

Client: River Cruise Line
 Source: Money Week (Main)
 Date: 01 February 2019
 Page: 43
 Reach: 46081
 Size: 473cm2
 Value: 3793.46

Three small island retreats

Head to these paradise islands for a dose of winter sun. Chris Carter reports

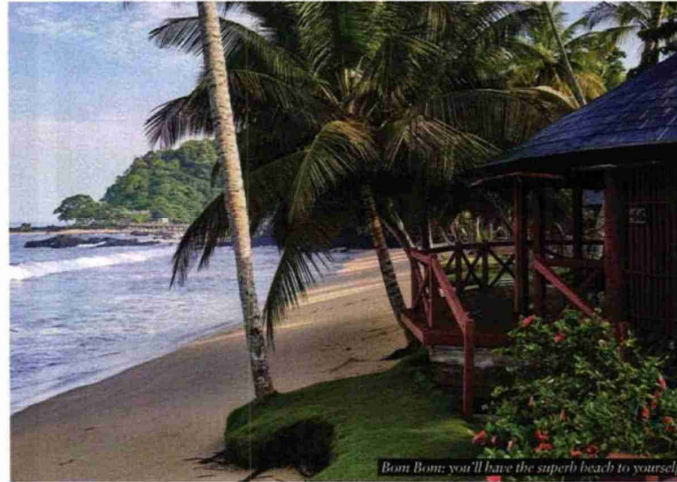
São Tomé and Príncipe is Africa's second-smallest country after the Seychelles, says Gabriele Steinhauser in *The Wall Street Journal*. But unlike the Seychelles, it is only just beginning to build its profile as a destination for travellers who are keen to combine hiking through rainforests and past fading colonial mansions with flopping on deserted beaches. The island of Príncipe, some 90 miles to the north of the larger São Tomé, is perfect for the latter activity, especially on the Praia Banana. You may recognise it from rum maker Bacardi's 1990s advertisement. Not much has changed since as few tourists make it to Príncipe, preferring the more affordable São Tomé. "It's worth the extra bucks, though."

Stay at the Roça Sundy, a stylishly renovated manor house hotel, with tiled floors and wooden ceilings. The manor "makes it easy to imagine what life must have been like for plantation bosses a century ago". It provides a free shuttle service to its partner resort, Bom Bom. Its private beaches on a small peninsula and eponymous islet are "among the best, and emptiest I've ever seen".

Roça Sundy from €175, HotelRocaSundy.com; *Bom Bom* from €280, BomBomPrincipe.com

Trinidad's chilled-out sibling

The Caribbean island of Tobago has more "ramshackle beauty, bewitching wildlife and smashing beaches" than you can shake a stick at, says Mike Atkins in *The Times*. It's got a big brother too – the island



Bom Bom: you'll have the superb beach to yourself

of Trinidad. But if Trinidad is big and brash (think carnival), Tobago is very much the chilled out little sibling – "happiest sitting back on the sand and letting life happen, maybe with a plate of curried crab and dumplings, maybe with a cold beer".

Tourism on the island has developed more slowly than in other parts of the Caribbean, thanks to the island's oil and gas reserves. "Sure, if you look hard enough, you will find the odd luxurious all-inclusive resort, but Tobago is not really about roped-off beaches and shiny shopping malls." You are more likely to find

yourself sharing the beach with locals than with "sunburnt Europeans suffering from buffet fatigue".

Castara Retreats is a gorgeous collection of wooden lodges scattered on a hillside overlooking a bay, where it's



"Every island in each of the five island groups that make up French Polynesia is unique"

easy to fall into a blissful routine of "liming" (not doing anything, in the local vernacular). After a lunch of callaloo and fried fish at a local seaside café, Atkins and his 11-year-old son "waddle onto the beach to let the afternoon drift into the evening... [like] natural born limers".

From £95, CastaraRetreats.com

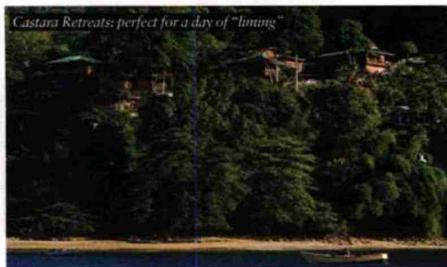
The other emerald isle

Hiking up through the tropical highlands of Moorea, in view of sister island Tahiti, requires as much use of your hands as it does of your feet, says Andrew Evans in *National Geographic Traveller*. It takes more than an hour to reach the knife's edge of

Moorea's volcanic ridge, a steep, black basalt wall. But the climb is worth it for the views. From the narrow lookout at Trois Cocotiers, you can see the whole of the heart-shaped island, including Opunohu Bay, "and the unbroken carpet of green that sweeps from the

shoreline up to the cartoonish peak of Mount Rotui". Every island in each of the five island groups that make up French Polynesia is unique. Tahiti and the other Society Islands (including Moorea) are the most visited; the Marquesas, the most northerly; the Tuamotus, the flattest; while the more southern Austral and Gambier islands are almost unvisited by tourists. "The biggest mistake a traveller can make is not to get past the romance of Tahiti or the honeymooner overwater bungalows of Bora Bora," says Evans – or even, despite all its charms, "the emerald green Moorea".

See TahitiTourisme.com for a list of guest houses throughout the islands



Castara Retreats: perfect for a day of "liming"