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FALL/WINTER

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PLUS: THE GEOPOLITICS OF THE MARTINI

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP RIGHT: JP MASCIET/© BELMOND; ERIC FEFERBERG/GETTY IMAGES; BRIAN DORE/CONCIERGE IN UMBRIA; GINKGO AGENCY. OPPOSITE, FROM TOP: © STEVE BLOOM/STEVEBLOOM.COM; LA BAMBÀ DE ARECO



Assegai, a Belgian Malinois, and his handler, Bongani Toto, on patrol.

DOG DAY

WHERE: The Sabi Sand Game Reserve, on the western border of Kruger National Park in South Africa.

WHAT: A day in the bush with an innovative anti-poaching team—scouts and specially trained dogs—recently deployed by the acclaimed high-design and high-luxury Singita camps and lodges.

WHAT MAKES IT SPECIAL: The unprecedented surge in poaching in Africa during the last five years—driven by an Asian appetite for rhino horn and elephant ivory, as well as by technological advances that help poachers find their victims—is rapidly leading certain species to the brink of extinction. Conservative estimates, for example, give African black and white rhinos—species that have been around for 17 million years and that are now being poached at an average rate of nearly three a day—fewer than 25 years on earth, if this pace continues.

Enter Singita's K-9, a men-and-dogs team founded by Conraad de Rosner, a South African master tracker and anti-poaching specialist. Its goal is to deter poaching in the area around Singita's three Sabi Sand camps and, if poachers do appear, to find and arrest them while collecting the evidence necessary to secure convictions. The specially trained dogs are deployed either as "sniffers" (these are usually Weimaraners), to uncover evidence such as wounded animals or remains, or "bite dogs" (often Belgian Malinois or German Shepherds), to stop poachers on the rare occasions when they will not give themselves up, and track human subjects, firearms, and bullet cases.

You will rise early to meet the team—usually four dogs, their trainers, and government wildlife scouts—and then participate in training exercises, which are fast-paced affairs. (Note: You will not have any interaction with real poachers; all activities are limited to demonstrations of the extraordinary abilities of all K-9 members—and they're plenty exciting.) Time permitting (and unless an actual situation requires the team's immediate attention), you might visit K-9 headquarters to meet the rest of the dog team (five to 10 animals) and some of the new puppies. In the afternoon you can visit local communities to see conservation education in action; all funds generated from the K-9 experience go to Singita's efforts to teach local children about the importance of preserving their natural heritage. **THE COST:** A minimum \$1,200 tax-deductible donation per couple to Singita's environmental education fund. The experience is offered 12 times per year, and you do need to be staying at Singita's Ebony or Boulders lodge or Castleton Camp. **WHO CAN MAKE IT HAPPEN:** Cherri Briggs of Explore, info@exploreffrica.net, 888-596-6377. **K.G.**



Belmond's Amaryllis barge.

WHERE: Burgundy. **WHAT:** A tasting of all 33 grand cru wines. **WHAT MAKES IT SPECIAL:** Belmond runs dozens of cruises along France's riverways, but only once a year does it host La Semaine des Grands Crus, which brings aboard Burgundies from the 33 wineries awarded the rare grand cru distinction. The six-night trip on the Amaryllis (which has four bedrooms and a heated pool) includes visits to the 14th-century chateau where the dukes of Burgundy lived and the cellar in which the King of France kept his personal stash, plus a tasting of the famed Romanée-Conti. So as not to overwhelm the palate (or liver), only a selection of the wines is served each night. **THE COST:** \$11,600 per person. **WHO CAN MAKE IT HAPPEN:** Hilary Hamilton of Abercrombie & Kent, hhamilton@abercrombiekent.com, 630-725-3400 ext. 544. **S.W.**



THE HUNT IS ON



Agriturismo Bartoli, a farmstead where wild truffles grow.

WHERE: Umbria. **WHAT:** Hunting for truffles in the mountains above medieval Spoleto, followed by a five-course lunch with the truffle hunter and his family in their 500-year-old farmhouse. **WHAT MAKES IT SPECIAL:** Big business these days, truffles are grown just about everywhere, though the most coveted varieties grow wild in Italy's Apennine Mountains. You'll be searching for them there, at Agriturismo Bartoli, a sprawling farmstead surrounded by the kind of Umbrian landscape (undulating meadows, stone-walled cottages, a lone horse out for a trot) that could easily distract you from the task at hand. You'll be led by Felice Bartoli, whose family has lived on this plot since at least the mid-1700s, and his specially trained pair of dogs, who reliably sniff out black summer truffles and the rarer black winter truffles, known as black diamonds. Even if the dogs strike out (it happens), strolling the countryside with the affable, Dante-quoting Bartoli is well worth the trip, as is the lunch that follows. Prepared by Bartoli's wife Marcella, the meal features many foodstuffs from the farm, such as platefuls of prosciutto, pecorino cheese, the truffles, and whatever else might be in season. **THE COST:** Approximately \$155 per person, depending on group size. **WHO CAN MAKE IT HAPPEN:** Maria Gabriella Landers and Brian Dore of ConciERGE in Umbria, brian@ciuitaly.com, 212-769-4767. **DEBORAH DUNN**