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Joan Smalls

Returns to glorious
Puerto Rico
By Ryan McGinley

HOW TO DRESS THIS SUMMER

From sultry
beach style to
crisp city cool

*Bé body
proud*
20 page
bikini-ready
beauty special

Getaway Chic

PLUS: Drew Barrymore, Joan Didion, Isabelle Huppert, Azar Nafisi, Goldie Hawn, Candace Bushnell, Angela Missoni, Mindy Kaling, Naomi Campbell, Carrie Fisher...

out of this world

PEACE AND QUIET
This page: Princess
Paola de Orléans e
Bragança in the gardens
of Sobrado do Príncipe
Opposite: a bedroom at
Sobrado do Príncipe



THE HOTSPOT

a corner of paradise

Tucked away on the COSTA VERDE between Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo lies the hidden gem of PARATY. A former 17th-century, gold-rush port, today it is a quiet enclave with virginal shores, WATERFALLS, rainforests and incredible places to stay, from HISTORIC mansions to sleek contemporary residences and authentic beach shacks to call your own.

Catherine Fairweather discovers Brazil's best-kept secret VILLA destination

Photography by Tinko Czetwertynski

When we eventually reach our lodge, Le Gite d'Indaiatiba, after a long winding drive through the Brazilian rainforest, it is sweet and unassuming – a few cabins you can stay in and a collection of tables on a terrace perched above the jungle valley. Half an hour from the coastal town of Paraty, this place is so revered by Cariocas and Paulistas from nearby Rio and São Paulo – despite a simplicity about it that borders on the basic – that they will chopper in for weekend lunches. The helipad sits discreetly above a 'swimming pool' sourced from a natural spring.

The caipirinhas arrive, served in banana-leaf holders. The owners, the de Cortas, invite us to go for a stroll before the food arrives. Their dog, Naomi, accompanies us down the hill, which leads to a waterfall and beside it a wooden sauna. We strip and plunge into the cool waters and I wonder where else in the world a dip in a natural rock pool, cocktail in hand, would be treated as an appetite sharpener? And where else would an award-winning restaurant (with the Brazilian equivalent of a Michelin star) open its kitchen just for you? For, visiting midweek, we are quite alone here, apart from a colony of butterflies as big as handkerchiefs that land on the sugary rims of our cocktail glasses.

Later, back on the terrace, we eat, surrounded by a vast library of books and serenaded by classical samba music. The lodge is run by a French husband and Brazilian wife, who cook and deliver simple and sophisticated food, with ingredients gathered from their very own corner of Eden. There is taioba ravioli, made with a jungle leaf that tastes of kale; a delicious local fish simmered in mango and ginger from the owners' smallholding; and freshwater crab cooked in coconut milk, Bahia-style.

Brazil is, historically, full of people like the de Cortas – escapists, idealists, visionaries, immigrants – all taking advantage of the spiritual freedom that is possible in a country this size to create and reinvent different utopian versions of living. It is no surprise that the world's biggest and most visionary 'art park', Inohotim, is in Brazil, built by a Brazilian former model turned industrialist, Bernardo Paz; or that the philanthropic and self-sustaining community and environmental project Ibitipoea, on another vast swathe of the Atlantic rainforest, the size of New >



York State, has set a benchmark among the traveling elite.

It may be that achieving a state of harmony and connecting to the natural world seems easier here simply because the nature is so abundant. In Paraty the next day, sailing in a traditional schooner around the islands with Tetê Etrusco, the formidable doyenne of our hotel-villa Casa Turquesa, we watch, round-eyed, as the fish shoot out of the water like fireworks and fling themselves into our net. Dropping anchor near Brazil's landmark tropical fjord, Saco do Mamangua, where the jungle slides into the emerald water, nuts and fruits plop off the trees into our open palms, a rare golden monkey scampers and rain falls in sheets. Plant a stick in the rust-colored soil and it would probably sprout a leaf within a few months.

