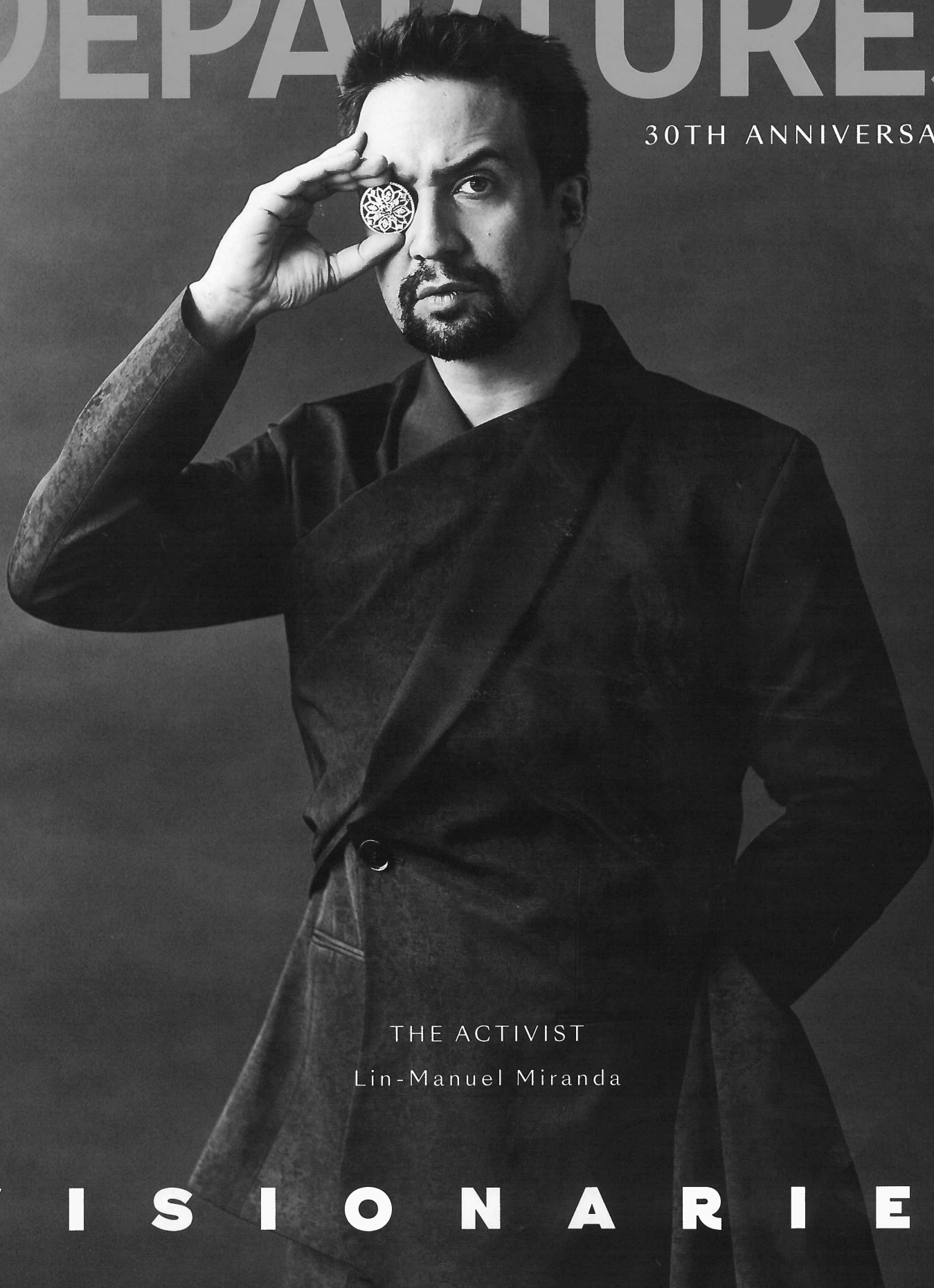


SEPTEMBER 2019

# DEPARTURES

30TH ANNIVERSARY

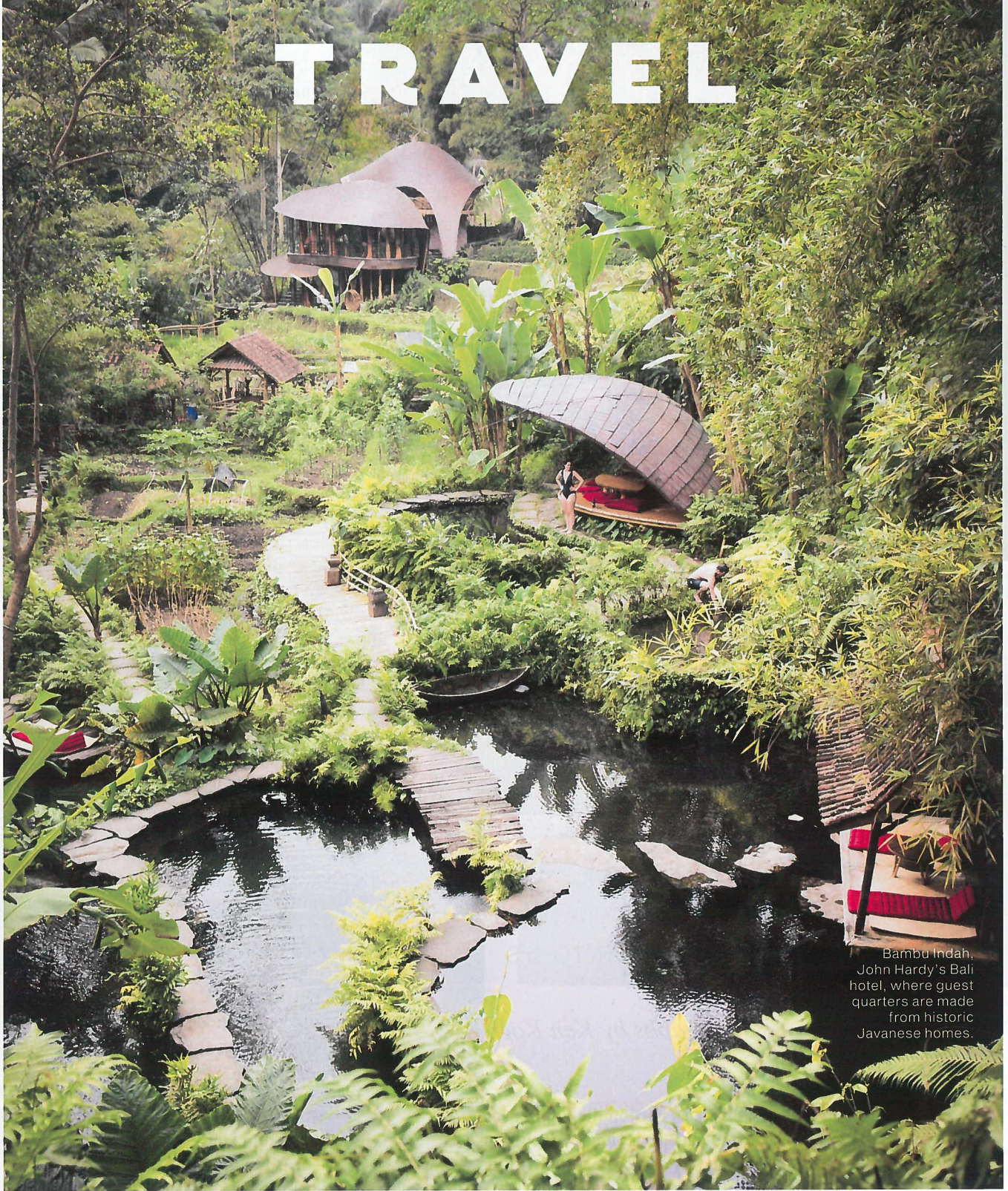


THE ACTIVIST  
Lin-Manuel Miranda

V I S I O N A R I E S



# TRAVEL



Bambu Indah, John Hardy's Bali hotel, where guest quarters are made from historic Javanese homes.

**Think Global, Act Global** To address issues ranging from overtourism to climate change, some of the world's most innovative thinkers are raising the bar for sustainable travel.



## WILDLIFE

## Search and Rescue

*Finding and saving at-risk species drive a pair of new travel initiatives.*

Traditionally, the phrase “animal conservation” has conjured images of sub-Saharan Africa or other areas with big game. However, with a recent United Nations report warning that 1 million species around the planet face extinction, the travel industry is refocusing on the lesser among us in the animal kingdom. Costa Rica’s population of three-toed sloths, for example, has dropped sharply in recent years because of deforestation. Hotelier Leo Ghitis, who owns [Nayara Resorts \(arenalnayara.com\)](#), two properties in Arenal Volcano National Park, knows he can’t save all of them, but he plans to spend up to \$5 million

reforesting barren land with indigenous trees. A focal point of the campaign is a mountainous area where, in December, Nayara will open its first ultra-luxury tented camp. “My goal is to bring it back to how it looked a century ago,” said Ghitis.

