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Travel: Simple ESCAPES

The most luxurious new travel experiences embrace the ethos of less is more, says MARK C. O'FLAHERTY

The new trend in travel is for stripped-back luxury, but don't panic, that doesn't mean stark bedrooms and no-frills service. As a backlash to our fast-track lives, vacations are becoming a time to disconnect, with more of us seeking out stress-free environments in what experts are calling "authentic" locations. So turn on your out of office and embrace a more meaningful luxury at one of these very different, yet utterly stylish, escapes.

MUST PACK
A maxi dress will keep you cool – and chic – in hot climes.

LIZARD ISLAND
Great Barrier Reef, Australia

Why go: This is one of the most sophisticated and remote all-inclusive resorts in the southern hemisphere with peace, quiet and Mother Nature all around you.

Back to basics: There's a full calendar of natural phenomena, from marlin and manta ray season to the early rising of the Southern Cross constellation.

When to go: Now, next week or in six months – it has year-round temperatures of around 80 degrees.
lizardisland.com.au

IN PARADISE
The beach at Lizard Island and one of its villas (right)

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HIX ISLAND HOUSE

Vieques, Puerto Rico

Why go: This is almost-camping for architecturally minded modernists, located near miles of wild, empty beaches.

Back to basics: Canadian architect John Hix has created a collection of Japanese *wabi-sabi*-inspired (a minimal design philosophy) houses with bright Marimekko textiles, but without windows or a fourth wall.

When to go: Visit during the darkest period of the new moon, when the bioluminescent bay glows brightest. Avoid June to November: it's hurricane season.
hixislandhouse.com

MUST PACK
A long-sleeved dress is great for the changeable British weather.

THE SHINGLE HOUSE
Dungeness, UK

Why go: This contemporary take on a fisherman's cottage sits on the shingle beach of the UK's only desert. It's a place to read, draw or beachcomb.

Back to basics: The all-white interior, modern Scandinavian furniture and state of the art appliances belie the fact that this is a place to disconnect. With no Wi-Fi, you can soak up the mesmerising views from the floor-to-ceiling windows across the lunar landscape instead.

When to go: At the height of the British summer when the shingle gleams. living-architecture.co.uk

MUST PACK
Keep cool with cotton kanzans, leather sandals and a chic fedora.

VAMIZI
Quirimbas Archipelago of N. Mozambique, Africa

Why go: Imagine the Maldives, 15 minutes after it was discovered. This is a conservation-focused, gleaming white-sand gem adrift in the Indian Ocean, with some of the best diving in the world.

Back to basics: Don't expect air-conditioning or televisions – instead, the 13 villas are open to the breeze and sounds of the island's wildlife. Spa treatments include seaweed masks and sea-salt scrubs.

When to go: Come for the whale-watching season, July to September. vamizi.com

MUST PACK
Relax on the empty beach in an ultra-simple bandeau bikini.

SHOP MORE VACATION BOUTIQUE

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