

TRAVEL + LEISURE



THE HOTELS ISSUE

61

**GREAT NEW
PLACES TO STAY**

**+
OUR A-Z GUIDE
TO GETTING
THE MOST OUT OF
YOUR HOTEL**

Display until June 22, 2013
\$4.99



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travelandleisure.com JUNE 2013

Editor's Note

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The Hotels Issue

Even in New York City, where I live, hotels are a happily unavoidable part of my life. This morning I started out at 8:30 a.m. at the Lambs Club, Geoffrey Zakarian's restaurant in the Chatwal Hotel, which along with Sirio's at the Pierre is one of my frequent haunts for breakfast meetings. My haircuts take place at the Carlyle, where I visit Yves Durif's salon each month (on page 46, you will find the Carlyle's Bemelmans Bar, an Upper East Side classic); and weekdays you would find me in the Loews Regency gym by 7 a.m., until the hotel closed for renovation in December; it will reopen in the fall with a gym for guests only.

Putting together *Travel + Leisure's* annual Hotels Issue is a campaign played out on many fronts, with scores of meetings among our editors to review story lineups and contenders for our annual It List of the best new properties (page 130). This month's cover article, by writer Alexandra Wolfe, presents the 21st-century haute-luxury incarnation of Puerto Rico's legendary Dorado Beach Hotel ("Puerto Rico's Next Act," page 78), from the original private landing strip to the beige-toned bungalows with plunge pools and the winding cupey-tree-lined paths and beaches. Editor-at-large Peter Jon Lindberg reports on his trip to Zambia, a still-under-the-radar African safari destination with camps that are no less stylish for being simple ("Zambia Up Close," page 88). Our wine and spirits editor Bruce Schoenfeld traveled from Maine to Texas and Wisconsin to Montana to uncover a handful of American lakefront resorts that offer up the quintessential pleasures of the family vacations of his childhood ("Summer Classics," page 120). Daphne Merkin returns to St. Mawes, a former fishing village on the coast of Cornwall, England, where palm trees long ago imported from China mingle with pastel-painted cottages and ivy-covered buildings with thatched roofs ("English Seaside Paradise," page 102). Just for fun, we drop in on a group of well-traveled canines on a sleepover date at a dog-friendly hotel in L.A. ("It's a Dog's Life," page 112). And to help you get the most out of your hotel experience, we devote our Strategies section to "Your A to Z Guide to a Better Hotel Stay" (page 163), and present a roll call of winners for T+L's World's Best Service Awards 2013 (page 174), along with some hotel service secrets.

Last weekend I joined my daughter, Caroline, and a friend for a cooking class with Chris Eddy, the chef at Winvian, a Relais & Châteaux hideaway in Morris, Connecticut. The subject this time was roast chicken and sides, from mushrooms and cauliflower to rutabaga, and one of the best parts of it all was lunch in the dining room, feeling like a guest, within easy distance of where I spend weekends—when I'm not on the road. —NANCY NOVOGROD



At the Lambs Club Bar, in the Chatwal Hotel, New York.

WHERE I'M
GOING NEXT

Miami

Mexico City

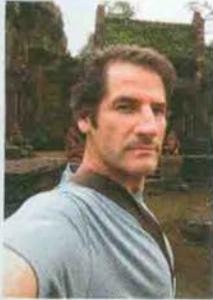
The Dolomites

Umbria

✉ Any tips on these spots? Tweet me @TLNancy.

THE T+L CODE *Travel + Leisure* editors, writers, and photographers are the industry's most reliable sources. While on assignment, they travel incognito whenever possible and do not take press trips or accept free travel of any kind.

Contributors



Thomas Beller

Writer
"Love, Hotel Style"
(page 62).

ROMANTIC HOTEL YOU'D MOST LIKE TO STAY AT

The Kulm Hotel St. Moritz. Second place goes to the Salish Lodge & Spa, in Snoqualmie, Washington, though I'm not sure if I would avail myself of the romance concierge's bag of tricks.

THE ART OF CEREMONY For my wife's birthday last year, I gave her a gift certificate to a local day spa, but I also enlisted my daughter and, in the end, made a charming setting with a cake and candles. This piece taught—or rather reminded—me about the importance of ceremony, which is another way of saying "story," which is at the heart of the word *romance*.

YOUR IDEAL ROMANTIC STAY IS... Anywhere my wife is. Follow him on Twitter @thomasbeller.



Alexandra Wolfe

Writer
"Puerto Rico's Next Act"
(page 78).

IMPRESSIONS OF THE NEW PUERTO RICO?

