

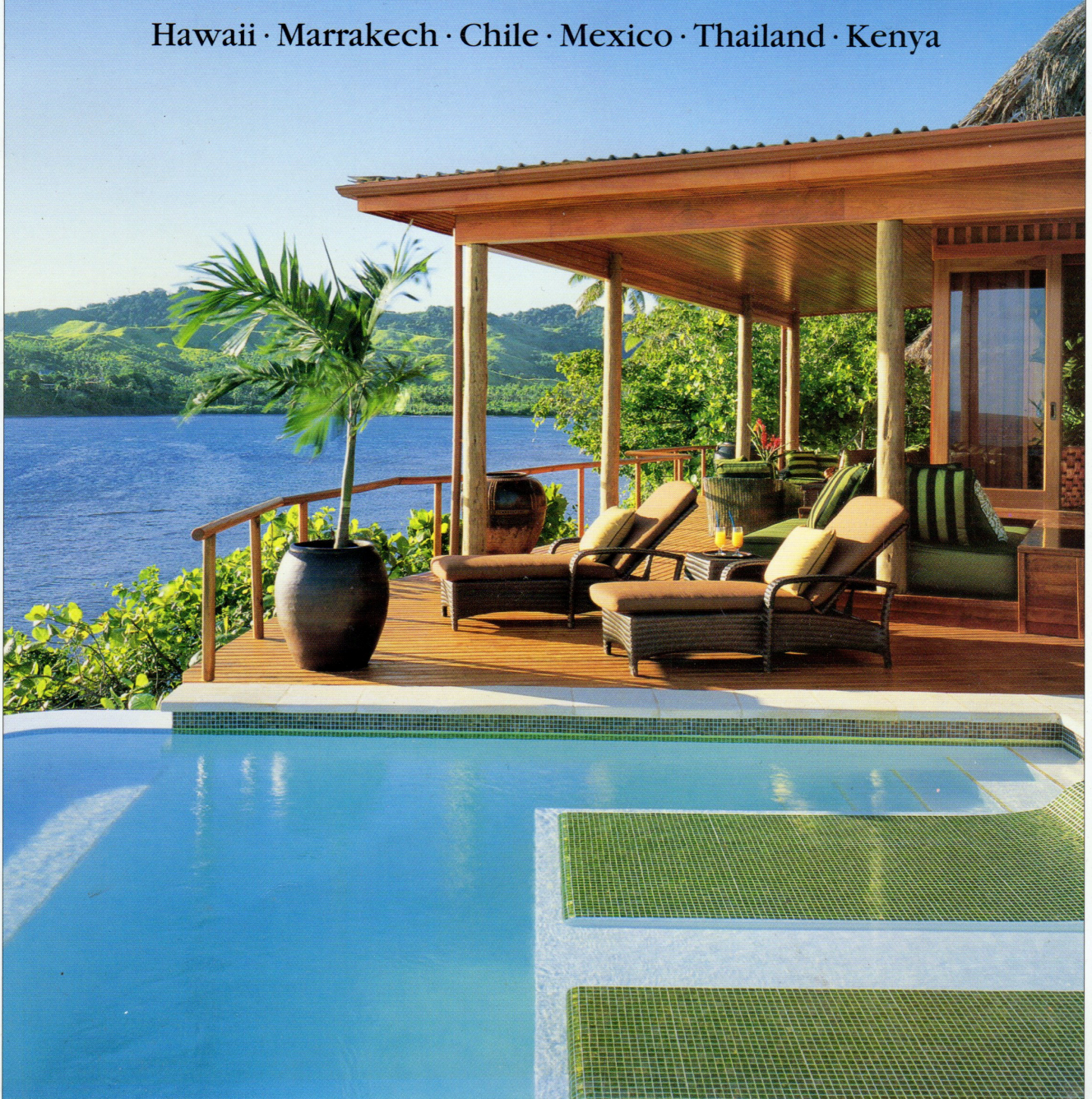
# ARCHITECTURAL DIGEST

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## EXOTIC HOMES Around the World

Hawaii · Marrakech · Chile · Mexico · Thailand · Kenya



"We wanted to update her without spoiling her look," Halvor Astrup says of the *Tusitiri* (opposite), an African dhow owned by his wife, Kjersti, which anchors at Lamu island, Kenya, and can be chartered. The onboard soft illumination comes from candles and antique lanterns.



