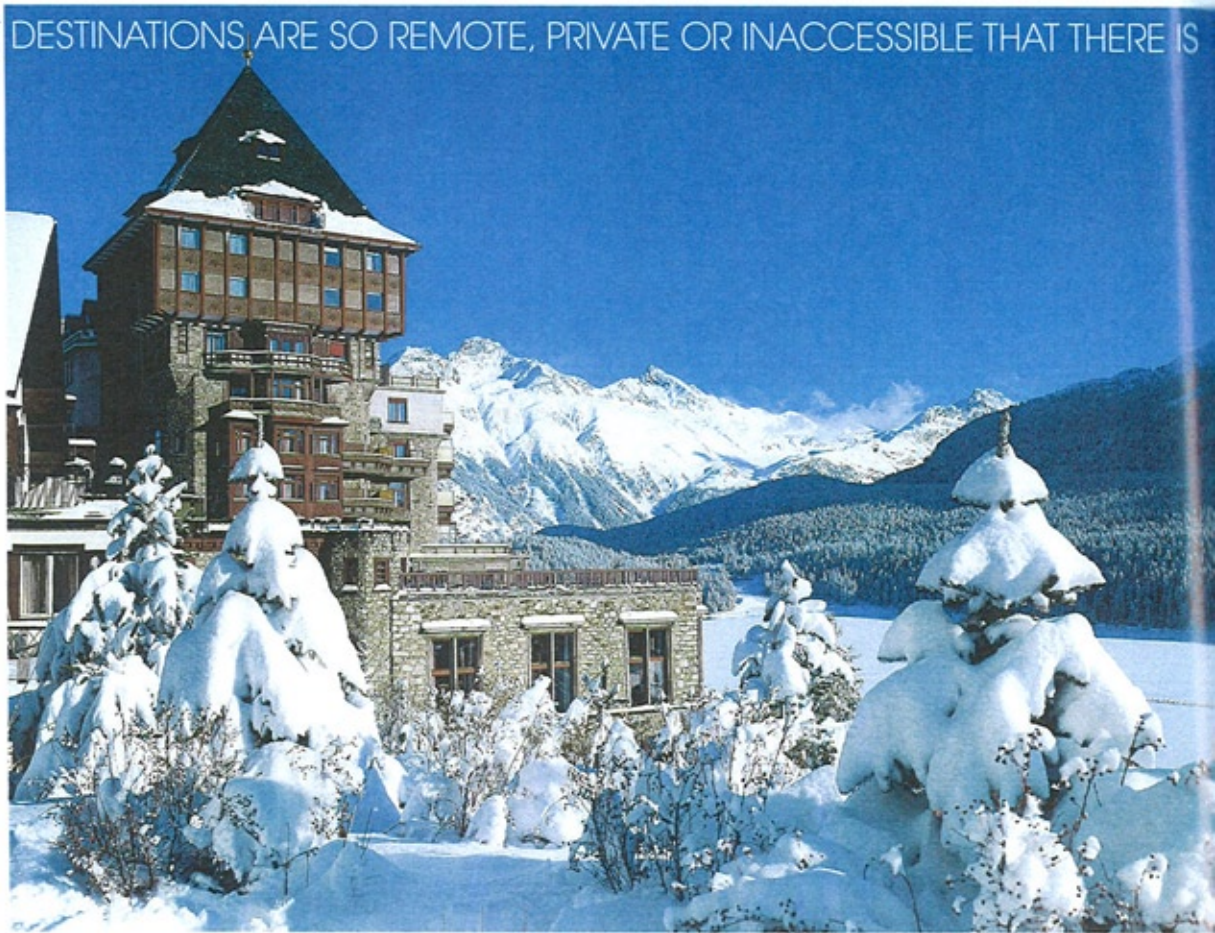


SOME HOLIDAY DESTINATIONS ARE SO REMOTE, PRIVATE OR INACCESSIBLE THAT THERE IS



ACCESS ALL AREAS

WHEN THE LEGENDARY hotelier Bob Burns, founder of the Regent chain, opened Mussolini's former villa on Lake Garda as a glittering boutique property in 2001, he harboured one reservation. For his target guest list, Villa Feltrinelli's location in Gargnano was a spaghetti of a place to get to. With Milan and Venice more than two hours' drive away and the nearest airport, Brescia, served only by budget airlines, what was a time-impoorished tycoon to do? The solution was private aviation, making the last leg by helicopter to touch down in style on Villa Feltrinelli's lakeside park.

And, as Feltrinelli's fame spread through the financial community, private jet holiday specialist Jeffersons began to receive a stream of requests from new clients wanting to fly not just from London, but from small airports near their country seats.

Much the same has been happening all over Europe as the revolt against the major hubs for scheduled flights grows. 'Businessmen simply can't afford the delays and top-end holidaymakers don't want to get their trips off on the wrong note,' observes Robin Fawcett, managing director of Jeffersons. 'It is

not that security is less tight when flying privately, simply that four passengers take a lot less time to process than 200,' he explains.

The growing use of private jets among leisure travellers is helping breathe life back into places that were in danger of becoming moribund. St Moritz may be the most glamorous of Swiss resorts, but until recently it was looking progressively less appealing as journey times lengthened, following delays to scheduled flights into Zurich.


Now, however, the tide seems to be turning again, as upmarket holidaymakers increasingly charter private

jets to fly straight into the neighbouring village of Samedan from where St Moritz's Badrutt's Palace Hotel and Suvretta House are but minutes away.

