Calling All eBay Addicts!

Name your own price: Your favorite hotels are currently up for bid. The world’s finest resorts, villas and even safaris are flying off the block for a fraction of their regular rates—not on eBay, but at Luxury Link (luxurylink.com) and Sky Auction (skyauction.com) and via The Principality of Monaco (visitmonaco.com) and the International Ecotourism Society (ecotourism.org). On Luxury Link, for example, a four-night stay for two in a charming hillside villa near Rome ($1,100 value) recently drew only one bidder and sold for (gasp!) $375. A three-night weekend for four guests (two junior suites, valued at $8,450) at L’Andana in Tuscany went for the starting bid of $3,215. And when the gavel came down on a five-night romp for two at Vedema Resort on Greece’s whitewashed Santorini (spa included, valued at $4,353), it sold for merely $1,750.

Living La Vida Local

Go locavore. Rent an apartment rather than staying in a hotel. Shop at the neighborhood market and cook your own meals (or at least breakfast). It’s the best way to really immerse yourself in a foreign culture. Paris Perfect (rates from $1,785/week; parisperfect.com) manages more than 35 luxury pieds-à-terre of varying sizes in the French capital, some with views of the Eiffel Tower or within steps of the best restaurants and shops. In Florence, the new Palazzo Vecchietti (rates from $505/night; palazzovecchietti.com) offers 14 immaculate apartments with full kitchens (some with kitchenettes) and butler service in a historic palazzo steps from the Piazza della Repubblica. And in Sydney, consider the Molori Private Retreat (rates from $5,000/night; molori.com), a new, crazy-cool, three-bedroom rental that includes an infinity pool, multiple Jacuzzis, a gym and a gourmet kitchen. Located directly on the waterfront, the house comes with—get this—complimentary use of three boats (two speedboats and a yacht) and a BMW X5. The housekeeper and private chef are included as well, but groceries cost extra.

“I love traveling to West Palm Beach to buy furniture. Bruce Erehard is the grooviest furniture dealer there. He sells everything from the sublime to the ridiculous, at absolutely the best prices.”

–Simon Doonan