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# The big hotel openings of 2022

From the grand former War Office building in Whitehall to a Rwandan island retreat



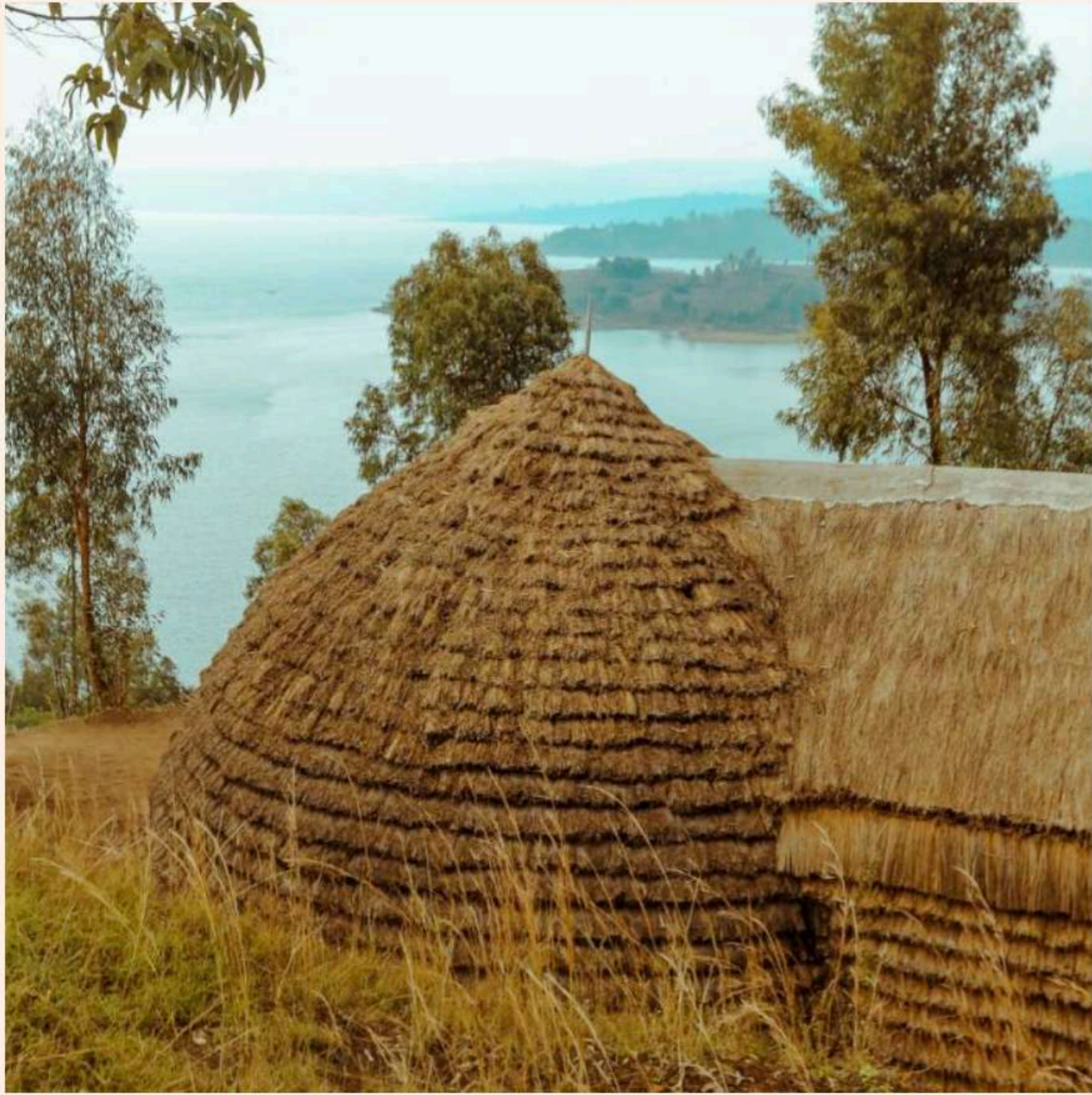
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Claire Wrathall YESTERDAY

28





Accommodation at Sextantio Rwanda is in beehive-like thatched huts



The hotel is intended to support poor Rwandans; guests will be encouraged to make donations rather than pay set rates

## Lake Kivu, Rwanda

Sextantio is known for its two wildly atmospheric *alberghi diffusi* in Italy, one in the medieval houses of the tiny Abruzzo hill-village of Santo Stefano, the other in the *sassi* (or cave dwellings) of Matera in Basilicata. Rather than creating conventional luxury experiences, its aim is to open hotels in what it calls “areas of social disadvantage” — the latest project being at the northern tip of Nkombo, an island in Lake Kivu, on the border between Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of Congo. The verdant, hilly island covers 22 sq km and is Rwanda’s, though the population of 20,000 is largely Congolese.

**Sextantio Rwanda, The Capanne Project**, as it styles itself, will consist of a cluster of beehive-like thatched dwellings inspired by the King of the Tutsis’ Hut in the Ethnographic Museum in Butare and built without electric tools. There’s a beach from which one can swim, though it won’t be warm: the lake has depths of 1,000m and an altitude of 1,460m; the year-round average air temperature is 20C. Exploring the lake in dugout canoes and night fishing are among the activities on offer, along with trips to the Nyungwe Forest National Park (for sightings of a dozen primate species), and the Akagera Savannah in the east of the country (for bigger animals). However, Sextantio’s philanthropic founder, Daniele Kihlgren, hopes that guests will also interact with village life on the island, visit its schools and health centre, learn about the farming and fishing that sustains its population and ultimately come to support the NGO he has set up to provide “the neediest in Rwanda” with health insurance. For this is a hotel with no published rates: the price of staying here is a donation. *Due to open March 21, [sextantiorwanda.com](http://sextantiorwanda.com)*