Hitherto little-known Swiss mountain resorts such as Crans Montana are also benefiting. No longer is the ski weekend feasible only for the Swiss and French. Brits, Germans and Italians have also been booking houses. 'Some of our guests hit the ground skiing,' according to Joeri White of Indigo Lodges, which offers several of the smartest chalets in the area.

It is the upgrading of the net-

Above: the winter wonderland of Badrutt's Palace Hotel in St Moritz. Right: the island paradise of Masha Cay in the Exuma chain of islands in the Bahamas.

An aerial photograph of a tropical beach. The foreground shows a white sandy beach curving along the edge of a crystal-clear turquoise lagoon. In the middle of the beach, there is a bright yellow beach umbrella and two dark lounge chairs. The lagoon extends to a dark, low-lying island in the distance under a vast, blue sky with scattered white clouds. The overall scene is serene and idyllic.

REALLY ONLY ONE WAY TO GET TO THEM.

JULIAN ALLASON CHARTS THE RISE OF THE PRIVATE JET



work of around 3,200 local airports around the world, some of them in remote destinations such as the Galapagos Islands, that has transformed the situation.

This has created synergy with that other manifestation of contemporary leisure, the super-yacht, and this, in turn, has brought forth a new animal, the integrated travel organiser. Firms such as Avolus specialise in handling the transport needs of high net worth individuals so that when they travel – which tends to be often – the experience is seamless.

For one particular Russian client, they arranged a large motor yacht, handling a revolving guest list over the period of the charter. To meet the clients' need to return home each weekend, Avolus's control centre monitored the boat's location, and was able to arrange helicopter transfers from wherever it happened to be docking on a Friday to the nearest airfield where an executive jet was waiting to whisk them off to Moscow.

Even the traditional yacht migration along the southern coast of France down to Capri and the Amalfi Coast is now becoming integrated with private jet flights into local airports. For St Tropez the nearby airfield at La Môle is be-

coming a more familiar sight to Euro-liggers than the international gateway of Nice Côte d'Azur with its congested motorway link. For Hollywood royalty booked into the greatly renewed (and now infinitely more relaxed) Hotel du Cap Eden Roc at Cap d'Antibes, it is Cannes Mandelieu where their private jets touch down.

As for the smaller Greek islands, the alternatives of direct early morning charter flights or flying scheduled into Athens then changing to a local airline or ferry has limited their appeal to those with time to burn. So much so that, until recently, the development of hotels on even the livelier islands such as Santorini was held back by the paucity of sophisticated guests. This has now, at least to some extent, been rectified thanks to the appearance of hotels like the award-winning Katikies perched on the cliffside in the lovely village of Oia or the 19th-century mansion of Zannos Melathron with its breathtaking and panoramic views.

In other parts of the world, some islands are only accessible by private jet, short of a bumpy ride in a small boat. Take the private island

Above and right:
Pädaste Manor on
Estonia's idyllic
Muhu Island

of Little Whale Cay, for instance, off the coast from the Bahamian capital, Nassau. While it is perfectly feasible to fly into Nassau's international airport by scheduled service and make the last short hop by small plane, many of the Americans who rent Little Whale Cay prefer to pilot themselves.

One of the most exclusive jet destinations in the Bahamas is magician David Copperfield's Musha Cay in the Exuma chain of islands, about 85 miles southeast of Nassau, that is available for rental to those with an appropriate credit rating – weekly rates start at about \$300,000. A West Indian plantation house sits on top of a hill at the centre of the island, its airy living room supported by pillars of coral stone. The all-in weekly rental includes everything down to lobster barbecues accompanied by Dom Perignon Champagne.

As Musha's agent, John Steinfeld, points out, the island is not just about luxury but discretion. 'This is a place where those in the public eye can relax completely in the

knowledge that they are not only secure but totally private,' he says.

For parties travelling from Europe to the West Indies, there are also now sound reasons to consider flying privately. Larger private aircraft can now carry up to 12 or 14 passengers without refuelling, and can do so without the lengthy delays often resulting from the fact that many of the more charming islands lack international airports. Jetting in directly is an altogether more civilised experience in which queues for immigration and luggage are almost unknown.

From Estonia's capital of Tallinn, the drive to Muhu Island is long and dull. Take one of Rotorway's fleet of helicopters, however, and, 30 minutes later, the curious outline of Muhu Island takes shape through the perspex bubble of the cockpit as the chopper hovers in to land at Pädaste Manor.

As a base for fishing, hunting wild boar or just observing the plentiful wildlife, little-known Muhu is hard to beat, while the romantic setting and exceptional cooking to be enjoyed at Pädaste alone justify touchdown. It is, perhaps, a truism that such splendid isolation cannot survive where conventional access is easy.

With an airfield close by and helipad onsite, Pädaste Manor embodies the possibilities of appreciating hidden treasures without destroying them. ●

WHERE

Badrutt's Palace
St Moritz
badruttspalace.com
Hotel du Cap Eden Roc
Cap d'Antibes
hotel-du-cap-eden-roc.com

Hotel Saint-Barth
Isle de France, St Barths
isle-de-france.com

Katikies
Oia, Santorini
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Muhu Island, Estonia
padaste.ee

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suvrettahouse.ch

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vilfafeltrinelli.com

Zannos Melathron Hotel
Pyrgos Kallistis, Santorini
zannos.gr

Indigo Lodges
Geneva
indigolodges.com

Mustique Island Rentals
West Indies
mustique-island.com

Little Whale Cay
New Providence, Bahamas
littlewhalecay.com

Musha Cay
Exumas, Bahamas
sanctuary.com

HOW

Avolus integrated travel
avolus.com

Jeffersons private jet
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