

TRAVELS, CONVERSATIONS & OTHER NICE THINGS

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Madagascar

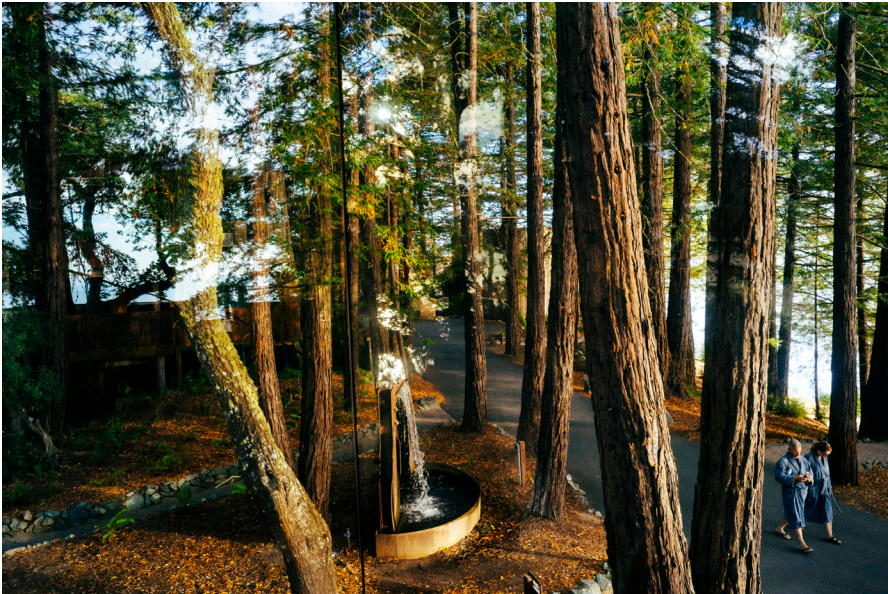
Bangkok

*Riviera
Nayarit*

Palm Springs / Copenhagen / England / Laos



Post Ranch Inn in Big Sur, California, was built to blend into the environment, with guest rooms — such as this 9-foot Tree House — constructed with mostly natural materials and designed to work with, rather than impose upon, the natural habitat.



The Score

Future-forward definitions of legacy and sustainability ground Beyond Green properties from Tetiaroa to Big Sur.



As legend has it, the actor Marlon Brando was in Tahiti filming the 1962 historical drama *Mutiny on the Bounty* when he first spied the atoll Tetiaroa. In the movie, a fictionalized recount of an 18th-century British Royal Navy voyage, the crew spends six months in Tahiti, a blissful break from their rough life at sea. Brando viewed French Polynesia similarly, considering it a real-life paradise far from Hollywood’s spotlight, but his relationship to the collectivity was longer term than that of his character’s — to the point that his obsession with the destination played a foundational role in the 2024 biographical drama *Waltzing With Brando*.

Brando purchased Tetiaroa in 1966 and spent his ensuing years either living on the atoll or regularly visiting it. His ashes were scattered there after his passing in 2004, but the legacy he left wasn’t limited to making the just-over-2-square-mile isle world-famous.

Tetiaroa’s beauty inspired within Brando a foresighted fascination with living in harmony with the environment, which grew into a vision to transform Tetiaroa into a resort grounded in sustainability and stewardship that educates its visitors about French Polynesia, the planet’s ecology, and the ways we can and must protect them all. Five years after Brando’s death, the dream materialized,

with the Brando Family Trust approving the construction of the actor’s namesake resort in 2009.