Move over, Miami! **BEST FEATURE OF DORADO BEACH RESORT** My room's floor-to-ceiling window shutters, which slid into the walls. When they were open, it felt like I was completely outdoors. **CARIBBEAN PACKING ESSENTIALS** Sarongs, swimsuits, and Cipro—I can't afford to lose beach time with any travel bug. **WHAT YOU'D FLY BACK FOR** The hotel has had a thoroughly modern renovation, so seeing the old landing strip used by Amelia Earhart off the resort's running trail was like jumping back to the 1930's. Follow her on Twitter @alexandrawolfe.



Christopher Sturman

Photographer
"Puerto Rico's Next Act,"

DORADO BEACH HIGHLIGHT

Photographing golf legend Juan "Chi Chi" Rodriguez. He cracked jokes the entire time. **ONLY IN PUERTO RICO** At night, you could hear the coqui frogs chirping from the resort's gardens. They almost sounded like birds. It was very tropical. **TOP BEACH-PHOTOGRAPHY TIP** It's always about getting great light. I prefer it when the sun is quite high—the ocean and sand seem to pop more. **OTHER RECENT WORK** I shot three short films around Scotland for fragrance company D.S. & Durga. The country's big backdrops make you feel so small. Follow him on Instagram @Sturman70.



Catherine Ledner

Photographer
"It's a Dog's Life"
(page 112).

PET PROJECT It's heartwarming to see hoteliers opening up their doors and honoring that sensitive bond between guests and their dogs. My long-haired dachshund, Little Bear, is no-nonsense, but I know Gracie, my standard poodle, would definitely enjoy a fancy haircut! **MODEL BEHAVIOR** When we ordered room service for the bed shots, you could see the dogs mustering all their strength not to dive into the meat and chicken. The bulldog had to leave the shot altogether as, according to his trainer, "there was no way he could handle it." **WHAT INSPIRES YOU?** I love old masters, the avant-garde, and finding the beauty in all things. Follow her on Instagram @cledner.