YACHTS

# Enchantment AT SEA

CRUISING THE KENYAN COAST ON  
THE ROMANTIC DHOW *TUSITIRI*



Text by Steven M. L. Aronson  
Photography by Tim Beddow

Simply put, the 80-foot *Tusitiri* is by all accounts the most majestic private dhow—or lateen-rigged ship—in the known world, as well as the most luxuriously appointed and the most professionally run (a crew of at least six is needed just to hoist her vast expanse of sail). Not by accident the vessel is based in a location long hospitable to its kind: the Swahili-settled island of Lamu, on the north coast of Kenya, where dhows from India and Arabia have been putting in for centuries, trading exotic commodities such as ivory and spices.

From mid-August to mid-April, the *Tusitiri* can be chartered for sea safaris of almost any duration, though the four-, seven- and ten-day excursions seem to be the favored ones. It's anchors aweigh, then, through—and, if time allows, above and beyond—the Lamu Archipelago, to explore its islands and lagoons, its mangrove swamps and coral reefs, its virgin, palm-edged beaches.

Exerting a strong historical appeal as any dhow does, this one, for a wonder, comes outfitted with all manner of modern amenities and with what its captain, Mark Eddy—a surfer from Durban, South Africa, who's already logged 30,000 miles in the Mozambique Channel alone—describes as “loads of toys,” meaning water skis,

"The dhow is timed to good weather, and our seasons run on an eight-month cycle," explains the *Tusitiri's* captain, Mark Eddy. The boat can accommodate 12 guests comfortably. RIGHT: "We live on deck, because we sleep, eat, read and relax here," notes Kjersti Astrup.

BELOW: The aft deck can be transformed with a double bed into sleeping quarters or can be arranged with a low table for a sundowner dinner. OPPOSITE: "It's rather cool all the time on the boat—you're never caught by the African heat; there's always a breeze," Eddy points out.



Windsurfers, and diving and snorkeling equipment. "There's a lot of time to spend playing in the sea," he says. "I can stop almost anywhere, since I'm staying mostly in flat coastal waters." The voyage, he adds, is just as long on tranquility as on adventure, offering bird watching and kite-flying on those empty beaches, not to mention sunbathing on the aft deck.

Until two years ago, when it was decided to "go operational and partially commercialize," the *Tusitiri* was used exclusively by Halvor Astrup, a Norwegian businessman who operates out of London and happens also to have a farm in Kenya. Asked what motivates a man to buy a dhow, of all things, he answers without the slightest hesitation: "The wife!" At which point Kjersti

Astrup herself takes up the tale: "It's 20 years now since I first saw her, outside Lamu. She was lying on her side, high up on the beach. Just lying there, at low tide, looking so sad and unloved. And I thought, 'My goodness, she is *so* beautiful.' She already had her name, which means something like 'God protect us' in Swahili. It turned out she was the biggest dhow left in Kenya



and, alas, she had been sold—she was about to be towed to Mombasa and set in concrete to become a restaurant. Horrible. But then the supposed buyer was late with his payment. . . .”

And her husband came aboard, so to speak? “Well, I did have to shed a few tears first, and that worked—he gave it to me. But,” she hastens to add, “he’s never regretted it. No, he loves it. He gets sort

of a strange look in his eye when he’s on that dhow—he’s just *gone*.”

The boat had been built, for the transport of goods, a quarter of a century before the Astrups came along. Its open hull was made of the heavy local mahogany—a deep red that the irradiating sun turns incarnadine. But it was left to the couple to construct the more than ample deck (it has not gone unremarked

that it’s the size of a sizable house), whose wide planks are kept beautifully polished. For this they used an indigenous dark wood called *mbambakofi*.

“But things deteriorate very quickly in that climate,” Kjersti Astrup volunteers, “and a few years ago we got a man from Southampton, England, to come down and take the whole boat

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