



THE SUNDAY TIMES

SECTION 6

04.11.2016

THE SUNDAY TIMES

HOME

PROPERTY
SUPPLEMENT
OF THE
YEAR



WILDE IN THE COUNTRY

Poldark's Gabriella Wilde on why settling down in Somerset has put her on a career fast track p14

THE TRUMP BUMP WHY THE HOUSING MARKET WON'T RECOVER UNTIL 2018 CABIN PORN: THE £140,000 SHACK THE BEST RUGS AND GUEST BEDS BRING ON THE CACTI

Go the extra mile

Owning a property overseas, for many, still evokes visions of a far-flung, warm, exotic destination. The trouble is, foreign homes are no longer a conscience-salving purchase, due to concerns about the environment. Aside from all the air miles, there's the worry that your bolthole may damage a pristine landscape, hurt the planet with its air conditioning, acres of concrete and chlorinated pools, or wreak havoc on the lives of local villagers.

The good news is that developers are upping their game and building resorts that are easier on the planet and neighbouring communities. Modern construction methods deplete fewer resources, emit less carbon and are more energy-efficient than those of a generation ago. Power is increasingly supplied by micro solar, wind and hydro sources. Waste and water are recycled and treated by non-polluting methods.

And don't worry: luxury is not being sacrificed for sustainability. Although many of the most desirable resorts are decorated with organic and fair-trade materials — wool, cotton, cork, bamboo and hemp — they don't have a hair-shirt feel.

Sceptics complain that improved green credentials result in higher prices, but many of these resorts claim the contrary. Indeed, for discerning developers, the motivation to build sustainably is practical as well as ethical — renewable energy solutions are sometimes the only options in remote, off-grid locations.

So which are the best places to invest in? We've selected five schemes that are all ahead of the eco curve. We've assessed them for their environmental sustainability and considered — as much as we could, and where it was considered relevant — their impact on the local people as well as the planet.

A fly-and-flop holiday home with a conscience? It can be done. **Gordon Miller** chooses five top resorts that offer investors a guilt-free slice of paradise



Light touch Above and right, Soneva Jani, in the Maldives, is described as the world's lowest-density resort



Rancho Santa Monica brings sustainability to the Costa del Sol

So, if you're keen to offset those air miles, start looking for your second home here.

Soneva Jani, Maldives

This is the standard-bearer for environmentally sensitive resorts. Opened last month, Soneva Jani was created by the team behind the Six Senses brand, which pioneered sustainable luxury resorts when it opened in 1995, and is billed as the lowest-density resort in the world.

It has 24 villas dotted over three miles of blue lagoon, and one villa on an island. The pools use seawater with UV filtration and the villas have been built so as not to damage the reef. A

"significant portion" of the resort's power is generated by solar panels, waste water is recycled on site and drinking water is produced using desalination.

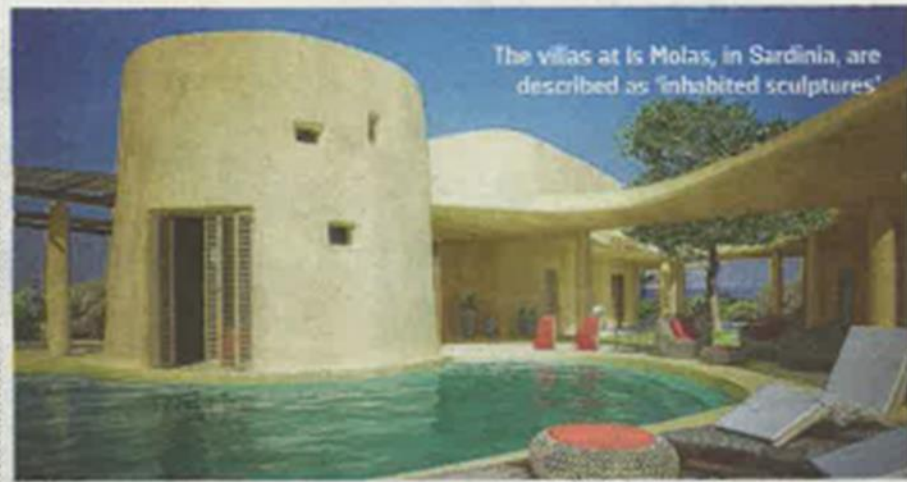
An organic vegetable garden provides produce for the restaurants and there's an outdoor "silent cinema" where guests can watch movies while wearing Bluetooth earphones, so that nesting wildlife is not disturbed by noise.

