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LUXURY WITH A MISSION

Beyond the world-class surfing and unspoiled natural beauty, *Karen Ting* discovers understated luxury with heart and soul at Nihiwatu in Indonesia

THE BUZZ An insider's best kept secret and a surfer's paradise, the award-winning Nihiwatu resort enjoyed relative anonymity until recently, when a change of ownership brought forth breakthroughs in terms of development and reputation. Since American entrepreneur Christopher Burch, who spends extended periods of time with his three sons at Nihiwatu, purchased the property from founders Claude and Petra Graves in 2013, the resort has started to generate increased media attention and attract those seeking an alternative luxury experience.

HOW IS IT SPECIAL? Located on the island of Sumba in Eastern Indonesia about an hour's flight from Bali, part of Nihiwatu's allure lies in its remote location, or what we city dwellers consider as inaccessibility. Unlike Bali, Sumba remains a sparsely populated island with breathtaking landscapes covering tropical forest, rice terraces, and waterfalls, and local village tribes that continue living in the same way as their ancestors. In other words, tourism is foreign to the locals thus making the experience all the more authentic and exotic.

As Nihiwatu's tag line "On the Edge of Wildness" aptly puts it, this is a resort where luxury is subtle, authentic and hard to pin point – there is nothing outwardly over the top or luxurious at the resort, rather it is the personal encounters and bespoke activities that sets Nihiwatu apart

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01 Bedroom with a view from the Marangga villa 02 Lunch at Nihioaka Tree House 03 The Sumba Foundation benefits local schoolchildren 04 Views from the cliffside bale at Marangga villa 05 Amazing views from the Nihioaka Bamboo Pavilion 06 Kanatar villa

besides its naturally beautiful setting. On the other hand, some may deem it too remote – the nearest local hospital is about a 40-minute drive away, and there is no telephone or television in your villa – but who needs modern-day trappings when you are surrounded by endless options from world class surfing and sport fishing to bird watching and many other water and outdoor activities.

LUXURY WITH A PURPOSE Founded by Claude Graves in 2001, the main focus of The Sumba Foundation is to alleviate the problems of poverty in Sumba and provide the local people with access to clean water by building wells (the number stood at around 60 at the time of my visit), fight against malnutrition and malaria eradication (Sumba has one of the highest occurrences of malaria in Asia).

On the second day of my stay, we hop on a jeep for 30-minutes and are dropped off at a school where lunch is being served to schoolchildren as part of the Foundation's School Lunch Program. It's humbling to see how a basic plate of rice, vegetables and scanty servings of sardines can make these children's eyes beam with joy and

gratitude. Nearby we visit a basic clinic equipped with a few telescopes and equipment; I learn that since the malaria prevention programme was introduced in 2004, it has reduced the number of cases by 85 percent.

Through a brief but impressionable visit, I am touched by the devotion from the team behind the Foundation and the philanthropic connection between Nihiwatu and the local communities. Profits from Nihiwatu will go to the Foundation once the resort starts generating them (projected for 2017/18). Presently, the majority of the Foundation's donations come from private individuals who have been or are guests at Nihiwatu, with owner Burch as the largest donor. The team at Nihiwatu is like an extended family; the service is swift and warm, and there is a personal touch that makes you feel like this is your second home. **17**



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