themselves – they are our reef police"*



Cessna, pilot and jeep at Vamizi's landing strip – it will take another 30 minutes to reach the resort

## ESSENTIALS

Rooms start from \$590 per night, per person, including board. Five of the resort's 13 Beach Villas boast an extra bedroom, allowing space for up to four guests. Private villas start from \$23,520 for up to eight people and a minimum of six nights; extra guests pay an additional \$490 per night. [vamizi.com](http://vamizi.com)

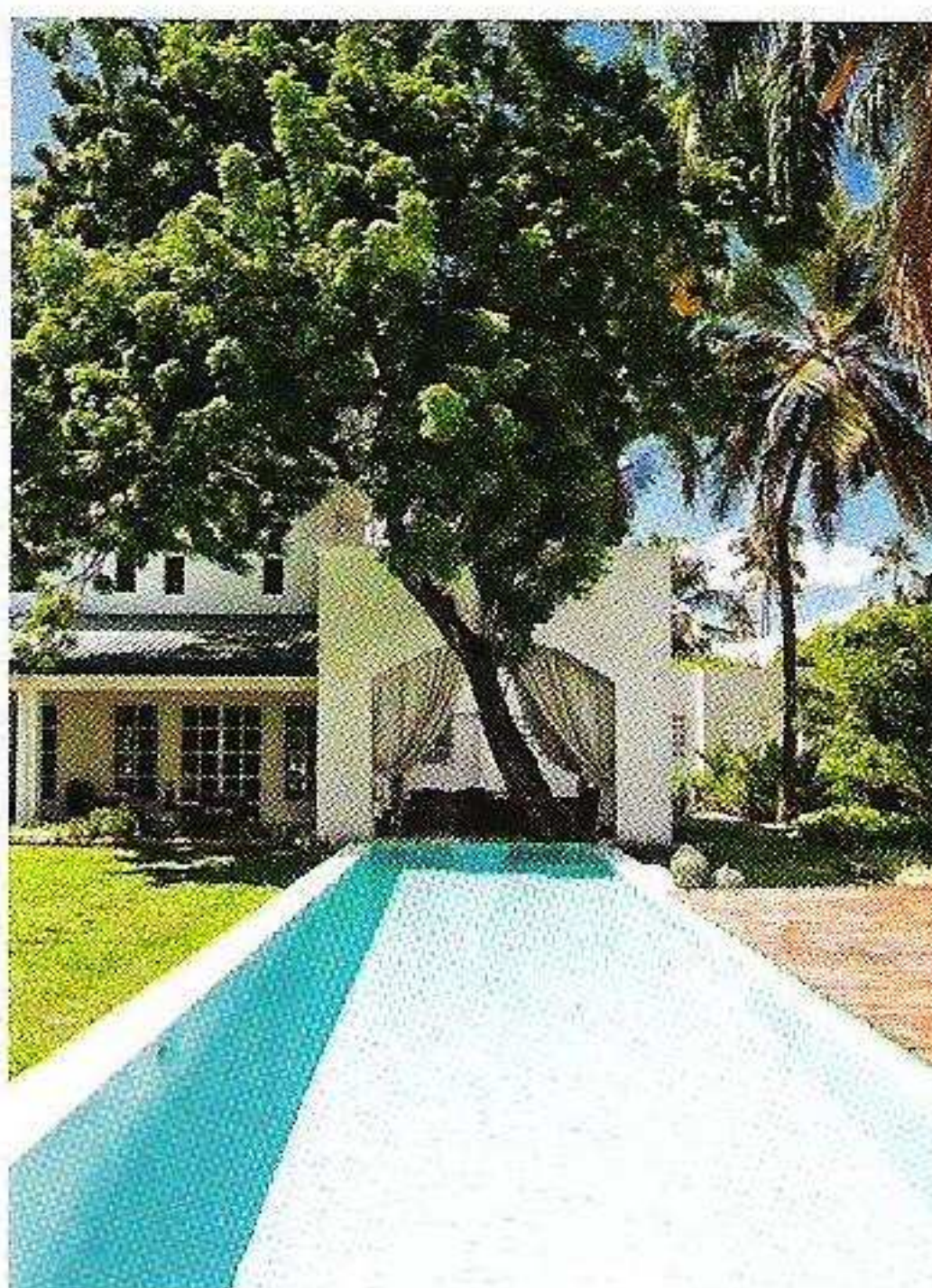
The Vamizi Island Charter flies regularly to and from Dar es Salaam and Pemba.