Like its Maldivian predecessor, Soneva Fushi, the resort has spacious villas decorated in sustainable materials such as organic fabrics and recycled wood. Glass bottles are crushed to make designer tabletops and coir rope made from coconut husks is used for floor coverings. Every water villa has a private pool; some have slides from the top deck into the lagoon below. In the master bedrooms, retractable roofs slide back at the touch of a button so guests can stargaze from their beds.

You can expect good stargazing of another kind: A-listers including Richard Branson, Kate Winslet, Paul McCartney and Madonna and Guy Ritchie have stayed at Soneva Fushi, while Gwyneth Paltrow,



AlmaVerde, in the Algarve



The villas at Is Molas, in Sardinia, are described as 'inhabited sculptures'



L'Amandier is in the foothills of the Atlas Mountains

market for €430,000 (£385,000); off-plan villas start at €433,000.

CONTACT 00 351 282 697857, almaverde.com

L'Amandier, Morocco

The beautiful Ouirgane Valley is an hour south of Marrakesh, in the foothills of the High Atlas Mountains, and L'Amandier doesn't mar its unspoilt setting: its 14 villas and boutique hotel take up only 6% of the 12-acre site. It offers luxury, an authentic, pared-back experience and immersion in the raw beauty of the landscape — on a plateau in the Toubkal National Park, amid citrus and olive groves and almond trees.

The developer has striven to reduce L'Amandier's impact on the environment. Water is pumped from a borehole and the villas were constructed by skilled local tradesman using time-honoured artisanal building techniques and materials: adobe bricks (which have good thermal properties), tadelakt (a waterproof lime plaster) and bejmat tiles. This Berber craftsmanship has been fused with a contemporary European design aesthetic by the London architect Nick Gowing and the interior designer Michael Kopinski.

The villas are set in secluded landscaped gardens, and each of them has a plunge pool, an internal courtyard, a private garden and a large roof terrace. They are close to the boutique hotel, which opens next spring. It will have an infinity pool, a restaurant, an all-weather tennis court and a concierge service, all available to owners.

BUY IN Prices start at £339,000 for a two-bedroom villa.

CONTACT 020 7754 5563, lamandierhotel.com

Is Molas, Sardinia

Since it opened this year, the Is Molas Golf resort has been turning heads with its otherworldly villas, 18-hole Gary Player golf course, five-star hotel, private beach club and luxury restaurants and boutiques. Designed by the Italian



Cara Delevingne and Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie have visited Soneva Kiri, in Thailand.
BUY IN Prices start at \$3m (£2.4m) on a renewable leasehold basis.
CONTACT 07970550986, soneva.com

AlmaVerde, Portugal

Set amid mature oak, pine and carob trees near Lagos, in the western Algarve, the AlmaVerde Village & Spa has green credentials to match its setting – there's a tree-planting programme designed to scoop up more carbon than is generated by the guests. It's low-density, with less than 10% of the 143-acre site taken up by buildings. The rest has been given over to parkland, gardens, sports and play areas, which fits the developer's philosophy of boosting community and wellbeing: the resort offers yoga, Tai chi, dance, four tennis courts and a day spa.

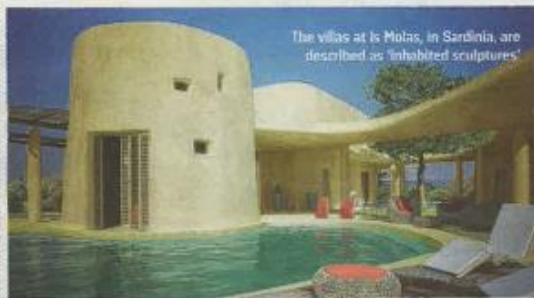
The whitewashed architecture draws on local traditions, adding modern flair, but using sustainable materials: handmade sun-baked clay bricks and reclaimed tropical hardwood. Materials were chosen for their thermal and insulating properties as well as for their durability and beauty.