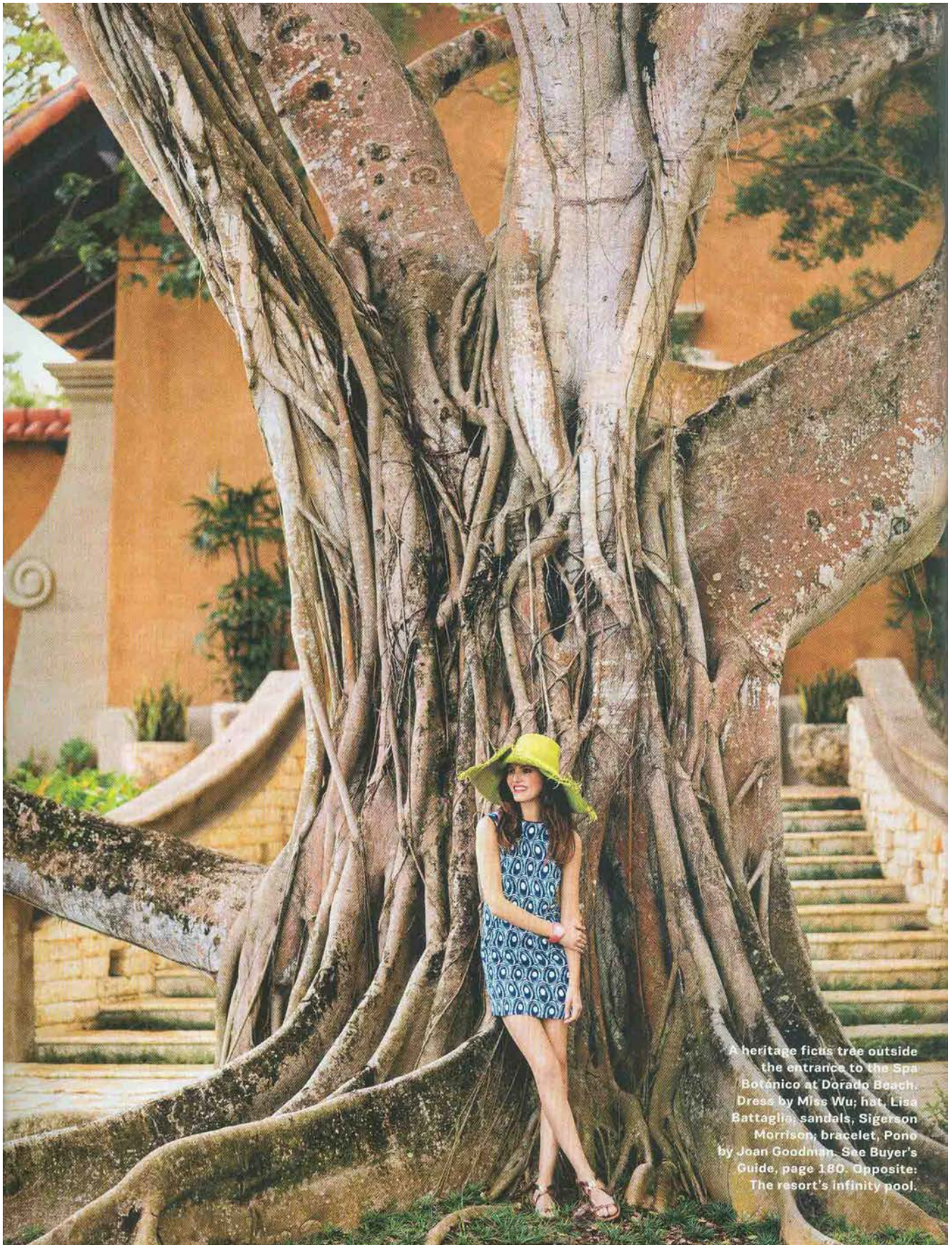
Daphne Merkin

Writer
"English Seaside Paradise" (page 102).

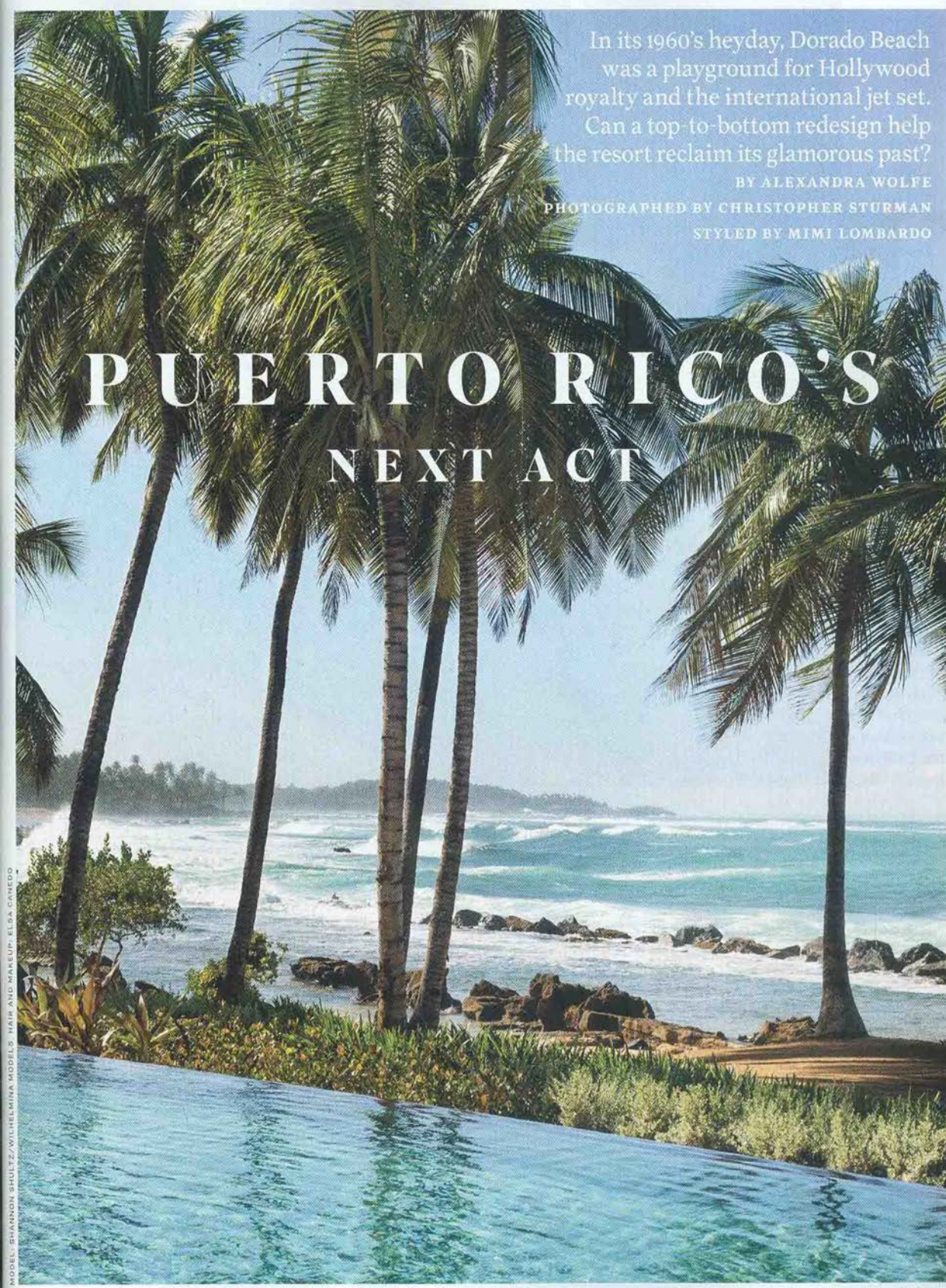
CORNWALL'S BEST SEASON I love visiting during that transition between spring and summer, when the sun never gets too hot and the flowers are in peak bloom. **WHAT'S FOR LUNCH?** Two of the best restaurants in the area for traditional fish-and-chips are Porthminster Café, in St. Ives, and Watch House, in St. Mawes. But as far as fish-and-chips go, you can't go wrong with almost any of the local spots. **FAVORITE OFF-THE-RADAR GEMS** The exteriors of the thatched-roof, privately owned Round Houses in Veryan Green are so charming and worth a look. I also like perusing local art at the Gribbin Gallery, which overlooks the rocky Polkerris Beach.

