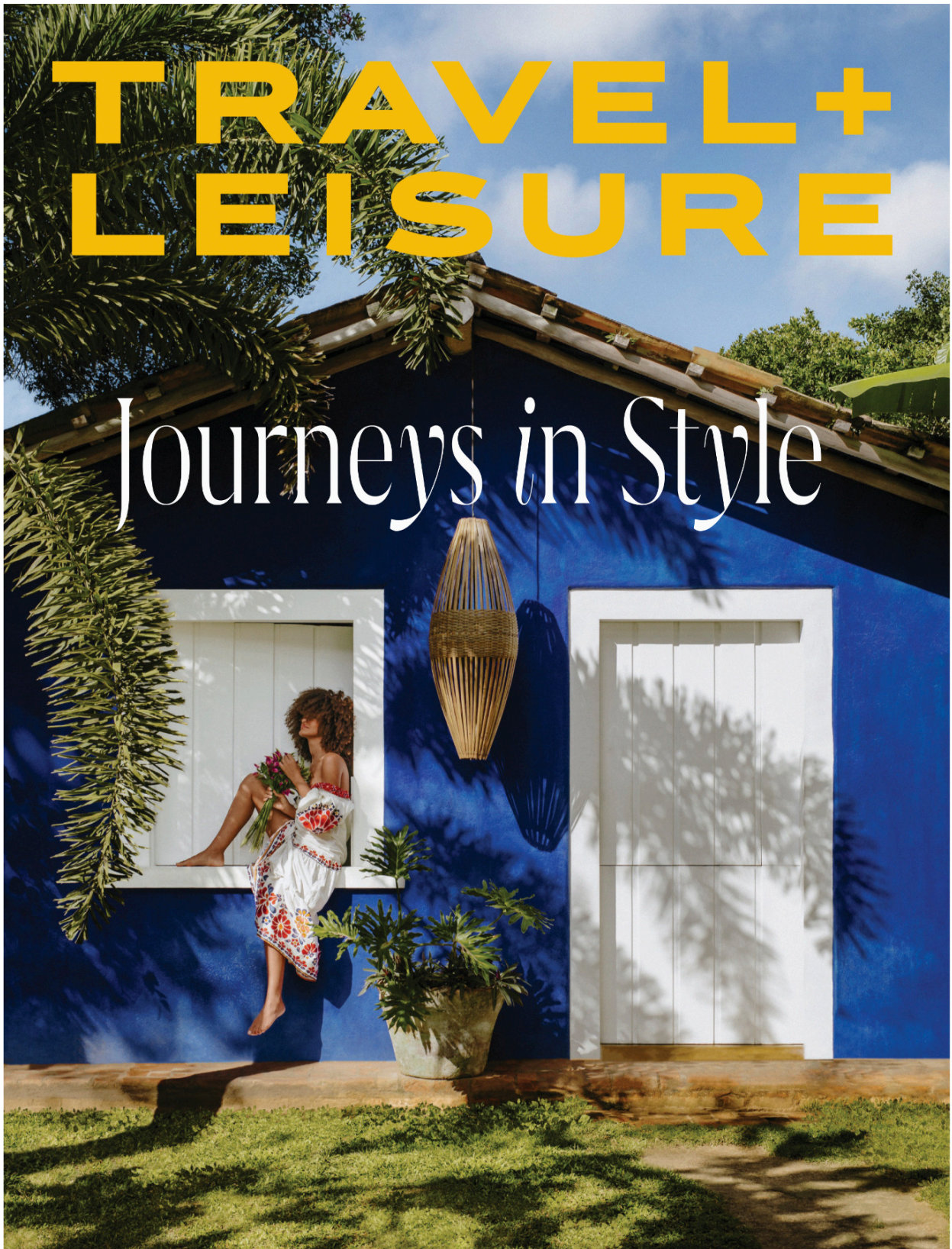


# TRAVEL+ LEISURE

*Journeys in Style*







## Tracking That Trophy Bottle

The latest safari must-have for the one percent is elusive (and expensive) wine they can't try anywhere else. By Hannah Selinger



▲ A bush picnic for guests of Xigera Safari Lodge, in Botswana.

▲ Pouring a Bordeaux-style South African red at Kenya's Angama Mara.

FOR MOST PEOPLE, it would be the trip of a lifetime. The 40-person wedding party was going on a no-expense-spared safari, complete with a full buyout of Singita's **Sasakwa Lodge** (*doubles from \$2,730 per person, all-inclusive*), a manor-house-style property overlooking the plains of the Grumeti Game Reserve, near Tanzania's Serengeti National Park. While wildlife watching was certainly on the agenda, says **Mark Lakin**, the safari expert and member of T+L's Travel Advisory Board who helped orchestrate the blowout, these clients were also looking for some of the best wine on the continent. They'd specifically requested Sasakwa because of its well-stocked cellar—and Singita's growing reputation for sourcing hard-to-find labels.

"You would never have seen that kind of request ten years ago, where the client is asking about the wine in Tanzania and that being a big part of the draw," explains **Lakin, founder of the Legacy Untold**. "But I'm seeing it more and more."

Singita, which has 15 lodges and tented camps in four African countries, has spent years amassing a trove of wines that today is rumored to top 250,000 bottles. "It's all driven by the guests' interest," explains Francois Rautenbach, general manager of the Singita Premier Wine Direct program, which purchases, cellars, and delivers top-quality labels to remote outposts.

Other operators are also responding to the demand, says Allister Kreft, the CEO of Under the Influence, a firm that supplies high-end wine to leading safari companies. "People are willing to explore wine more," Kreft observes. Recently, his firm worked with **Angama Mara** (*doubles from \$2,275 per person, all-inclusive*), a 30-room safari lodge in Kenya, to develop a new wine list that focuses on African

bottlings and also to help educate staff on the finer points of the labels on offer. "The wines guests find here are going to be different from the ones they have at home," says Adlight Muhambi, one of Angama's butlers, who has become the property's unofficial sommelier.

Great Plains Conservation has also put more emphasis on wine, particularly at its Kenya properties, including the six-suite **Mara Plains Camp** (*doubles from \$2,540 per person, all-inclusive*). "We're very conscious of supporting winemakers that also fund conservation efforts, for example, Painted Wolf Wines from South Africa," says Savanna McKittrick, a camp operations and guest relations manager for Great Plains. "Some of these are imported just for us, so it's almost like private label."

Rarities can also be found at the 13-suite **Xigera Safari Lodge** (*doubles from \$4,487 per person, all-inclusive*), in Botswana's Okavango Delta. Numerous high-end wines are included in the rate and available 24/7, says Stefan Otto, Xigera's food and beverage consultant. "If you want to drink Lanson Le Rosé at six o'clock in the morning, you can," he says. Oenophiles can also splurge on reserve wines that aren't included in the rate, such as Dom Pérignon; verticals of Château Margaux, one of the famed *premiers crus*; or a 1998 Château Pétrus, from Bordeaux's right bank.