The innovative Coolhouse air-conditioning system also plays a part: it pumps cool air into the house from underground and reduces humidity. The system uses up to 94% less energy than regular air conditioning and maintains a year-round temperature of 26C. Overhangs above the south-facing patios prevent overheating in summer and the windows are fitted with low-emissivity glass.

There are currently 106 villas at AlmaVerde. Buyers can choose between plots, off-plan units and previously owned villas; designs include the Luz, a villa with an internal courtyard, two roof terraces, three bedrooms and a study or fourth bedroom. It also has a large heated pool in private Mediterranean gardens.
BUY IN A previously owned three-bedroom villa is on the



AlmaVerde, in the Algarve



The villas at Is Molas, in Sardinia, are described as 'inhabited sculptures'



L'Amandier is in the foothills of the Atlas Mountains

market for €430,000 (£385,000); off-plan villas start at €433,000.
CONTACT 00 351 282 697857, almaverde.com

L'Amandier, Morocco

The beautiful Ourigane Valley is an hour south of Marrakesh, in the foothills of the High Atlas Mountains, and L'Amandier doesn't mar its unspoilt setting: its 14 villas and boutique hotel take up only 6% of the 12-acre site. It offers luxury, an authentic, pared-back experience and immersion in the raw beauty of the landscape – on a plateau in the Toubkal National Park, amid citrus and olive groves and almond trees.

The developer has striven to reduce L'Amandier's impact on the environment. Water is pumped from a borehole and the villas were constructed by skilled local tradesman using time-honoured artisanal building techniques and materials: adobe bricks (which have good thermal properties), tadelakt (a waterproof lime plaster) and bejmat tiles. This Berber craftsmanship has been fused with a contemporary European design aesthetic by the London architect Nick Gowing and the interior designer Michael Kopinski.

The villas are set in secluded landscaped gardens, and each of them has a plunge pool, an internal courtyard, a private garden and a large roof terrace. They are close to the boutique hotel, which opens next spring. It will have an infinity pool, a restaurant, an all-weather tennis court and a concierge service, all available to owners.
BUY IN Prices start at £339,000 for a two-bedroom villa.
CONTACT 020 7754 5563, lamandierhotel.com

Is Molas, Sardinia

Since it opened this year, the Is Molas Golf resort has been turning heads with its otherworldly villas, 18-hole Gary Player golf course, five-star hotel, private beach club and luxury restaurants and boutiques. Designed by the Italian

architect Massimiliano Fuksas, the unorthodox villas were conceived as "inhabited sculptures", but their bold forms are both traditional (they were inspired by nuraghi, local megalithic stone towers) and sustainable. They're built in natural, locally sourced materials such as tadelakt plaster and coccolpesto – fragments of earthenware used in ancient Roman architecture. It's deemed "bio-architecture", and the buildings are designed to be cool in summer and warm in winter.

The architecture is immersed in the landscape: the gardens use only native species such as myrtle, mastic, arbutus trees and cork oaks. Every villa is positioned to capture the best possible views, which include the turquoise Sardinian sea, the golf course and the mountains.
BUY IN Prices range from €1.8m for a two-bedroom villa to €4.4m for one with five bedrooms.
CONTACT 00 39 02 8707 8300, sothebysrealty.com; ismolaresort.com

Rancho Santa Monica, Spain

With its concrete jungles of high-rise holiday flats and sea of cranes, the Costa del Sol is not a destination you associate with eco-friendliness. Yet Rancho Santa Monica, in Benalmadena, has vowed to be a gated community with a difference. Overlooking the Mediterranean, on half-acre plots, its 25 luxury villas will be built with prefabricated technology that is quick to put up, energy-efficient and has less of an impact on the environment than traditional construction methods, using EPS (expanded polystyrene) panels. These provide excellent thermal and acoustic insulation.

The villas can be customised to the owners' specifications: green options include solar energy, water recycling and air-source heat pumps. The first properties will be ready in 18 months.
BUY IN Four-bedroom villas start at €1.2m.
CONTACT 020 3608 1267, tranio.com