

VANITY FAIR

HOLLYWOOD 2010

ON TRAVEL

*"Luxury lies not in richness and opulence
but in the absence of vulgarity"*
—GORE CHANDLER



INDIA

the princely pavilions of
RAJASTHAN
By VICTORIA MATHIEU

ETHIOPIA

Praises sing to its miraculous
ROCK CHURCHES
By ADAM HARTLEY



— THE —
FIVE-STAR ECO-WARRIOR

SONU SHIVDASANI

Eco-consciousness and posh resort hotels did not go together until Sonu Shivdasani, Indian contemporary of David Cameron at Eton and Oxford, became the Robinson Crusoe of the Maldives. In 1995 he and his wife Eva, a Swedish model-turned-designer whom he met on his sister's yacht in Monte Carlo, built a house on the island of Kunfunadhoo, which became Soneva Fushi, paradise idyll for the likes of Richard Curtis and Emma Freud. "No Shoes, No News" was the mantra for the guests: wealthy global citizens who lived urban, hectic air-conditioned lives and wanted to feel the sand between their toes. Shivdasani talked up intelligent luxury, which he defined as connecting with nature, sustainability and good health. He rightly pinpointed that the rich used to be landed rural for whom formal-grand was a treat; now they are city dwellers for whom informal chillaxing is nirvana. He's also tapped into eco-guilt: a small guest levy has produced \$6million for his SLOWLIFE (Sustainable Local Organic Wellness Learning Inspired Fun Experiences) Foundation, which has provided 500,000 trees in northern Thailand and cooking stoves in Myanmar and Darfur. That offsets the air miles, then. After the Sonevas came his Six Senses spa brand and the Evason Resorts, now sold—so Fushi, Soneva Kiri and the upcoming Soneva Jani, bristling with solar power and Mr or Ms Friday butlers, are Shivdasani's core properties. He's reinvented camping for the spoilt.

Photographed by Richard Young at Soneva Fushi in the Maldives on November 24, 2015