I arrived at The Brando after a 20-minute flight from Papeete, Tahiti, on a tiny plane that landed on a private airstrip just outside of the resort. The exquisite 35-villa property is still run by the Brando Family Trust, and, in accordance with the actor’s wishes, it works in partnership with the Tetiaroa Society, which was developed to protect Tetiaroa. The society’s research and educational center studies the isle’s environment and ecology, continuously exploring innovative forms of conservation and alternative energy. As a result, the resort is solar powered, which also provides flow battery storage. Additionally, deep-sea water is used for air-conditioning; a massive organic garden generates fresh produce, pineapples, and vanilla beans for the resort’s restaurants; drying trays produce sea salt; coconut oil is used as biofuel in generators and in vehicles throughout the property (there are also electric vehicles and bicycles for on-site transportation); and a rigorous recycling program aims to sort, break down, and reuse everything possible.

Which isn’t to say the resort compromises on experience. The Brando is astoundingly beautiful. Each villa is a tiny home, complete with a private plunge pool and its own small stretch of beach, connected to the rest of the property via paths that ➤

Words by T. Cole Rachel
Photography by Sinna Nasser

➤ can be explored by bicycle (each villa comes with a pair) or golf cart. There’s also one large private residence suitable for a family (the Obamas were past guests). Not only are the villas immaculate, the common areas — a beach bar named after Marlon Brando’s film assistant, Bob; three separate fine-dining venues; plus an elevated (literally) cocktail bar that is built like a treehouse — are also all just a few steps away from a jaw-dropping stretch of white sand beach. A spa tucked away in the middle of the island features treatment rooms resembling large, inverted bird nests, and one of the restaurants, Les Mutinés, boasts a dining concept based on *Mutiny on the Bounty*, complete with a sublime tasting menu that charts each course on a map that mirrors the travels of the titular ship.

The combination of luxury hospitality and continuous innovation takes The Brando beyond the paradigms that have heretofore defined sustainable tourism, a term that has become diluted and inscrutable due to pan-industry greenwashing. It also explains the resort’s decision to join Beyond Green, a global leadership portfolio of hotels, resorts, and lodges that combines elevated guest experiences with transparent sustainability practices to empower travelers to find truly responsible places to stay while helping to scale positive impact across the travel industry through collaboration, education, and global advocacy. To be considered for membership, properties must meet criteria based on 54 sustainability indicators, and they are subject to review every two years thereafter. Members must also be committed to delivering on the three established pillars of sustainable tourism: environmentally friendly practices that go beyond the basics, protection of natural and cultural heritage, and contribution to the social and economic well-being of local communities.

Spending a day with The Brando’s staff, cycling around the property, I saw firsthand how these markers come to life. I was impressed by not only the extreme tenacity with which the resort approaches sustainability but also the hyperefficient and relatively seamless system it has created. It represents a functional model of what a modern-day “luxury” experience should look and feel like.

California’s Post Ranch Inn, another property in the Beyond Green portfolio, offers a very different but equally convincing case study. Situated high atop the cliffs above Big Sur, the inn was one of the area’s first settler homesteads, claimed in 1867 by the Post family, who first developed it into a ranch and farm. In 1992 it opened as an inn. Its current footprint was built to blend into the environment, with tree clearing minimized and guest rooms — such as its earth-sheltered Ocean Houses and 9-foot Tree Houses — constructed with mostly natural materials and designed to work with, rather than impose upon, the natural habitat. This commitment to preserving the landscape extends to experiences, with guests encouraged to engage with the environment in ways that change their understanding of it, through falconry, garden tours led by the resident chef, forest meditation, and guided nature walks, which were initially hosted by Billy Post, a loyal, fourth-generation steward of his family’s land for 90 years, until his passing in 2009.

Like The Brando, Post Ranch Inn is an example of legacy in action, with both rooted in the humility that personal legacy is only part of the composite. As Beyond Green’s mission highlights: The legacy of our era (if not our entire species) is bound up in our ability to urgently preserve the land that sustains us. And in order to be remembered at all, we need to take action today. Put another way, by Brando himself, “All we have is now.” //

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On Tetiaroa in French Polynesia, The Brando realizes its namesake Marlon Brando’s dream of a resort that educates its visitors about French Polynesia, the planet’s ecology, and the ways we can and must protect them all.