Like sloths, giant manta rays face declining numbers. A new expedition from adventure company Black Tomato ([blacktomato.com](#)) brings guests to the Flores Sea to track the elusive creatures with scientists studying their migration patterns. The four-night trip offers a rare opportunity to snorkel with a school of manta rays and participate in tagging them. Environmentalist and adventurer David de Rothschild, who created the itinerary, described it as “nature porn. You’re with marine biologists who have worked extensively in the region,” he said. “You become a citizen scientist.”

The formula has seen major successes. In 2018 alone, AP employed 1,000 rangers, constructed and funded 278 schools, and reintroduced lions to Malawi’s Liwonde National Park—the first breeding population to live in the park in two decades. Wilderness Safaris just opened its newest camp, Magashi, in Rwanda’s Akagera National Park, where AP also recently translocated black rhinos, restoring the park to Big Five status. Another publicity boost was the 2017 appointment of Prince Harry as president (he had previously worked on wildlife relocation schemes in Malawi).

But of all AP’s projects, Odzala is perhaps the most crucial. The reserve is thought to be the largest protected piece of the Congo Basin rainforest—itsself the globe’s second-largest forested area. “It’s the single biggest lung of the world—that on its own is worth protecting,” said Fearnhead. Working to combat poaching around Odzala has been a focal point: In 2016, a high-profile elephant poacher was arrested, and in 2018, rangers confiscated more than 48 tons of bushmeat, the trade of which is a major threat to gorillas.

Back in the park, tracker Gabin Okele managed to steal us a few more minutes with the great apes in a clearing where Neptuno’s group cohabits with that of another silverback, Jupiter—rare behavior to witness. We watched them “mining” for the edible roots of the *Maranthes glabra* tree. Over coffee at Ngaga Camp—six romantic, treehouse-style suites enveloped in dense jungle run by Congo Conservation Company (CCC)—Spanish primatologist Magdalena Bermejo explained that Ngaga is the only place such activity has been recorded. Remarkably, she thinks the silverbacks have been teaching one another how to dig out the roots.

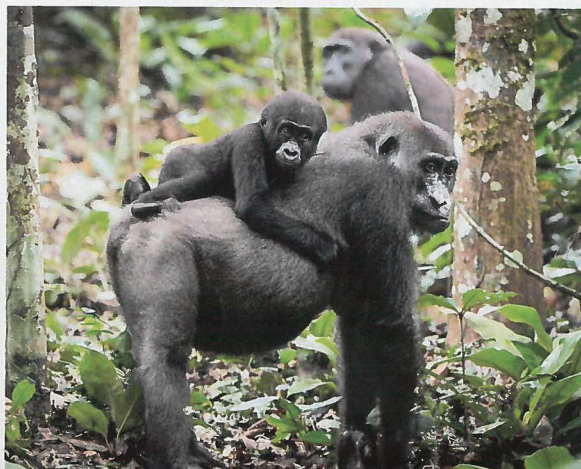
Bermejo, who has been habituating and researching more than 35 gorilla groups around Ngaga since 2015, is considered the leading expert on western lowland gorillas. Her presence is a major asset to the camp, allowing guests to experience grassroots conservation firsthand. Working alongside local trackers who have a profound understanding

of the forest, she has formed a uniquely skilled research team.

These kinds of close-up wildlife experiences give AP a unique edge when it comes to the visitor experience. In Odzala, CCC is African Parks’ tourism partner, running three high-end eco-lodges that provide jobs and a sustainable financial incentive for the park’s long-term protection. “Every tourist who comes to Odzala becomes a conservation actor,” said Paul Telfer, primatologist and managing director of CCC. “Just by their presence.”

*For more information, see [odzala.com](#) and [africanparks.org](#). Natural World Safaris can arrange trips to Odzala-Kokoua National Park, starting from \$9,720 per person for eight nights; [naturalworldsafaris.com](#).*

A group of western lowland gorillas—a critically endangered species—in Odzala-Kokoua National Park.



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