'Seeing the old landing strip used by Amelia Earhart off Dorado Beach resort's running trail was like jumping back to the 1930's.'

—ALEXANDRA WOLFE



A heritage ficus tree outside the entrance to the Spa Botánico at Dorado Beach. Dress by Miss Wu; hat, Lisa Battaglia; sandals, Sigerson Morrison; bracelet, Pono by Joan Goodman. See Buyer's Guide, page 180. Opposite: The resort's infinity pool.



In its 1960's heyday, Dorado Beach
was a playground for Hollywood
royalty and the international jet set.
Can a top-to-bottom redesign help
the resort reclaim its glamorous past?

BY ALEXANDRA WOLFE

PHOTOGRAPHED BY CHRISTOPHER STURMAN

STYLED BY MIMI LOMBARDO

PUERTO RICO'S NEXT ACT

MODEL: SHANNON SMITH/IZ/WILHELMINA MODELS HAIR AND MAKEUP: ELISA CANEDO

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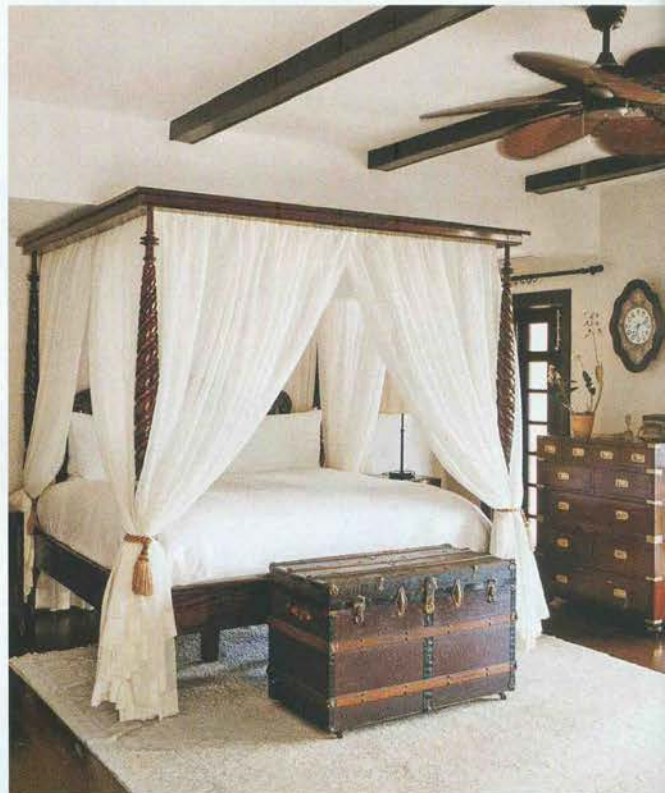
his past New Year's, eight Learjets filled with industry titans, real estate tycoons, and high-flying socialites landed at Puerto Rico's San Juan international

