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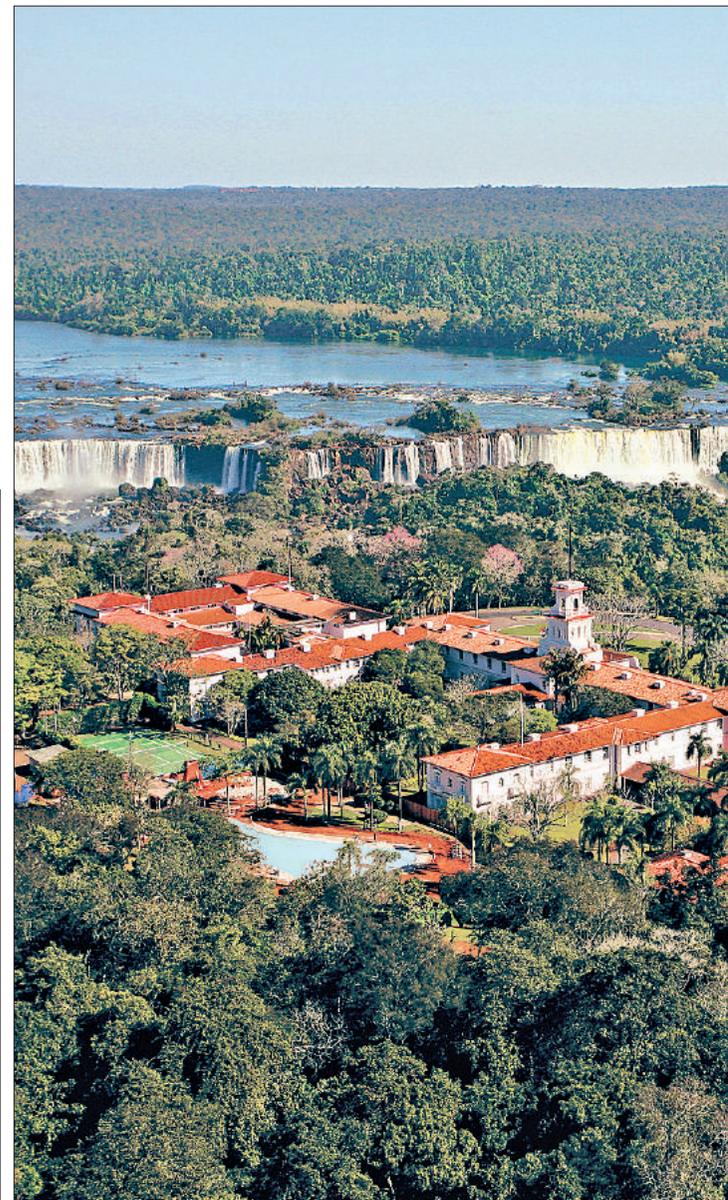
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Latin leaps and bounds

Investment in Latin America is producing a raft of tempting luxury experiences that should keep even the most discerning of travellers happy, reveals **Angela Cronin**

Ever since Anouska Hempel set her sights on Brazil, waving her designer wand over the exclusive Warapuru resort, travel pundits have been touting the destination as “the new Caribbean”. Three years on from the opening of Warapuru, tucked away in a rainforest above the coast in Itacaré, southern Bahia, the Brazilian tourism boom shows no sign of abating.

And there is nothing like a major sporting event to spur serious investment in infrastructure, so imagine the buzz of activity in Rio de Janeiro following the city's



5-STAR OFFER

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Jordan's Red Sea Offer

A special tariff for a new 5-star hotel at Tala Bay on Jordan's Red Sea coast

7 nights from only £677

Utilising our exclusive and convenient direct day flight to Aqaba, the only one from the UK and staying in the new marina and coastal resort of Tala Bay, located away from the busier Aqaba town centre. Offering fine hotels, shops and cafés, it lies about 20 minutes' drive from Aqaba centre and boasts fine beaches with easy access to the coral reef for snorkellers or divers. It is well situated for excursions to Petra, Wadi Rum and the Dead Sea.

