

REMOTE PLACES TO STAY

“*To move, to breathe, to fly, to float,
To gain all while you give,
To roam the roads of lands remote,
To travel is to live.*”

It was the whistling of the icy wind on top of the Kleine Scheidegg that made us feel remote. Since 1840, Hotel Bellevue des Alpes has been a refuge for travellers wanting to get away from it all. They had to make a considerable effort to get there, to achieve that feeling of remoteness. Once there, those guests, just like us, could settle into a warm and hospitable inn that would quickly make them forget about everyday life down there in the valley.

In the NamibRand it was the heat of the arid desert air that gave us a strong sense of remoteness. On Marathi it was the slow pace of life of a handful of Greek residents enjoying a secluded and simple existence. We quickly realised that Bhutan is the Kingdom of Remote, where the majestic Himalayas and strict rules keep the modern world at a distance. In the Alaskan wilderness, in our snug cabin at Ultima Thule Lodge, the idea of the only way out being by tiny bush plane brought a calming sense of remoteness. The black lava field outside Hotel Budir in Iceland was a palpable sign that urban life was far away. In Pension Briol's guest book, somebody once wrote: 'This is a gem of a small hotel, to which every city dweller will just long to return'. The comment dates from 1934.

The desire to feel remote, be remote and go off the grid has always been there. Accessible remoteness has become the new luxury. Pico Iyer once said: 'The fact is that you can only make sense of the world by stepping out of it now and then.' This esteemed writer and essayist also believes that something in most of us is crying out for a bigger perspective, a deeper wisdom, a stillness in the midst of all the exhilaration caused by movement and data.

The concept of remoteness is shaped by intense silence, solitude, space, emptiness, secret doors and pitch black, starry skies. These simple essentials can still be found, but only if you are ready to switch off and feel remote. In this book we present a carefully selected portfolio of 22 outposts where you can be remote, both in terms of longitude and latitude, and spiritually. This book is about the power of 'remote'.

DEBBIE PAPPYN & DAVID DE VLEESCHAUWER

The joy of remoteness

PICO IYER, ESSAYIST AND NOVELIST

The joy of travel has always involved getting away from it all, but never has the very notion of escape seemed quite as liberating as it does today. I remember stepping out of my room in a little motel on Easter Island—on the last day of the last millennium—and just walking across its empty lawns to where the sea crashed against black volcanic rocks. I could feel the stillness of the loneliest inhabited place on earth, with our nearest neighbours 1,300 miles away on Pitcairn Island (population 65). I think of the month I once spent in a modest, 11-room Tibetan guest-house in the foothills of the Himalayas, one of whose attractions was that the phones went dead even when the electricity (occasionally) stayed live. Even in modern Iceland, I have sat on a treeless hillside in mid-June, the sun not due to set for 2,400 hours, and heard the wind whistling in my ears as if calling me to an alternative dimension.

In an age of acceleration, nothing is so cherished as slowness. In an age of distraction, nothing can make us as happy as a feeling of absorption, of being lost in the scene around us. And in an age of fragmentation, nothing leaves us feeling richer—more ourselves—than lingering over a single point in a single place.

I'm not surprised that so many of my friends these days are perpetually on the lookout: not for hip hotels, or seven-star hotels, or boutique hotels in which each room is curated by a different artist, but simply for remote hotels—or guest-houses, or sanctuaries, or monasteries—where you can collect your thoughts and feel and hear the world around and inside you again. I remember the first time I drove up the one-lane coastal road three hours from my home to a Catholic hermitage a friend had recommended. I'm no Catholic—and not always a hermit—but as soon as I stepped into my small, but comfortable room, with its own private walled garden, and long picture windows looking out over the Pacific Ocean 1,200 feet below, surrounded by silence, I felt more restored than when I've stayed in some of the world's plushiest establishments.

A blue jay landed on my fence, and I was transfixed, all my senses awakened by the stillness. Every few hours, a bell tolled up above me, but I felt as though it was tolling inside me. I took walks after dark, and watched the red blinking lights of planes among more stars than I could begin to count. When I awoke, in the absence of beeping machines, the day seemed to stretch before me for a thousand hours.

It's not hard (or expensive) to go to the New Camaldoli hermitage in Big Sur, California, I tell friends—I've been back more than 60 times in the past 22 years, sometimes staying for as long as three weeks. But if circumstances don't allow you to do so, there will undoubtedly be somewhere offering remoteness very nearby, wherever you happen to be. I've stayed in retreat-houses in central Japan and Western Australia and just outside London; I've also relished unforgettable nights in a little guest-house next to the lofty rock-churches of Lalibela in Ethiopia, in the peace of a tiny island in Alaska, and even in a crowded Greek holiday spot above a remote taverna.