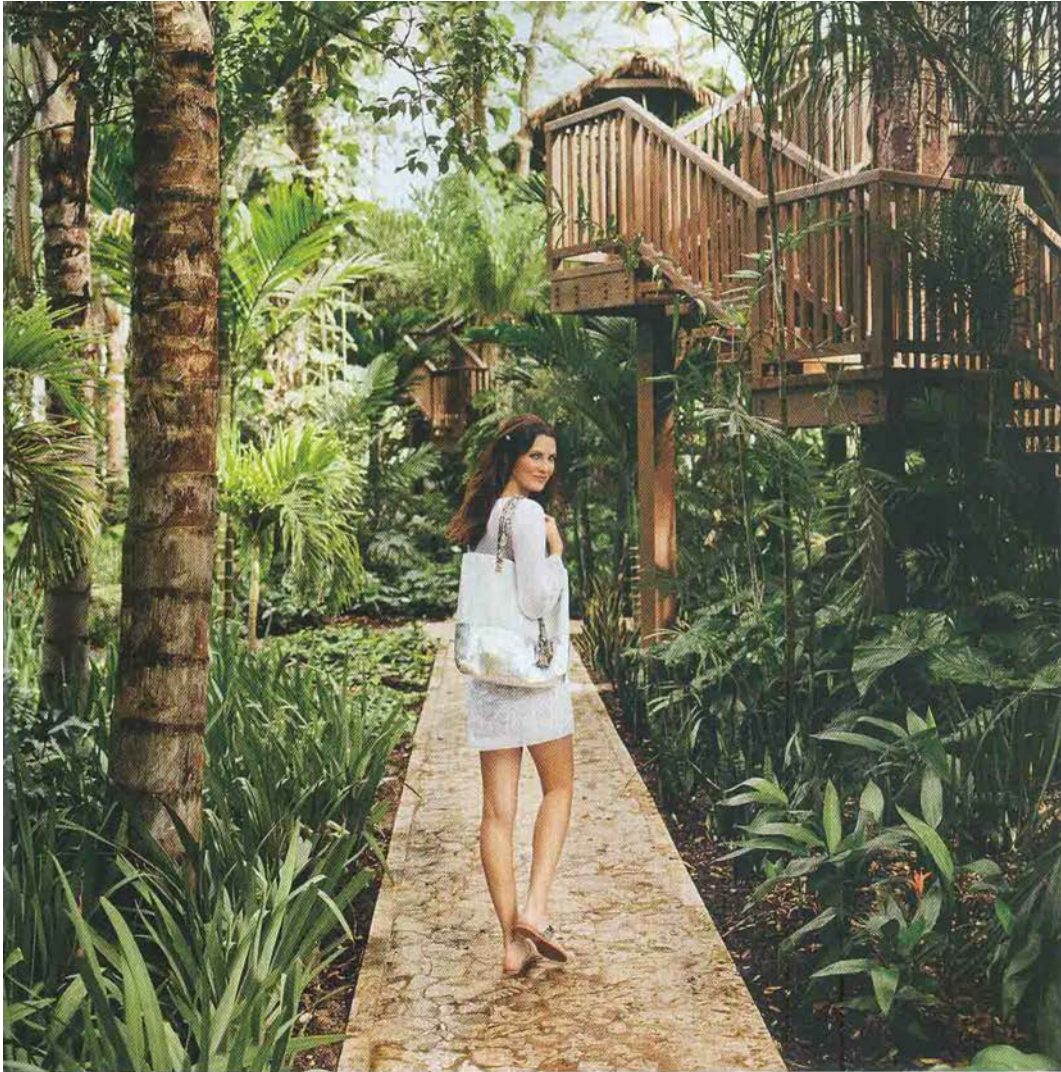
airport. Their final destination? The famed Dorado Beach, where a \$342 million renovation has transformed the palm-fringed oasis into a Ritz-Carlton Reserve. With a beachfront restaurant by chef José Andrés, a five-acre spa, and a private stretch of white sand, it is poised to become one of the most exclusive resorts in the Caribbean. Eager to see the place for myself, I hopped a flight south.

Dorado Beach's story begins in 1905, when Dr. Alfred Livingston bought 1,700 acres along the northern coast and developed a coconut and citrus plantation. His daughter, Clara, inherited the land in 1923 and lived in Su Casa, a pink colonial-style hacienda with a clay tiled roof and grand double stairway. In 1955, Laurance S. Rockefeller, the venture capitalist and son of John D. Rockefeller Jr., acquired the property and three years later opened the ne plus ultra of Caribbean resorts. Hollywood stars, who once frequented Havana, headed here—and the area became as much a scene as St. Bart's is today. John F. Kennedy, Elizabeth Taylor, and Ava Gardner were regulars; Amelia Earhart used to fly her plane in to see Clara (the landing strip remains); Joan Crawford is said to have had her room painted pink before she arrived.



From top: The Livingston Library at Dorado Beach; Laurance S. Rockefeller, who developed the original resort, with his wife, Mary, in 1958; the master bedroom at Su Casa.





On the way to the spa's tree-house treatment platforms. Dress by Marie France Van Damme; shoes, Joie a La Plage; bag, Rafe.

