Lanterns glow, the water in the pool - designed like an old step - well reflects the rising moon and then, as dusk deepens, its stars and bars.

Patagonia
Are we at the end of the world yet?

By Peter Hughes

Oman
Get your fill of the empty quarter

By Jhumpa Lahiri

Capri
When the wrong time of year
Is the right time to go

By Alice B-B

Play it again
The scarlet grand piano in the centre of the atrium in the Oberoi Mumbai is a Vijay musical form, a symbol of renewal after the terrorist attacks. Rooms, many overlooking the bay of the Queen's Necklace, are contemporary and super-chic and you'll find your own grand piano in red chocolate-waiting for you on your desk.

Cyury on camping
There was nowhere to stay in Jaisalmer, the golden city of sand fast diminishing, like a sandcastle, into the desert from which it was built. Well, there was the Fort Rajpura, where they used to spell out “Welcome Victoria Muller” in elephants in the hall. Now there's the Serai tented camp, and it's dreamy. Jaisal and Ajit Singh, who turned their Sher Bagh Camp from quickly-churning to sexy-smart, have excelled. Lanterns glow, the water in the pool-designed like an old step-well reflects the rising moon and then, as dusk deepens, its stars and bars. Drinks are set up under the night sky, dinner is around the campfire. All 21 tents have drawing rooms, some have private walled gardens and pools. The spa uses chemical-free herbs and spices.

Gem of a setting
Devi Ratn, named for the nine gems said to focus cosmic energy, is an explosion of colour: ruby-red, sapphire-blue, emerald-green. It celebrates the Pink City’s craftsmanship with architecture deploying mirror-work, anlay and hammered metal. When the Peddar family opened Devi Garh, near Udaipur, there was an audible groan from traditionalists who preferred the heritage hotels where switching on the light often means it falls off the wall. If Elizabeth Hurley wore a hat, she’d be Devi Garh (and has already stayed there). Love Devi Ratn or loathe it, but realise that India cannot be kept as a preserve of quaint crumbling palaces to indulge our nostalgia. It’s made for the bling and the bold, and Rani is a magical, contemporary statement.

So well-trained
Luxury trains in India are on the fast track. Fabulous service, you don’t have to pack and unpack. WiFi, plasma screens, spa cars. Forget the old Palace on Wheels (tired and dowdy), take the Maharajas’ Express from Delhi, the Deccan Odyssey from Mumbai or the Golden Chariot from Bangalore.

The Maharajas’ Express All aboard the red train with gold stars. Agra champagne with the sunset at the Taj Mahal; a moonlight elephant-polo match in Jaipur; a camel cart ride to dinner, like a pop-up restaurant, in the desert at Bikaner; fireworks at the Mehrangarh Fort in Jodhpur. The horror of trains is rattling along in a tube, having to wind up showers, a la boarding school, with a sticky funnel. Here the suites have baths and showers, a sitting room, proper double beds, subliminal staff.

The Dream Odyssey The blue train that enables visits to the monumental forts of Sindhudurg and Daulatabad, the Ellora and Ajanta Caves (shades of E.M. Forster), Gandhi’s ashram in Sevagram and God’s beaches (over-praised) and markets. And all the while you have the spa car and the on-board steam bath.

The Golden Chariot Karnataka on the pink train that travels to 14th-century Hampi (beaucoup ruins and no decent hotel within hitting distance), Kabin for the wildlife, Mysore’s market, a still life of vivid spices. Bandipur in the Nagna Hills and Tipu Sultan’s island fortress of Srirangapatna. The interior of the train is reminiscent of Buckingham Palace.

The swimming pool at Serai Tented Camp.