The more space you have around you, the more space you discover within yourself. The less you have in the room, the more you have to bring to others. And the fewer worries you have, the wealthier you feel, in the deepest sense.

Years ago, I noticed something interesting. Whenever I took myself to a remote hotel, there were a thousand reasons not to go. I felt guilty about not spending the time with my mother, my bosses were emailing me with reminders of a hundred pressing deadlines, and I would miss my old friend's birthday party. As soon as I arrived, though, I wondered what I could have been thinking: it was only by taking myself to a place of clarity and seclusion that I could begin to muster anything joyous, generous and refreshed to bring back to my mother, my bosses or my friend. Remoteness offers us the greatest reward of all: reminding us of what we care about, deep down, and showing us how and where to find it.

places to stay

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BOTSWANA

**JACK'S
CAMP**

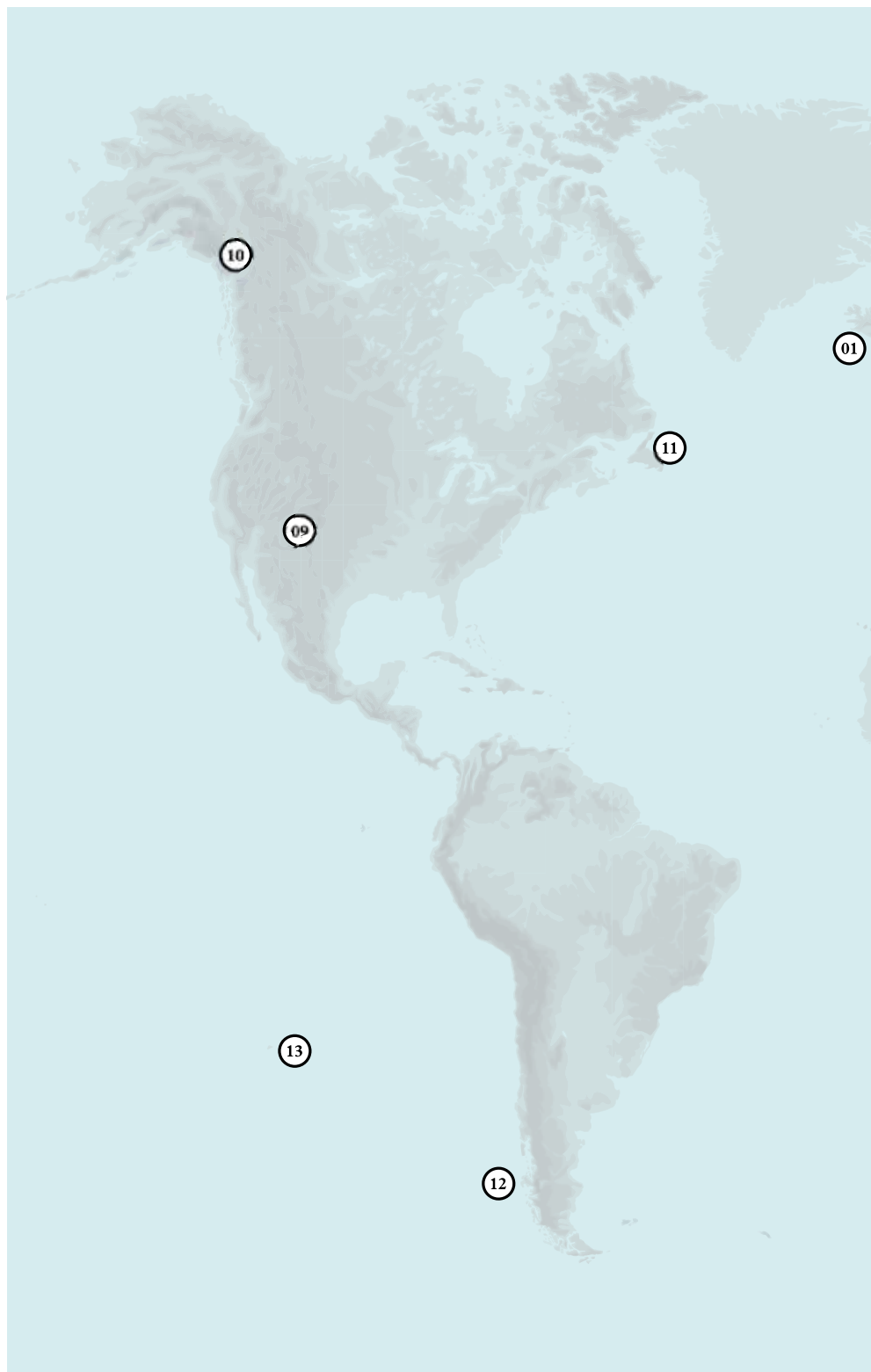
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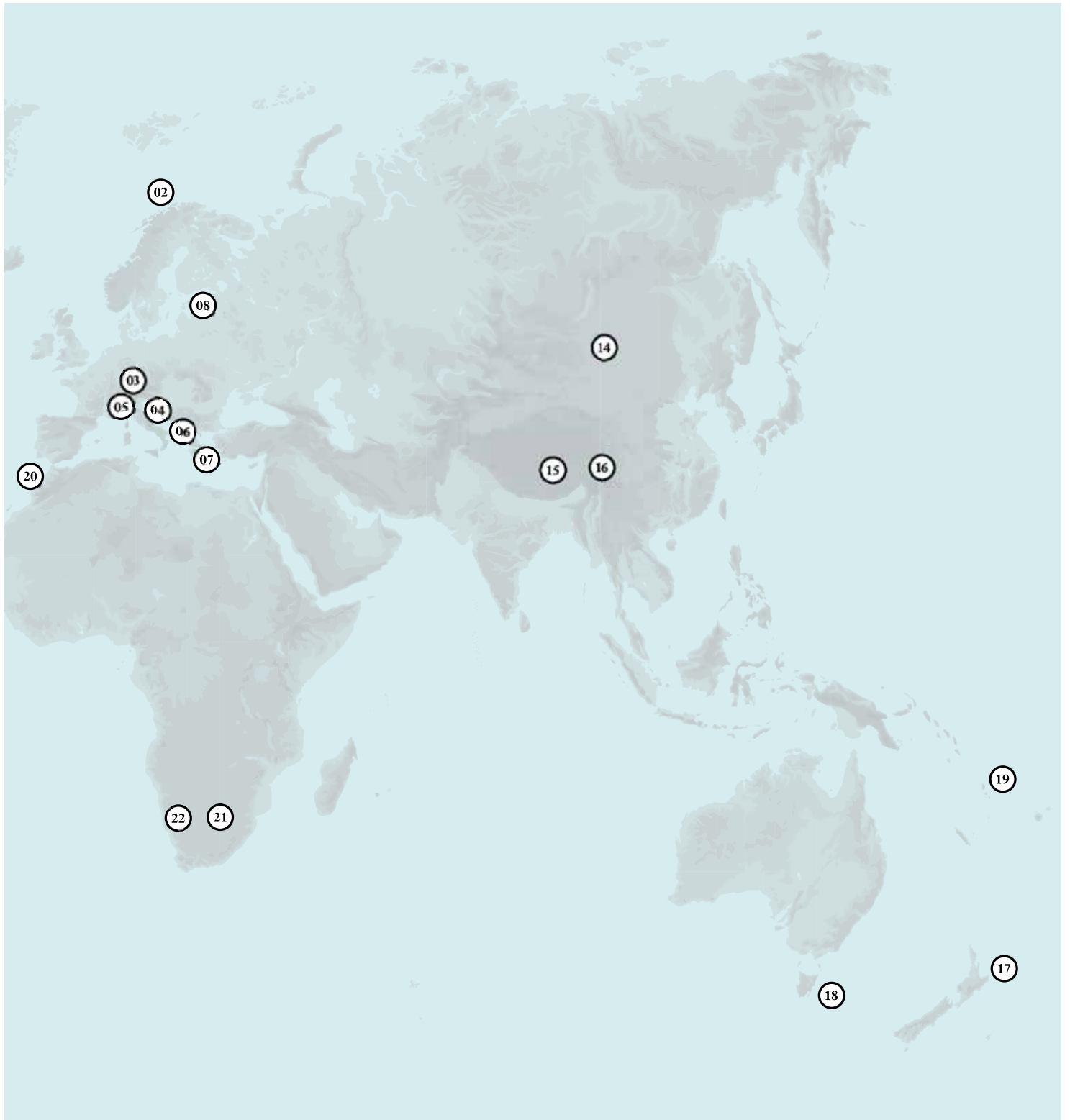
NAMIBRAND NATURE
RESERVE, NAMIBIA