Back in town, this abundance is even more noticeable. Inside the lovely private villas and the 18th-century *pousadas* that line the cobbled streets, there is a very fine dividing line between outdoors and in; one gets a sense that this is nature, barely contained. My traveling companion is the designer Princess Paola de Orléans e Bragança, and in the lush gardens of her uncle's home, Sobrado do Principe – a glorious Portuguese colonial mansion on the harbor front – a large tropical almond tree tries to invade the sunbathing space around the lawn and strangler roots wrap themselves around the masonry of the high walls. Meanwhile, large crabs scuttle in from the sea and across the cobbled pavements of the town, hummingbirds dart in and out of the kitchen doors and, during a full moon, the sea water rises and washes in and through the streets outside like a river. A makeshift bridge has to be constructed and efficient *pousada* owners like Tetê issue her guests with Casa Turquesa flip-flops or galoshes. Dom João, Paola's debonair photographer uncle and semi-permanent resident of Sobrado do Principe, whose great-great-grandfather was the last Emperor of Brazil, points out that the streets were designed this way by Portuguese merchants in the 17th century so that the rising and falling tides could flush away the epidemics that used to wipe out whole communities. The cobbles from Portugal that line the street came in as ballast, he enthuses, and the whale blubber mixed with shell that make up the foundations of the buildings was a valuable commodity traded upcountry for gold. But the gold rush was brief and by the late 1800s Paraty's moment of glory was over. It remained a sleeping beauty hemmed in by the mountains that rim the Costa Verde, accessible only on foot or by boat until the 1970s, when a road connected the Port of Santos to Rio and it was 'discovered'.

But the impact of tourism here is all relative. While crowds mass on the car-free streets, in the cafes and restaurants on weekends, and for the annual Flip literary festival and photography fair, it remains, in essence, a quiet

OUTDOOR LIVING
This page, clockwise from top: the pool at Casa Turquesa; colonial estuary house Casarão Amarelo; Princess Paola enjoys a boat trip in Paraty bay; an alfresco terrace at the Casa Jardim. Opposite, from top: Paraty's Santa Rita church; the pool at Pytagua



haven, a favorite of artists and writers, with as many bookshops as there are postcard stalls, saved from development by the fact it isn't actually on a beach and is protected by the National Park of the Serra da Bocaina.

You can hike to great crescents of sandy beach along the virginal shores of the Costa Verde and find them empty. Strewn with granite boulders and washed by freshwater springs and rivulets, these beaches seem untouched by time, which is all the more surprising given there are over eight million people living in the two biggest Brazilian cities of São Paulo and Rio within a four-hour drive in either direction. A 7km hike past towering heliconia plants and a series of bays takes you to the waterfalls and small fishing community of Punta Negra, where you can dine on fried mackerel at the lone lunch shack and stay in the fishermen's bungalows before continuing your hike the next day.

The high-low experience is part of the dynamic of a Brazilian journey, but nothing throws my romantic's version of luxury more sharply into relief, after the beguiling authenticity of the beach shack lunch, then the rather frigid compound of Laranjeiras, a few bays down, where the ferry boat deposits us later. This gated, high-security condominium is tailored for the billionaires of Brazil; no one has permission to photograph the canal and marina or step into the roped-off, immaculate lawns without a pass. I liked the fact that the specialist travel company we traveled with, Cazenove+Loyd, could organize rentals both here, at an air-conditioned fortress, and also at a fisherman's bungalow.

But in Paraty, there really is a playground to suit every taste, from the over-the-top Carmen Miranda-style ebullience of Casa Jardim on its own private island, to Pytagua, the shabby-chic artist's retreat of designer Mônica Penaguão, to the old colonial townhouse Casarão Amarelo. The great thing about the villas of Paraty is that the experience and service can be tailored to your budget. Well-connected owners like Tetê at Casa Turquesa and Simon Clift of Casa Colonial, whose foster son Cleber is now in charge, can provide unique access too. Whether you want to share your time with a rainforest botanist or a sugar-cane distiller, drink cachaça in a cellar or charter a top chef with a boat, Cleber can arrange it. Paraty may be much less fashionable and glossy than Búzios, north of Rio, which was discovered by Brigitte Bardot in the 1960s, but who needs a Brazilian Saint-Tropez when you have the quiet charm of these private colonial villas, hectares of unspoilt rainforest with empty beaches and waterfalls to cavort in and a confetti of islands to discover. ■

“Strewn with granite boulders and washed by freshwater springs, these beaches seem untouched by time”



HOW TO BOOK

CASA COLONIAL, CASA JARDIM and CASARAO AMARELO can be rented through Cazenove+Loyd from \$8,500 based on eight people sharing; cazloyd.com

CASA TURQUESA has rooms from \$529 per night, or can be booked in its entirety through Cazenove+Loyd; cazloyd.com; casaturquesa.com.br

PYTAGUA, which sleeps four with another house for children, is \$400 a day. For an extra charge, a schooner is also available for day trips; poeiraonline.com

SOBRADO DO PRINCIPE is available to rent by request only through cazloyd.com

LE GITE D'INDAIATIBA has rooms from \$98; legitedindaiatiba.com.br

Book Paraty's best cook, **GISELA SCHMITT**, for incredible feasts on her boat **SEM PRESSA** from \$680; gastromarparaty.com