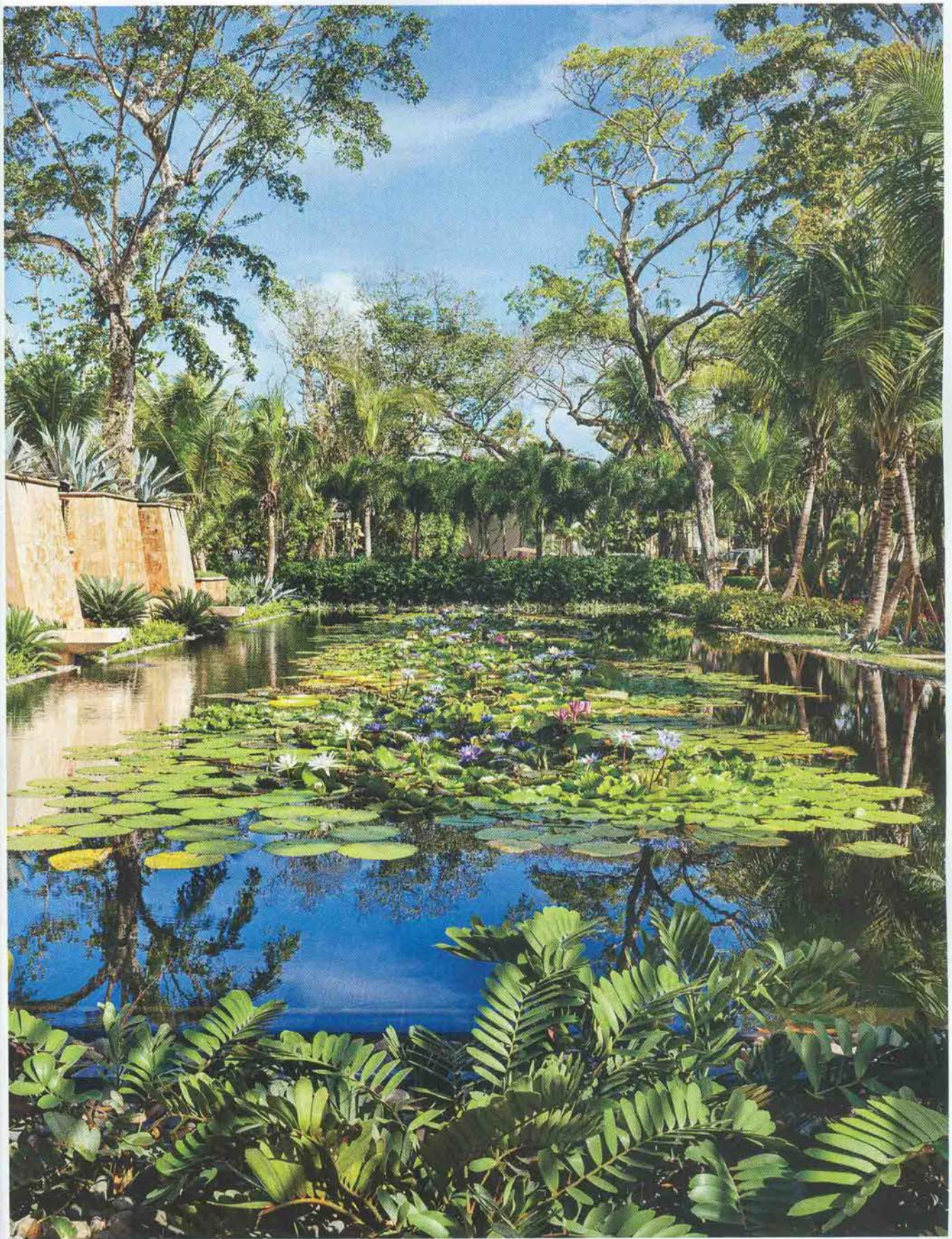


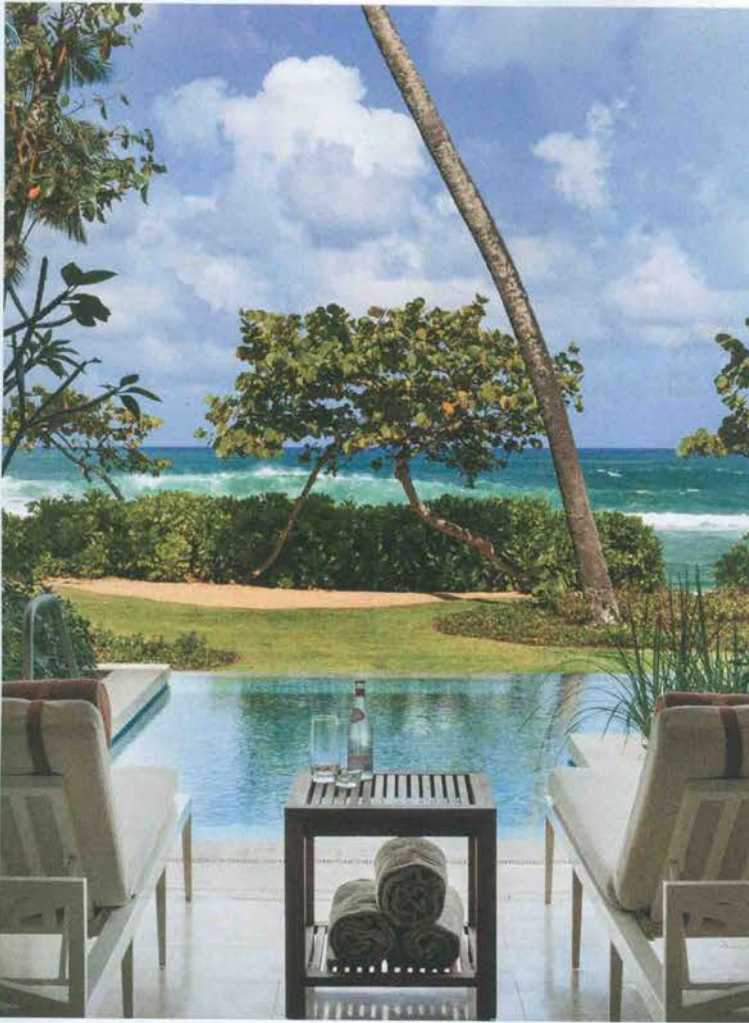
Right: Looking toward the ocean from the entrance to the resort. Above: The resort in 1958.





