

# Letter from the Editor



Jacqui and her son, Bobby, outside Moshions, a boutique in Kigali, Rwanda.

## FROM MY TRAVELS

In Kigali, another don't-miss is **Nyurah** (entrées \$15–\$19), a contemporary restaurant set in a somewhat nondescript office building. The dishes, however, were sublime: crayfish soup, alongside calamari tempura with red pepper purée, hit the spot after a long day of touring. (For more on the emerging creative scene in the city, turn to page 22.)

Back in New York City, I had another memorable meal at Angie Mar's new venture, **Le B** (entrées \$54–\$210), a snug West Village spot with deep blue walls offset by crisp white tablecloths.

It's a date-night place, for sure: get the jasmine-tea-smoked duckling and the steak angeline.

On a quick trip to Los Angeles, I checked in to the **Peninsula Beverly Hills** (doubles from \$1,335), my personal favorite because it feels more like an exclusive villa than a hotel, with staff who have been there for years. All 13 Peninsula hotels now offer a flexible check-in time, so your room can be ready as early as 6 a.m. and available as late as 10 p.m. Nothing better than enjoying the pool or spa for a few extra hours—am I right?

**W**HEN PLANNING a go-big-or-go-home trip, it always helps to phone a friend. Mark Lakin, founder of the Legacy Untold and one of T+L's trusted A-List advisors, has crafted countless trips to Rwanda, a destination I had been eyeing for some time. He assured me that a family trip there, though unusual, was possible. We could spot the Big Five in Akagera National Park, and though my eight-year-old son, Bobby, would not be able to go on a strenuous trek to see gorillas, a day at the Ellen DeGeneres Campus of the Dian Fossey Gorilla Fund—a playful, interactive research center near

Volcanoes National Park—would make a great alternative.

The two-week itinerary Mark put together from personal experience brought us right to the heart of the place. In Kigali, we tried on fun outfits with Moses Turahirwa, founder of Moshions, a fashion label known for its bold, drapery shirts, and watched Sarah Legrand, the artisan behind K'tsobe, a sculptural jewelry line, at work. At the 20-room **Retreat by Heaven** (doubles from \$550), we fell into relaxed conversation with owner Alissa Ruxin by the shaded pool, learning how she and her husband, Josh, moved to Rwanda after the genocide and opened a restaurant, hotel, hospitality training center, and yet another hotel, with passion and intuition to guide them. Mark had told me I would find a home away from home there—and he was 100 percent right.

Trips planned by a seasoned pro can often lead you to small, soulful properties like the Retreat, or our cover star: **Villa Mabrouka** (doubles from \$350), Yves Saint Laurent's former oasis in Tangier, Morocco, now reimaged as a 12-room hotel by Jasper Conran. Staying in places with lots of personality and zero pretension is one of my travel goals for the year—along with fully embracing the “phone a friend” philosophy. The joy of working with experts is that they've been there, done that, and you can ask them, *Is it right for me?* The Access Issue provides our annual editor-vetted list of the world's top travel specialists, beginning on page 25. All you have to do is make the call.

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Left: Bobby plays chess in the lobby of the Retreat, a hotel in Kigali. Below: Jacqui's husband, Rob, and Bobby take the plunge in the Retreat's saltwater pool.



FROM TOP: ATIMABLE MUTABARUKA; COURTESY OF JACQUELINE GIFFORD; ATIMABLE MUTABARUKA. ILLUSTRATION BY BASHIEL LUBARSKY