Mövenpick Tala Bay

A new 5-star hotel with restaurants, bars, pools (heated), jacuzzi, spa, shop, private beach and shuttle bus to Aqaba. 451 air-conditioned rooms with private facilities, hairdryer, safe, mini-bar (complimentary soft drinks), tea/coffee making facilities, satellite TV and balcony/terrace. Facilities at the Mövenpick Resort Aqaba can be used.



Itinerary

Day 1 Fly from London Gatwick to Aqaba. Transfer to the newly opened 5-star Mövenpick Tala Bay for seven nights. **Day 2** An optional afternoon tour of Aqaba includes Aqaba Fort, Museum, the archaeological site of old Aqaba 'Ayla', Aquarium and sunset cruise on a sailing ship with local entertainment (£47). **Day 3** Optional full-day guided visit to the Nabataean city of



Petra. Walk through the 'Siq' to the Treasury, Street of Façades, Theatre, Royal Tombs, Colonnaded Street, Byzantine Church, the Temple and Monumental Arch (£86/Nov-£95). **Day 4** Optional afternoon trip to Wadi Rum includes a 90-minute Bedouin jeep drive and dinner in a Bedouin tent with local musicians (£66). **Day 5** Optional full-day to the Dead Sea via the Wadi Araba Road. Entrance fees, towels and lunch at the Mövenpick Resort Dead Sea are included (£62). **Day 6** Optional Red Sea cruise to Pharaoh's Island including barbecue lunch, tour of the fort and the option to snorkel (£41). **Day 7** At leisure. **Day 8** Optional morning excursion on the 'Yellow Submarine', a 'see-through' semi-submersible viewing the marine splendours (£29). Return flight.

Departures & Prices

per person in a twin room – Monarch Airlines from Gatwick

2010 – Tuesdays

Oct 26	£747	Nov 9, 16..	£697
Nov 2.....	£727	Nov 23	£677

Supplements per person

Single supplement.....	£145	Extra legroom (return).....	£80
Half board.....	£195	Gatwick Lounge access	£17
Extra week.....	£245		

Price includes: Air travel, UK departure taxes, visa procurement†, transfers, 7 nights' accommodation, breakfast daily, itinerary as described, services of guides and local representatives. †Jordanian visa formalities for British passport holders will be arranged by Voyages Jules Verne.

For more information on this tour and other arrangements, please call or visit our award-winning website

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successful 2016 Olympic bid. Brazil will also host the Fifa World Cup in 2014. The Brazilian government is ploughing £1.7 billion into infrastructure improvements, while South American airline TAM has got in early on the act with the launch in August of a thrice-weekly service from Heathrow to Rio, offering the only first-class cabin from the UK to South America.

The biggest boom is expected in accommodation. While the mayor of Rio sifts through the 21 applications he has already received for new hotels by 2014, a number of luxury properties are opening their doors in regions across Brazil over the next few months. One of these is the 193-room Hotel das Cataratas at Iguacu Falls, in a Portuguese colonial-style building, which has recently

undergone a stylish Orient-Express makeover following the group's acquisition of the property. The only hotel in Iguacu National Park, it offers guests exclusive access to the falls, both in the evening, and at dawn, when the park is closed to the public, along with the services of the property's own biologist who can arrange nature walks.

For the more adventurous, helicopter rides over the falls, abseiling, rafting, trekking and rock climbing are available, but if that all sounds like too much effort, the hotel also has a rainforest-inspired spa.

