

Disconnect / Reconnect

You don't always have to leave the mainland
to experience the isolation of island living

Words by **RAE BOOOCK**

Secluded. Remote. Tranquil. Islands are often hailed as the ultimate escape. Yet it doesn't need repeating that a geographical location doesn't always dictate our mentality – and a life-altering, clandestine retreat needn't always be surrounded by an expanse of water.

“Fewer possessions, more experiences,” says Sina Murphy Chan, the co-founder of Off Grid Hideaways. It was while juggling the demands of a fast-paced career and raising a young family that this businesswoman realised that she needed to take stock. Brought together with the interior designer Flavia Kämpf Spahr by shared passions for travel, design and yoga, the pair have curated wild getaways that invite worn-out visitors to press pause on their hectic world.

Whether a reclaimed fishing hut nestled in a nature reserve or a contemporary cabin in the foothills of the Rockies, each Off Grid Hideaway combines a low-impact ethos with high-impact design. This is luxury, redefined. Style, sustainability and serenity form a holy trinity in every location. Guests are encouraged to adjust to a slower pace of life, to embrace the quiet season and to disconnect – the essential precursor to reconnecting. The digital detox reigns supreme. High-tech gadgets are out and creature comforts – coffee machines, toasters and binoculars – are in. Even the oh-so-sacred wifi is often only available on request.

“Off Grid Hideaways strip away the noise,” Sina continues. “These are escapes for people who want to break free from daily life. It's a chance to connect with what really matters.” ▶▶





LAS TRANCAS, CHILE

LOCATION: 36°54'28.4"S, 71°29'48.6"W

Best for: explosive scenery

With a backdrop of Andean foothills and the Valle Las Trancas at its feet, this remarkable mountain refuge is a fine example of modern alpine architecture. The timber-clad hideaway seemingly floats over the forest floor, offering an eagle-eyed view of snow-capped volcanoes. Within, the retreat takes guests back to nature with hand-hewn furniture and vintage pieces sourced from the owner's travels. Ski, ride along mountain-bike trails and explore a forest teeming with fauna before sinking down by the wood-burning stove to share tales of trails conquered.

TANGALLE I AND II, SRI LANKA

LOCATION: 5°59'23"N, 80°44'41"E

Best for: tropical tranquillity

With unrivalled views over Mawella Beach, a pristine stretch along Sri Lanka's unspoiled south-eastern coast, these former fishermen's houses are a tropical oasis. Lush jungle creeps down to dip its toes in the bay's languid waters, where candy-coloured catamarans bob and dip on their daily fishing forays. In the wake of the 2004 tsunami, these light and airy terracotta-roofed shelters were rebuilt in a way that is stylish and respects the environment. Tangalle is home to temples that are only a tuk-tuk ride away as well as some of the coast's best surf breaks.

ALENTEJO, PORTUGAL

LOCATION: 38°43'50"N, 8°08'53"W

Best for: the simple life

Nestled among rolling pastures studded with oak trees, this timeless farmhouse offers a contemporary reimagining of traditional Alentejan culture. It's all seamless white walls, warm clay flooring, graceful arches and natural textiles. Outside, a sloped-shore infinity pool mirrors the endless sky. Lakes, trees and wildlife are your only neighbours – you won't see another soul for miles. Saddle up for sunset horse rides and fish for your own supper before dining under a canopy of stars. Life here is lived by the rhythm of the seasons, not the ticking of the seconds.

COLORADO, USA

LOCATION: 40°31'52"N, 105°14'53"W

Best for: environmental design

This contemporary cabin offers a masterclass in low-impact living. Peering out over high plains, pine forests and the Rocky Mountains, the building is constructed from only organic, reclaimed and recyclable materials. Its stripped-back interiors of untreated wood, tiles and steel allow the great outdoors to take centre stage. Spot rare wildlife, hike the ridgetops and ride the white-water rapids. As dusk falls, press pause and settle in as you dine on locally grown produce and chat to your host, the architectural expert Andrew Michler, over a craft beer.



VEGA ISLAND, NORWAY

LOCATION: 65°36'20"N, 11°50'20"E

Best for: channelling your inner Viking

Appearing to sprout from the rocks themselves, a fisherman's cottage stands in the footprints of the hardy hunter-gatherers who have inhabited this remote island for millennia. Its pine cladding is camouflage among the shore's wind-blasted trees. Inside, open-plan Scandi interiors are illuminated by light flooding in through picture windows that gaze out over rugged mountains. Kayak among the coves nearby as wildflowers bloom in the warmer months. Come winter, when many islanders shut up shop, feed your soul by the warmth of the hearth.

COMPORTA, PORTUGAL

LOCATION: 38°24'24"N, 8°45'49"W

Best for: an antidote to modern life

Set among rice paddies, sand dunes and fishing wharves, these rustic wooden cabins are like a reset button for the soul. Constructed out of raw, reclaimed timber, they offer a chance to forge a connection with nature. The back-to-basics interiors here inspire sensory calm. Take an open-air shower as you look out over the waterways threading through the Sado Estuary. In summer, nearby Comporta thrums with bohemian life. Mild winters set the scene for evenings savouring fresh fish and local vinho verde as the sun dips below the horizon.



For more information visit offgridhideaways.com