

"AFTER A GOOD DINNER, ONE CAN FORGIVE ANYBODY, EVEN ONE'S OWN RELATIONS." OSCAR WILDE

GO TASTE + TRAVEL

IT'S
SUMBA
TIME

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BEST NEW
RESTAURANT
OF THE YEAR

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DID SOMEONE SAY
CHAMPAGNE?

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SURFING 'GOD'S LEFT'



"Guaranteed uncrowded barrels" – If that doesn't appeal, we're not sure what will. On a wave like this anywhere else in the world, you'd be lucky to grab a ride, let alone any rail. But, owned by Nihi, what makes Occy's Left (also God's Left) almost perfect is that only 10 people are allowed in the water at a time (reserve your slot prior to avoid disappointment). It's one of the greatest lefthanders to be discovered and works on any size, the bigger the better. The closest we came to a barrel went like this: Gam, the wind's offshore and the swell's dropped to eight foot (three foot smaller than yesterday and two

above our comfort zone). Sat in the line up, we know it's about committing to the take off. A set comes in. Paddle, paddle, we veer left down the wave's face. Pop up, woooooah, the drop's so steep. In a flash, we pull the rail in. A wall has formed to our left. Eyes popping, mouth open, breath held, knees bent, right arm pointed forward, Mick Fanning's advice forefront in our mind: "Hold your line, you'll be fine". Out, up and over the shoulder of the wave. Wow, what a feeling – the power of nature leaves us completely stoked. We were a metre ahead of where we should have been to actually be 'in the barrel', but you know what, we're still claiming it.

GETTING THERE
Qantas flies to Bali, then you need transfer to Garuda Airlines for the short flight to Sumba. qantas.com; garuda-indonesia.com

COST
Min stay of three nights, rates start at \$950 per villa per night, including all meals, wi-fi, minibar, laundry, scheduled excursions, sea activities (surf slots, \$130 a day) and yoga.

NEED TO KNOW
Guests are limited to one surfboard per person with a maximum length of seven foot. For surfboards that exceed this limit, contact the resort for special arrangements. We suggest going April–June ('shoulder season') when it's not too busy, the swell is more consistent and the weather is warm but not boiling.



Made up of 11 villas and 27 residences, privacy and community are brilliantly combined as the properties are spread across a sprawling hillside among gardens of jasmine, frangipani and palm trees. Some are hidden (Mamole Tree House), some are more secluded (Haweri) and others are interconnected by winding pathways.

From a single villa to the five-villa Mendaka estate, Nihi offers unregulated freedom to lone travellers just as it does to honeymooning couples or groups of up to 25. Each dwelling comes with a private butler and opens to vistas of the Indian Ocean. The communal beachfront proves the action (and inaction) – be it lounging around the infinity pool, or eating breakfast, lunch and dinner at the sandy-floored Ombak restaurant (think seafood, tropical flavours and organic vegetables and the freshest 'room' service imaginable).

Aside from engaging with some of the Foundation's projects, general relaxation, horseriding and surfing (or, watching from The Boathouse with a Bintang), the NihiOka spa safari means exploring beyond the confines of the resort. A 90-minute sunrise hike through rolling countryside hills and rice fields freshens the mind, so you're ready for a spa session, perched on a rugged clifftop. We recommend the sun-kissed body wrap, hydrating hair smoothie and Sumbanese lulur exfoliation.

Sat at the (more relaxed) Nio Beach restaurant on our last night for a chef's special barbecue (again with the freshest of seafood such as crab, line-caught fish, prawns – as plucked from the ocean) the jovial vibe is illuminated by festoon lighting and free-flowing cocktails. Engaging in conversation with strangers outside of dating apps is generally forbidden, but here, it's the go – you can't help but share stories of waves caught and relive the experienced magic of Nihi.

As the sun goes down, a feeling of fortune rushes through our veins. Same sun, different world. ■ nibi.com

A stay at Nihi is to be savoured. Despite being on the edge of nowhere, every corner of our Mendaka villa is wrapped in luxury – from the Sumbanese inscriptions on the canopy bed and the private, mosaic-tiled plunge pools to the brass outdoor bath on the treetop balcony (from which you can inhale idyllic sunsets). It's also in keeping with the symphony of the surroundings.

This has always been important for resort owner, American fashion entrepreneur Christopher Burch – authenticity the key to success. Ninety per cent of staff are born and raised here and the resort supports local initiatives through the Sumba Foundation. The hotel's philanthropic work is neither forced on guests or tokenistic – and 100 per cent of all donations go directly to the Foundation's projects.



THE NEW INDO

SUMBA, HOME TO THE BEST RESORT IN THE WORLD (AND ITS OWN PRIVATE WAVE).

In this hyperbolic world, labels like 'the best' no longer carry the gravitas they once did – everything is 'the best', 'the greatest', 'the most amazing'. Which is why, when something is genuinely incredible, it's hard to describe it as such without also arousing suspicion. But Nihi Sumba Island is the finest – there is no doubt.

Seldom are there times in life where you're totally relaxed, but this resort trades in these moments. Perched on the underbelly of the Indonesian island of Sumba, it's a 50-minute flight from the thoroughfare that is Bali's Denpasar and around 1000km from Broome, across the Indian Ocean.

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Bigger, and far less spoiled than Bali, Sumba's a stretch of paradise, boasting that rare specialty of not yet having been gobbled up by Western consumerism. The journey from airport to resort – reclining into the back of a blacked-out transfer, a freshly-cracked coconut and homemade granola bars wrapped in banana leaves at hand – reminds us of how simple life could (and should) be, rich in luscious greenery, colour and culture. Youngsters ride atop the roofs of passing vehicles; bananas and litre bottles of petrol line every hut; houses stand tall – their traditional high-pitched peaks a channel to the *marapu* (spirits). Life is a wealth of happy faces.

As you arrive at Nihi, the reality of the view below is hard to fathom. An uninterrupted coastline stretches forever into the distance, the blue of the ocean bleeding into the green tropical bush, a sliver of beach in between. And that's without even mentioning the endless clear sky. Down to the left, the resort is visible in neat, miniature form, its famous left-hand wave rolling in out front.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: THE BEACH CLUB POOL; ONE OF THE TREEHOUSE VILLAS; THE TREEHOUSE BALCONY; INSIDE THE HAWERI ESTATE; AERIAL VIEW OF SUMBA ISLAND.

CHASING BARRELS

... (SUCCESSFULLY) REQUIRES CUSTOM-MADE BOARDS

Like investing in a tailor-made suit, with more of an adrenaline rush. For our Nihi trip, Hayden Cox (of HaydenShapes) recommended and shaped us a 'Love Buzz'. As a performance surfboard, the design blends surface area, rocker and performance curves to create an all-round, fast and flowing short board, which complements our ability, weight and the waves we're chasing. It also has a flat entry rocker for easy paddling and plenty of speed down the line – perfect for Indonesian adventures. haydenshapes.com