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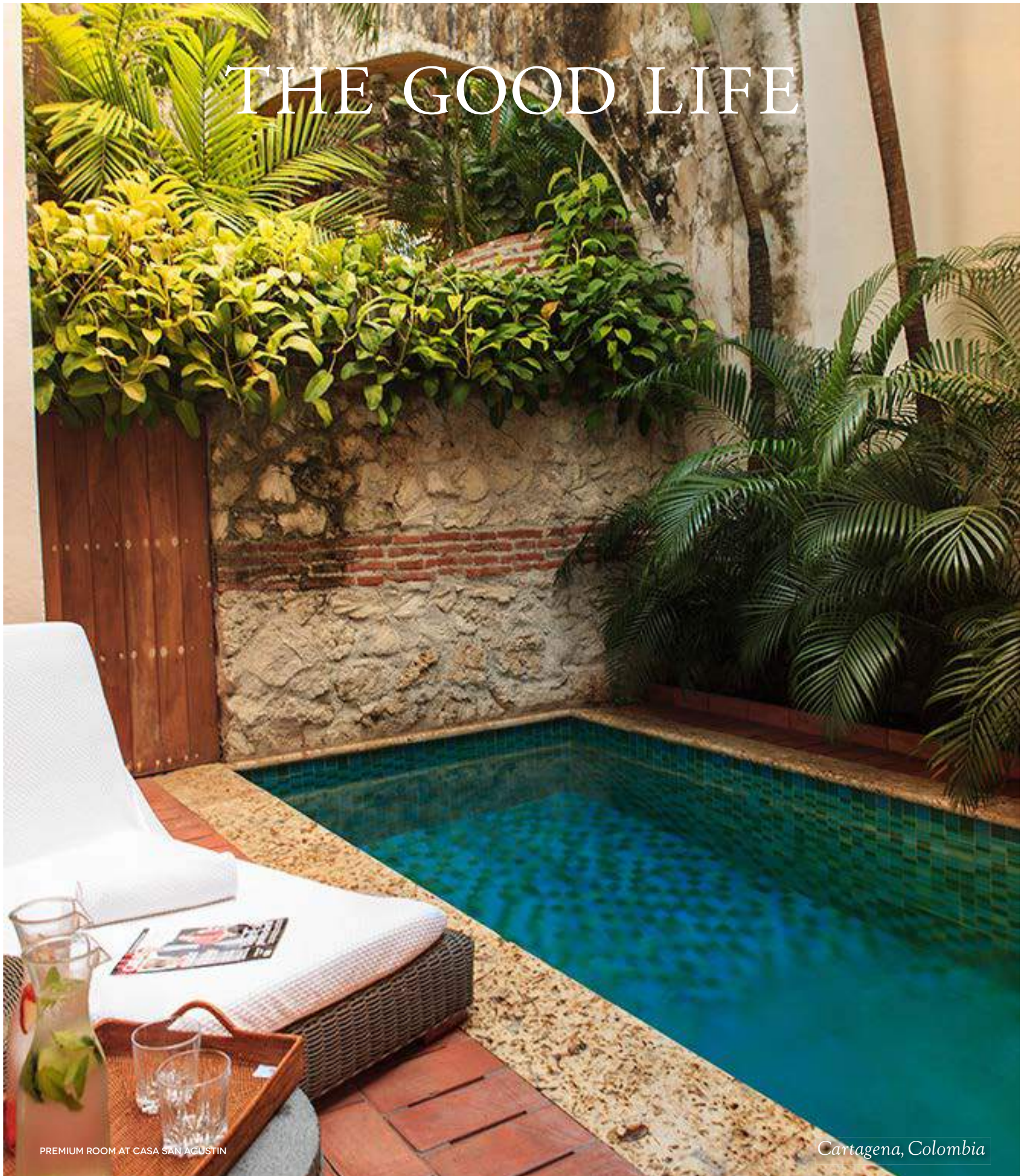
Beautiful Beachfront Living

A Hermosa Beach home with breathtaking ocean vistas and light, open spaces make for the ultimate beachside living experience

*Presented by
Robb Stroyke, Stroyke Properties Inc.*
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THE GOOD LIFE



PREMIUM ROOM AT CASA SAN AGUSTIN

Cartagena, Colombia



PARGO EN CABRITO



COLOMBIAN WOMAN

CARTAGENA CHIC

Explore the Colombian hot spot beguiling travelers with boutique hotels, fine dining and Colonial charm

WRITTEN BY MICHELLE LYN

PHOTOS COURTESY OF CASA SAN AGUSTIN, ST. DOM AND MICHELLE LYN

Nestled on the Caribbean Sea, Cartagena de Indias, as it is formally known, is a South American gem that still remains a mystery to many Americans today. Emerging from the shadows of a less than desirable reputation, its home country of Colombia is now safer than ever to visit. The added bonus of a strong U.S. dollar makes this the perfect time to head south and indulge in the beauty of Cartagena.