This November sees the opening of an exclusive beach hideaway on Brazil's northeastern coast. Close to the village of Pipa, famous among surfers the world over for its miles of sparsely populated, golden sandy beaches and the “right” type



Achingly chic Fasano Hotels, which has properties in São Paulo and Rio, is venturing out of Brazil for the first time with the opening of a new hotel next summer in the upmarket Punta del Este region of Uruguay. A luxurious take on the area's ranches, the 480-hectare beach-and-countryside development combines private homes, a boutique hotel and 205 villas with amenities, including an equestrian centre and polo

and golf fields, along with a spa, private beach and marina.

Along the coast from Punta del Este is the bohemian village of José Ignacio, home to the Playa Vik José Ignacio luxury resort – a must for lovers of art and architecture. The property only has six “casas”, or houses, built around a central “sculpture” building that features a collection of art works.

In the west of the continent, in Ecuador, the much-anticipated Mashpi Lodge is due to open in the cloud forest of Mindo this month. The hotel is designed to

accommodate 36 guests in 18 suites with floor-to-ceiling picture windows. To add to the authenticity of the jungle experience, the lodge will also have a cable car running through the upper canopy of trees, a butterfly vivarium, a serpentarium, a tree nursery and an interpretation centre where guests can interact with local residents.

While the ink dries on the contracts for new hotels in Rio, now is the perfect time to sample the abundance of fabulous luxury holiday experiences that Latin America already has to offer.

Way to go

Audley Travel offers an 11-day Argentina and Brazil: Cities and Waterfalls tour, with departures throughout 2010 and 2011.

From £1,815pp, including flights, accommodation and some tours. (01993 8386 10; www.audleytravel.com)

Exsus Travel offers an 11-day Peru Explorer tour, with regular departures year-round. **From £3,059pp**, including flights, transfers, accommodation and most meals and activities. (020 7337 9010; www.exsus.com)

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The bohemian village of José Ignacio is home to the new Playa Vik resort – a must for lovers of art and architecture



Stunning settings: clockwise from left, dining area at Fasano Las Piedras, Punta del Este; Playa Vik José Ignacio; Hotel das Cataratas, Iguazú Falls; Rio de Janeiro

of waves, Natal Ocean Club will be the first luxury resort in this area. Constructed using a combination of tropical hardwoods, with an eco-friendly design that focuses on open, spacious living, it certainly makes the most of its dramatic ocean views.

Villa companies are also getting in on the act. New to the UK pool is the Brazilian Beach House Company, which offers fully staffed properties in highly sought-after, retreat-like locations on the coast.

The houses are divided into five categories whose names reflect their character – beach cowboys, city surfers, film stars and villains, flip-flop luxury and Robinson Crusoe – and they come with a range of push-the-boat-out extras, ranging from floodlit football pitches, helipads and speedboats to English-speaking staff who

can turn their hand to pretty much anything.

Most visitors to Brazil will want to explore the Amazon, and those keen to explore remoter areas of the river – from the safety of a luxury expedition ship – can board the Aria. This cruiser, boasting the comfort of a five-star hotel, will have 16 cabins, all with floor-to-ceiling windows, and a 24-strong crew including four expert nature guides.

Also cruising South American waters by the end of next year will be the 100-cabin Stella Australis, navigating the Patagonian waterways between Punta Arenas and Ushuaia. Looked after by a multilingual expedition team, guests will be treated to daily excursions in Zodiac boats and offered expert insight into the natural surroundings.



Luxury and style.

Jumeirah Carlton Tower in the heart of Knightsbridge.

Synonymous with luxury, and enjoying spectacular London skyline views, the Jumeirah Carlton Tower is only a short walk to London's most exclusive boutiques and prestigious department stores.

The hotel's three restaurants offer an abundant selection of mouth-watering cuisine while guests can also enjoy the exclusive Peak Health Club & Spa, offering a fully equipped gym, a state-of-the-art golf simulator, aerobics studio, sauna, steam room, award-winning Spa and 20 metre heated indoor pool.

Well appointed rooms and suites provide luxurious accommodation, including the spectacular Royal Suite which unashamedly delivers the very best in living and relaxation space

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