Golf legend Juan "Chi Chi" Rodríguez (left) with developer Friedel Stubbe (right) at the resort's Positivo Sand Bar. On model: dress by Gucci; earrings, Faraone Mennella. Opposite: The lily pond at the resort's entrance.





From left: Overlooking the private pool at a Plunge Reserve room; a Caesar salad at Mi Casa.



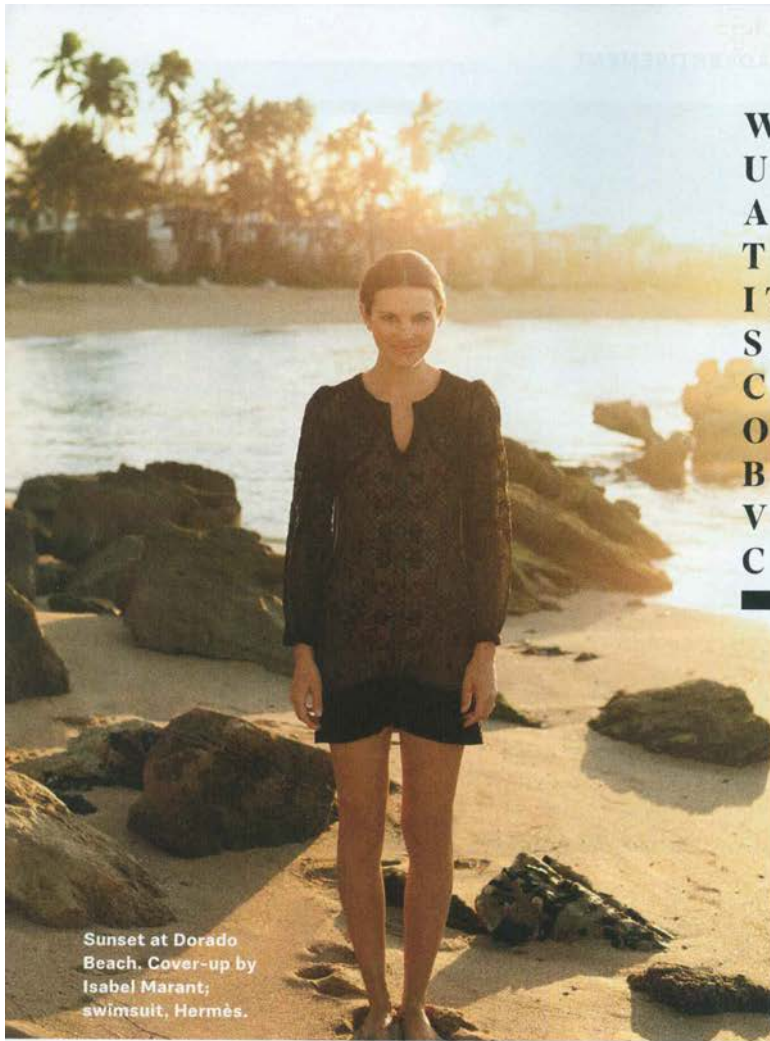
In the mid 1980's, the Puerto Rican government shifted focus away from tourism and the luxury hospitality market took a hit—and the resort eventually closed. Now, hungry for statehood (2012 marked the first time the majority of its citizens voted to join the United States) and seeking to bring back a time when visiting the island was a bragging right, Puerto Rico has instituted new tax laws, and dozens of direct flights have been launched (JetBlue; Southwest). In recent years, the country has also put billions into infrastructure and, to lure real estate investors, offered generous tax exemptions. A handful of upscale hotels—including the St. Regis Bahia Beach Resort, in Río Grande, and the W Retreat & Spa, in Vieques—have capitalized on the incentives. But no hotel has been as anticipated as Dorado Beach's comeback. "We want to be a place where friends from the Hamptons and other summer communities gather during winter," says Caribbean Property Group CEO Mark Lipschutz, who partnered with Ritz-Carlton and developer Friedel Stubbe six years ago to revive the property.