As a UNESCO World Heritage Site for the city's historic ports, monuments and extensive fortifications, the best way to get your bearings in Cartagena is a guided tour through an operator like Guianza Express. One of the company's most affable guides is Walter, who shares the history of the coastal city with visitors to acquaint them with notable sights, like the Cathedral of Cartagena, Castillo San Felipe de Barajas, Iglesia de la Trinidad in Getsemaní and La Popa Monastery, situated atop the highest point in Cartagena that affords a sprawling view of the city down below.

The ideal base while exploring Cartagena is Casa San Agustín, a chic boutique hotel located in the heart of the city's historic center. The swanky property is comprised of 30 rooms and suites—some with private plunge pools—that provide guests with modern, luxurious amenities and a complementary dose of Caribbean design.

Stylishly juxtaposing old and new, Casa San Agustín consists of three Colonial-era white-washed buildings, their architecture reminiscent of the city's rich history as a 17th-century Spanish stronghold. Original frescoes and centuries-old wood-beamed ceilings in guest rooms complement ironwork beds, chandeliers and sconces specially commissioned by local artists to create a residential feel.

The property's idyllic location allows you to set out on foot to explore Cartagena's historic center, a vibrant walled city, complete with cobblestoned streets, horse-drawn carriages and pops of color in every direction.

A delightful way to kick-off your stay in Cartagena is with a rooftop drink at Hotel Charleston Santa Teresa. Order a *limonada de coco*—a national drink akin to a light, refreshing piña colada, but with coconut instead of pineapple—and take in the scenic view of Bocagrande and the Cartagena coastline.

Then, meander through Cartagena's historic center, following your sense of smell to El Pandequeso, a bakery with lines out the door, where you can indulge in freshly baked, decadent pastries that are often filled with jam and mozzarella.



ST. DOM



MAIN ENTRANCE, ALMA RESTAURANT



COLORFUL STREET IN CARTAGENA



CAZUELA DE MARISCOS



VIEW OF TORRE UNIVERSIDAD DE CARTAGENA

An exceptional spot for lunch is El Boliche Cebicheria, a tiny ceviche and seafood restaurant owned by a lovely young couple, Oscar Colmenares and Viviana Díaz. Located on one of the most picturesque streets in Cartagena, this is the place for a first-ever ceviche experience. The roasted sea bass with fried coconut rice also leaves such an impression, you might just find yourself imploring Viviana to share the recipe.

While away the afternoon shopping at local favorites St. Dom, a fashion, art and design house; Ábaco Libros y Café, a cozy nook for perusing art and books by the aromatic coffee bar; and Casa Chiqui, popular for home decor.

A visit to Las Bóvedas, a vibrant yellow structure originally built as storage vaults for the military, is requisite. Eventually turned into jail cells in the 19th century, the structure is now a popular shopping stop, as the old cells house shops and boutiques with a wide array of Colombian art, jewelry and clothing.

Afternoon treats abound at sites like Gelateria Paradiso, Ciocolatto Pop-Bar and Se Volvió Prisprí. If a sunset cocktail sounds better, head to Café del Mar, a bar atop the historic center's wall. Endless sea views provide the best spot for a sundowner, if you don't mind rubbing elbows with other tourists.

A more laid-back option is El Baluarte Tasca-Bar, also atop the wall, but opposite Hotel Charleston Santa Teresa. Lounge music and candles set the scene as you relax and cocktail your way through the evening.

The only problem with the dining scene in Cartagena is the abundance of outstanding options. Alma, the restaurant located in Casa San Agustín, is an excellent choice with a warm staff. Handcrafted cocktails served in the courtyard, with live music and a three-course prix fixe menu for \$25 USD might very well make it the best deal in town. Sister restaurants María and Restaurante Donjuán are next door to one another, with both offering a contemporary dining experience. The lighter menu is at María, and though Donjuán is naturally heavy on seafood, it also prepares dishes like Oxtail Stew as well.

For a more authentic Colombian experience, head to Candé, a concept that boasts its food is 100-percent Cartagena. Here, dancers weave in and out of tables in the cozy space during a nightly live show.

Whether you're able to spend a long weekend or an extended visit, Cartagena is sure to become a destination that captivates you from morning until night, leaving you wanting more.