## DAR ES SALAAM

Whether Vamizi is the sole destination or the culmination of a longer safari in one of Tanzania's 15 national parks, getting there usually requires staying at least one night in Dar es Salaam. The natural choice is the **The Oyster Bay**, a jewel of a hotel set in the quiet diplomatic quarter directly on Coco Beach, about 45 minutes from the airport. More private residence than

hotel, the colonial-style villa impresses with its modern interpretation of local styles. The property's spacious living room outfits its cream-coloured walls and concrete floors with kudu horn and rattan lamps, jute and leather rugs, stately chandeliers made of mussel and coconut shells, ornate black and white portraits and intricate wooden sculptures. Guests reside in the property's eight colossal

suites spread out across three storeys. The true highlight, though, is the garden, with its manicured lawn and three massive metal masks, as well as a swimming pool and a long table used for dinner under the arcades and, last but not least, a gazebo, whose rattan sofas offer the perfect perch to end the evening. Rooms from \$400. [theoysterbayhotel.com](http://theoysterbayhotel.com)



Pool and living room at the Oyster Bay Hotel, Dar es Salaam



## TURTLES

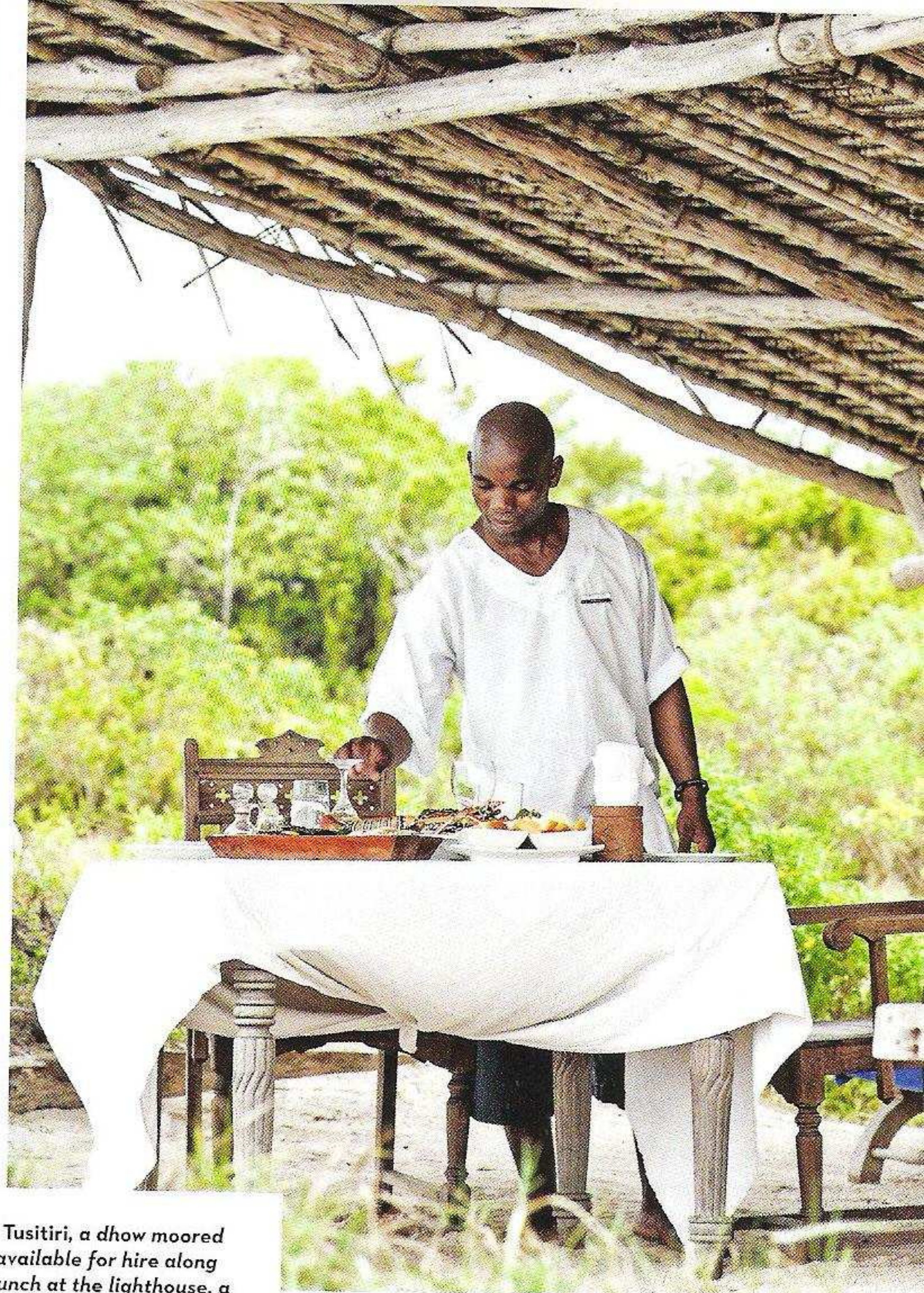


NEXT 5 km

Maluane







*Clockwise from top left: the Tusitiri, a dhow moored right in front of the resort, available for hire along with its entire crew; private lunch at the lighthouse, a serene location facing an isolated beach; ethnic art in the resort's al fresco lobby; a local woman*