Amid the throngs of tourists at San Juan's international airport, a uniformed Ritz-Carlton driver materializes before I reach baggage claim and ushers me to a black Mercedes SUV. It is a far cry from my last visit to the country, when a boyfriend and I took a teetering old taxi three hours

down unpaved detours to the eastern tip of the island, only to have the view of the lush hills from our hotel window collapse in a mudslide.

As we make our way down a road lined with palms and ceiba trees, I glimpse a minimalist, white-stone entry pavilion—its clean lines and pitched wooden roof blending seamlessly with the surrounding jungle. With resorts of this stature, there is no need to do anything so common as check in. My private *embajador* (ambassador) whisks me in a golf cart to my oceanfront room, decorated in cream-colored fabrics and soothing sand-tinted walls, with floor-to-ceiling windows that look out onto a powdery beach.

The level of luxury at the Dorado Beach resort sets a new standard for Puerto Rico, from the delicate shell designs reflecting on the sand at the outdoor Positivo Sand Bar to the spacious suites and low-lying bungalows extending out to private plunge pools and terraces. Walking along the jungle-lined wooden paths, past a series of tranquil ponds, I discover a labyrinthine infinity pool, where a plush oversize daybed beckons me to linger for hours. The hotel's legacy is present at every turn. Books about Rockefeller fill the mahogany-paneled library, and a short walk away, the restored Su Casa



Sunset at Dorado Beach. Cover-up by Isabel Marant; swimsuit, Hermès.

WHAT REMAINS UNTOUCHED AT DORADO IS THE TERRAIN ITSELF, THE SAME UNDULATING COASTLINE OF BEACH BUTTRESSED BY VERDANT CUPEY TREES.

marigold, and lemongrass. Guests are offered private consultations with healing experts called “Manos Santas” (healing hands), who create bespoke concoctions using natural oils and fresh herbs. Walking through the private massage pavilions and jungle gardens reminds me of the dense, wet rain forests of Koh Samui, in Thailand. The masseuse works on my back from underneath; in the room white curtains billow in the breeze, lulling me into a deep sleep.

Along with the resort’s postcard-perfect backdrop, what stands out at Dorado Beach is the service and, of course, the food. One night, five minutes before my dinner reservation at José Andrés’s Mi Casa restaurant, a driver surprises me with a knock on the door to offer a ride. With a nod to molecular gastronomy, the experimental menu plays with tastes and textures inspired by both Puerto Rico and the Iberian Peninsula. I order a Caesar salad “sushi roll” with avocado inside and quail eggs on top; a delicious squid-ink *rossejat* with shrimp; and the “*coquitos frescos*,” a small plate made of rum, lime, and coconut served inside a coconut shell.

For all the changes at Dorado, what remains untouched is the terrain itself, the same undulating coastline of beach buttressed by verdant cupey trees. It’s the very landscape that drew the area’s first guests 55 years ago and sets the stage for Dorado’s new golden era. +

ritzcarlton.com. \$\$\$\$

(which you can rent for \$30,000 a night in high season) stands in all its pink-hued glory.

Over lunch in the golf club’s casual bar, the resort’s CEO, Eric Christensen, introduces me to the property’s longtime golf pro, Juan “Chi Chi” Rodríguez, who began his career working for Rockefeller and was later inducted into the World Golf Hall of Fame & Museum. Tan and lithe, with trophy designs on his shirt and slick black hair peeping out of a Panama hat, Rodríguez reminisces about his early days. “When I first met Rockefeller, I scolded him for riding three to a golf cart,” he tells me. “I was sure I’d get fired.” But that didn’t happen. “Instead, Rockefeller apologized and said to my boss, ‘That young man is going to go places.’”

Plenty of A-listers have visited since the reopening six months ago, including the Kraft family, the owners of the New England Patriots; the Milstein real estate scions; and Puerto Rican pop star Ricky Martin. The property hadn’t seen so many heavyweights since Rockefeller’s inaugural party in 1958, dubbed the Fabulous 150.

An 80-year-old ficus tree marks the entrance to the spa, which is like a mini-resort in itself with a pineapple garden, soaking pools, a lily pond, and two tree-house treatment platforms. The experience begins with a walk through an herbal-scented Apothecary Portal, filled with lavender,