



# COOL OF THE WILD

Tanya Carr-Hartley with Sala, left, and the twins, Tisa and Kinna. The main lodge at Sasaab is open on all sides to catch a cool breeze on hot evenings. Below: The individual lodges, with their makuti woven

## THE CARR-HARTLEYS HAVE CREATED A DREAM LODGE DEEP IN THE KENYAN

**T**he art of running a safari is a precise one, combining high drama — in the form of anticipation and adrenaline — with apparently effortless glamour and luxury. Tanya and Mikey Carr-Hartley, who have been running safari lodges and luxury tented camps in Kenya for the past two decades, understand this cocktail better than most. “We were childhood friends and grew up in Nairobi, surrounded by the trappings of the bush. The spirit of safari is in our blood,” says Tanya, watching a herd of elephants crossing the river below Sasaab, the lodge she and Mikey designed. “Luckily, we know how to put on a really good show.”

The Carr-Hartleys live and work together all day every day. They have three young children, and while their family home is in Nairobi, they have a luxury tented camp in the Masai Mara as well as Sasaab, which is their newest project and where they currently spend much of their time. They are one of those enviable couples who fit together like yin and yang, and who have crafted a business and a life on entertaining in beautiful spaces they’ve designed and built themselves.

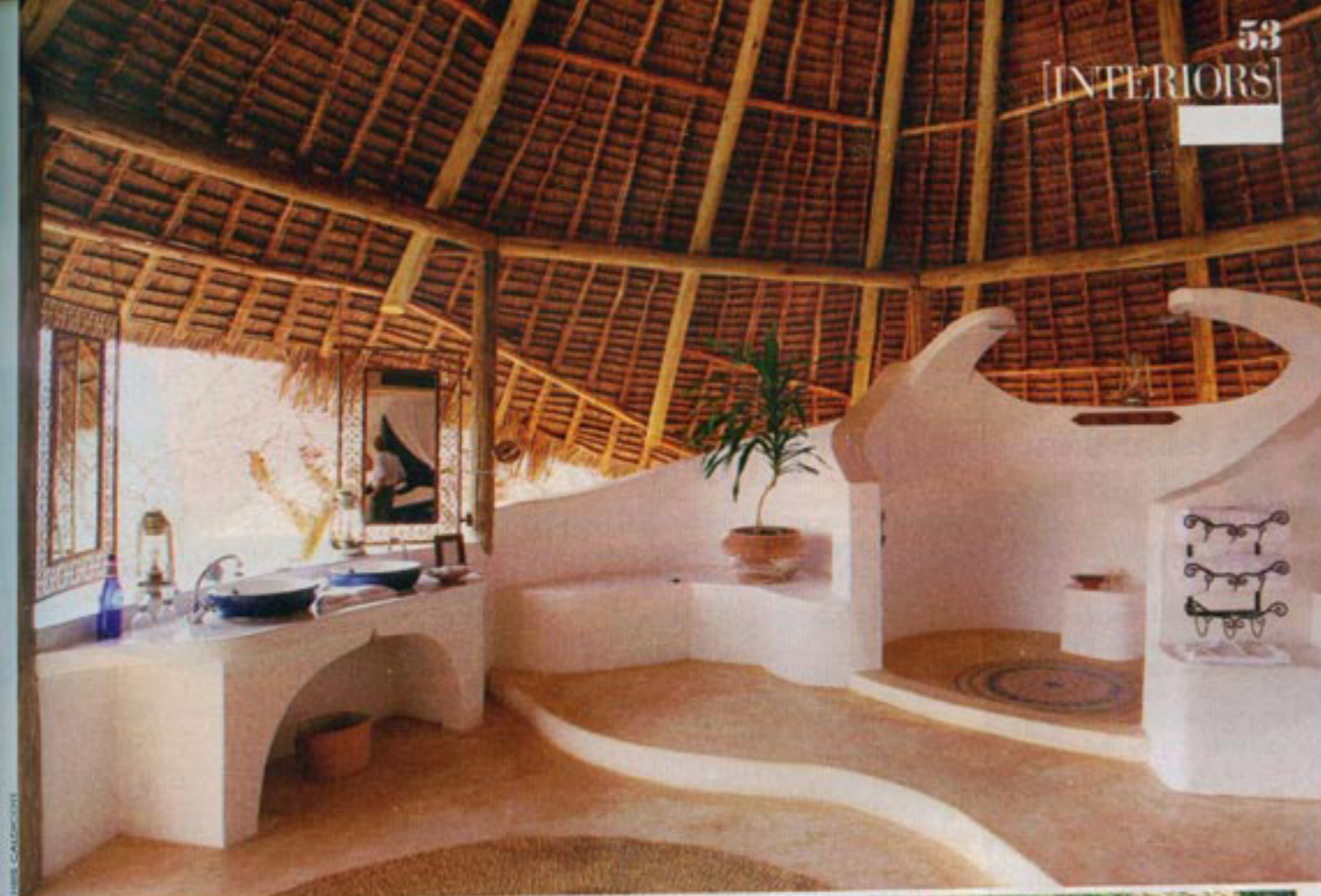
The adventure started nearly a decade ago, when the couple built a home together in Nairobi, using straw bales and materials reclaimed from an old ship. They were then “hounded” with requests from other people to design family houses and safari

lodges, so started a building business called Breaking Ground. No two projects are the same. “We created our own niche, building environmentally sensitive houses at a time when designers in Kenya were throwing up bog-standard square buildings,” says Mikey. “Each building is completely unique.”

At Sasaab, the big lodge is open on all sides to encourage a cool breeze on a hot African evening. It has an uninterrupted view of the bush, and was designed expressly for entertaining. “Kenyan society is very open and friendly. When I was young I would often come home with about 20 friends who my mother would cook supper for without flinching,” says Tanya.

Running a lodge might look like a dream, but maintaining ▶





▶ those picturesque four-poster beds, hung with muslin mosquito nets, and trays of linking sundowners takes a lot of hard graft. Professional and private life are a jigsaw that fit together tightly, because almost every day and night is spent looking after guests – something they learnt from Jocelyn Wildenstein, who they worked for together, running her former husband's Kenyan lodge, during their twenties. "She might have looked like hell, but she was the perfect hostess and I will respect her until the day I die," says Tanya, who has grand

stories of late nights entertaining royalty, Rothschilds and the odd rock star, helping arrange extravagant parties and track lions. Life at Sasaab is no less glamorous. Liz Earle has described the lodge as one of her favourite places in the world, and Calvin Klein and Donna Karan flew in for an evening together earlier in the year. A charmed life? Tanya grins. "It's hard work, but we love what we do, and life in Kenya is about living, and the moment is now." □

[sasaab.com](http://sasaab.com)



**Top** Each lodge is fitted out with objects designed by Tanya and made by local *jua kali*, or 'hot sun' craftsmen. **Right** Guests breakfast together on the terrace. Tanya's company, Right on Track, makes furniture, including the long dining table, from reclaimed railway sleepers. **Below right** Splashes of colour, such as this runner from Trio Crafts, add geometric detail to the organic lines of the lodge, and nod to the Moroccan design influence in the property

GET THE LOOK

- 1 April four-poster bedframe, £1,100; [oldginger.com](http://oldginger.com).
- 2 Soleil mask, \$456; [couturelab.com](http://couturelab.com).
- 3 Hurricane lamp, \$29, from John Lewis.
- 4 Spice velvet scroll cushion, £12.60; [per.co.uk](http://per.co.uk).
- 5 Lazy chair, \$345; [orchidfurniture.co.uk](http://orchidfurniture.co.uk)

