

# WHERE TO STAY

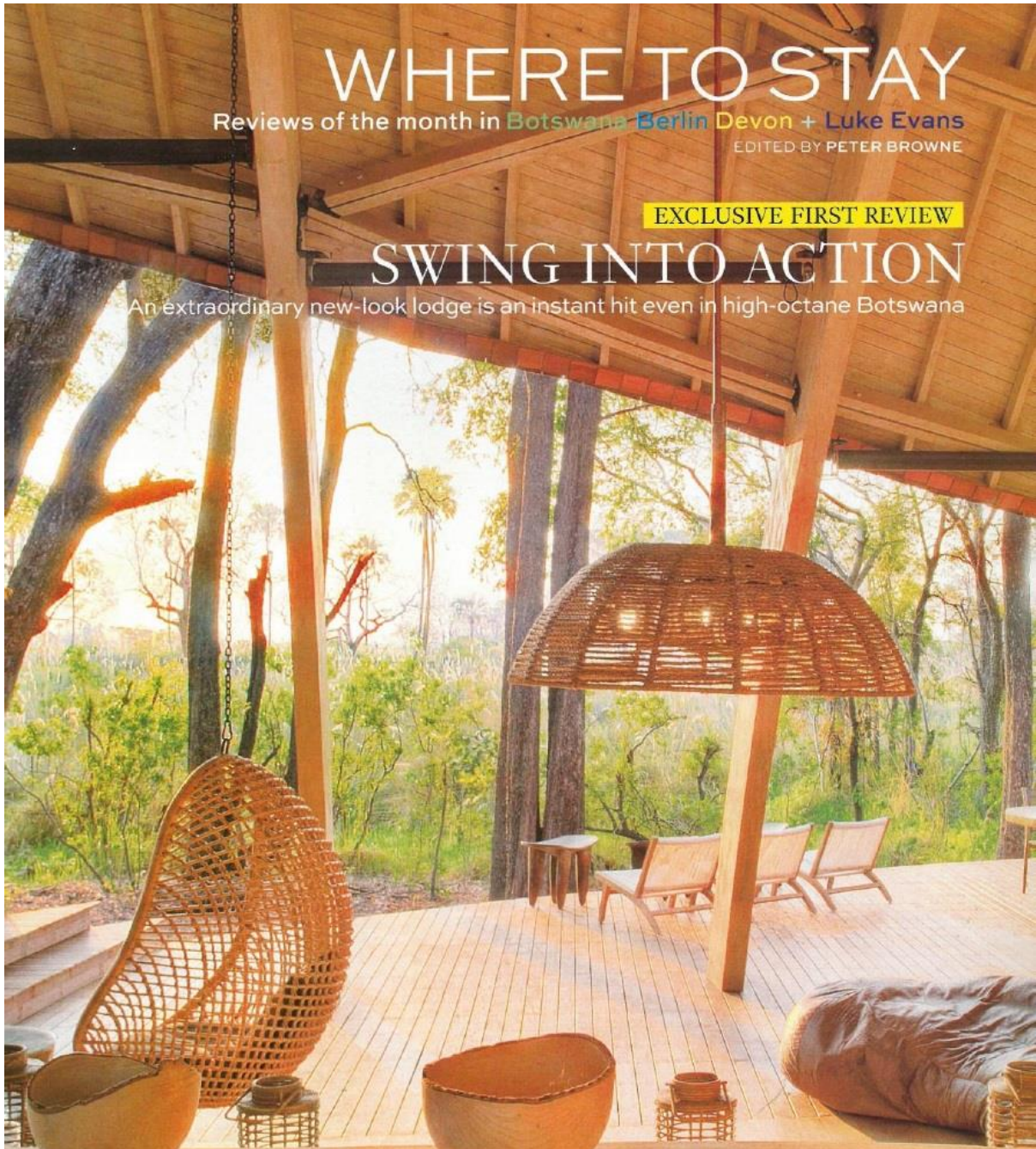
Reviews of the month in **Botswana** Berlin Devon + Luke Evans

EDITED BY PETER BROWNE

EXCLUSIVE FIRST REVIEW

## SWING INTO ACTION

An extraordinary new-look lodge is an instant hit even in high-octane Botswana



Sandibe Okavango Safari Lodge, part of the AndBeyond portfolio, has just reopened after a radical rebuild. Even in Botswana, which has some of the most admired wilderness camps and lodges in southern Africa, Sandibe is instantly up there with the best. It's charming and friendly, the service is relaxed but on-it, the food is excellent and the design is remarkable. It's a far cry from the traditional safari idiom. Inspiration was taken from the nests of the weaverbird and the overlapping scales of the pangolin. The result is a beautiful cathedral to nature, a cathedral of timber – timber of different types, textures and tones. The 12 suites resemble giant baskets, suspended between trees on the banks of the Sandibe River, alive with a chorus of frogs and hippos. They manage to feel both cocoon-like and wide-open, intimate and expansive. This is a grown-up, meditative retreat in a game-rich, glittering section of the delta where wild dog, lion, cheetah, leopard, red lechwe antelope and elephant are regular visitors. Butler service means that a late lunch of, say, chilled avocado-and-cucumber soup, thin-crust pizza and deconstructed Caesar salad – presented theatrically on copper trays – can be delivered private-poolside. The interiors are pared-down, simple, quietly smart. Leather beanbags replace sofas and ironwood tree stumps serve as tables. 'It's always tempting to go overboard with "stuff",' says designer Debra Fox. 'Instead, we practised restraint, giving guests just what they need.' JANE BROUGHTON +27 11 809 4300; [www.andbeyond.com](http://www.andbeyond.com). Doubles from about £1,170 all-inclusive