WOLWEDANS

\$ AFFORDABLE REMOTENESS
\$\$ REMOTENESS WITH
A TOUCH OF CLASS
\$\$\$ SOPHISTICATED REMOTENESS
\$\$\$\$ EXCLUSIVE REMOTENESS

- | | | | |
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Hotel Budir

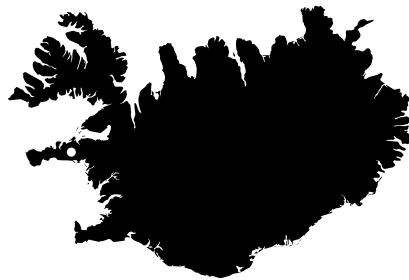
Snaefellsnes Iceland

SNAEFELLSNES — ICELAND

HOTEL BUDIR

01

ELEGANT AND ROMANTIC



N 64°49'15''
W 23°23'17''

ARCHITECT

Kári Eiríksson







top
The west coast of Iceland is characterised by the rugged landscape, dotted with quiet and isolated villages.

right
An archetypal Icelandic chapel, as intensely black as the lava fields that surround and protect it.



HOTEL BUDIR

SNAEFELLSNES
ICELAND

CLIMATE
IN JULY AVERAGE
BETWEEN 10°C (50°F)
AND 15°C (60°F)

IN JANUARY AVERAGE
BETWEEN -2°C (28°F)
AND 2°C (36°F)

AIRPORT
KEFLAVIK
220 KM

PRICE RANGE
\$

ROOMS
38 ROOMS

THE PLACE With the Atlantic literally a few metres away, Hotel Budir is perhaps the only real beachfront hotel in Iceland. It lies next to a lava field, with views over the Snaefellsnes glacier, and on a summer's evening – when fires are lit on the beach and guests go swimming – it's a surreal place. The Snaefellsnes peninsula in West Iceland is a rustic idyll with a handful of farms, villages and small churches scattered across this vast landscape. The hotel takes its name from the nearby Budir estuary, which wends its way down to Faxaflói bay, where a harem of seals live and play.

THE STORY The story of Hotel Budir began in 1947, when the Snaefellsnes and Hnappdalur Residents Association opened it as a venue for members to gather during summer. It functioned as a place to eat, drink, relax and generally make merry, which they did. At the extremely popular 'Budir Meets' in the original hotel the gramophone would play late into the night and the dance floor was always full. Sadly, in 2001, the hotel burned down in a fire caused by an electrical fault (fortunately no one was injured). It didn't take long for the owners to decide it was worth rebuilding and the new Hotel Budir opened in 2003. Although now owned by an Icelandic businessman, the hotel is still managed by a dedicated team who have worked there for years. The same goes for the guests, many are loyal regulars who see Hotel Budir as a place of retreat and make annual return visits.

ACCOMMODATION While the lunar-esque environment feels like another planet, the hotel is about making you feel right at home. Large windows make it possible to take in the natural beauty of the surroundings from the comfort of the lounge, where a fire blazes merrily in the hearth. The terrace opens for the summer months when bonfire parties take place on the beach directly in front of the hotel. The bedrooms are spread throughout the building, and a firm favourite is number 28: an attic room with a balcony overlooking the ocean. It also has a skylight, and in winter (if you are lucky) you may catch a glimpse of the Northern Lights. In the library there's a hefty but remarkable tome entitled *Dyraríki Islands teiknao* by Benedikt Gröndal. At the end of the 19th century, this Icelandic author captured the rich diversity of his country's wildlife in his drawings and this book is number 329 of a limited edition of 1,500, published in his honour.

ON THE MENU The bar has a friendly atmosphere and an Icelandic barman with up-to-the-minute knowledge of current trends in alcoholic beverages. After a full day out hotel guests gravitate towards the cosy restaurant where delicious, regional dishes are made using local produce – even the vegetable oil is sourced directly from the farm. Breakfast is an unpretentious affair consisting of marinated salmon, herring, Icelandic flatbread and *rúgbrauð* (a dark, slightly sweet rye bread) served with locally-made jams – simple but certainly hearty enough to set you up for a day's trek through the rugged Icelandic scenery.

MUST-DO The Snaefellsnes region has an incredibly diverse landscape that is worth exploring – volcanoes, craters, glaciers and a seemingly never-ending coastline. Don't miss walking across the lava field (it's right next to the hotel after all). And other exciting seasonal activities include whale spotting, ocean fishing, or exploring inland volcanoes by jeep.

www.hotelbudir.is



Hotel Budir

Snaefellsnes Iceland



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