

LUXURY

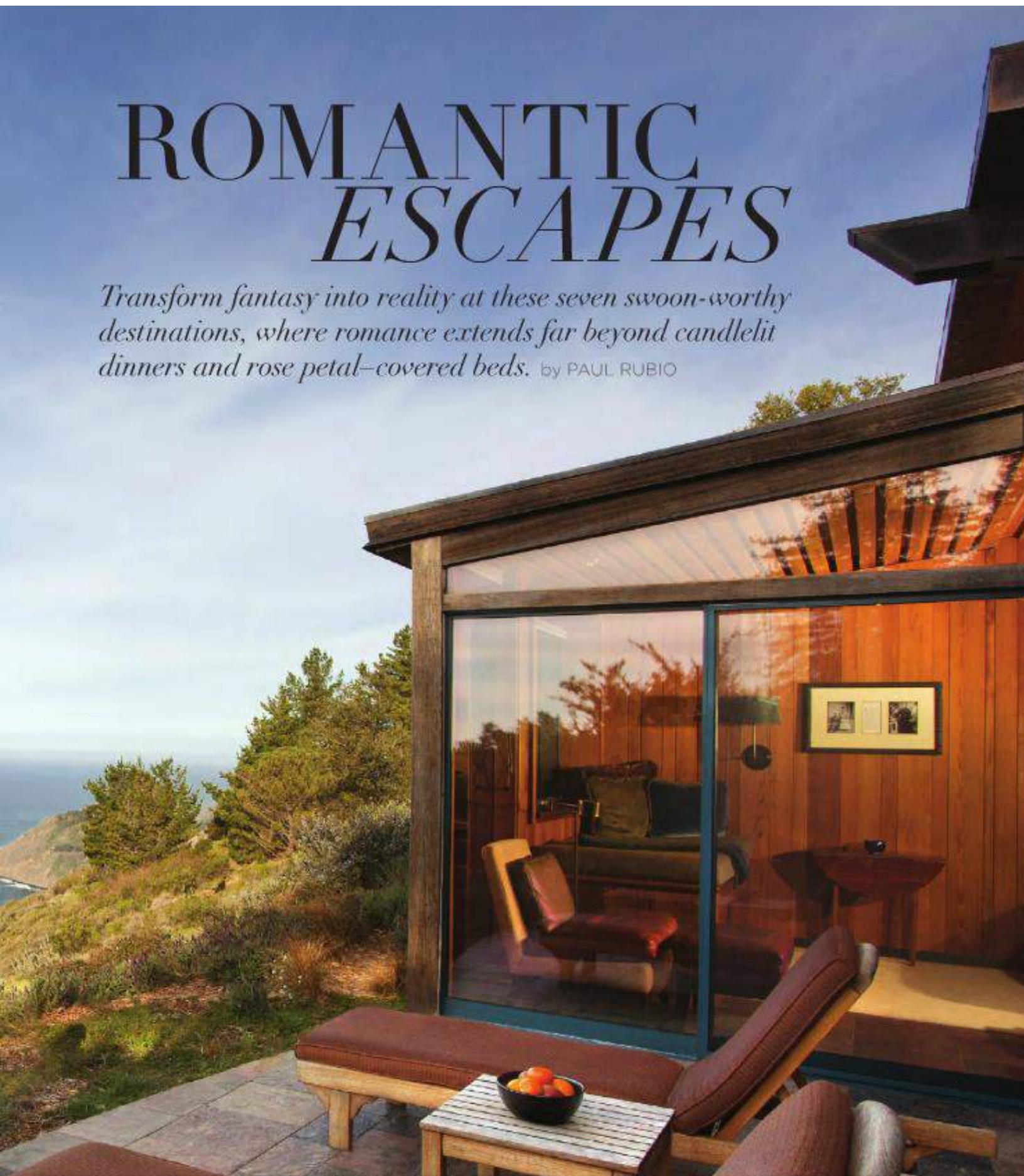
LUXURY MAGAZINE

WINTER 2015



ROMANTIC *ESCAPES*

Transform fantasy into reality at these seven swoon-worthy destinations, where romance extends far beyond candlelit dinners and rose petal-covered beds. by PAUL RUBIO



CARTAGENA & BOGOTÁ, COLOMBIA

Colombia has cleaned up its act, and the world is taking note. Now considered a safer and more secure travel destination thanks to enhanced military presence, protracted peace efforts with rebel groups, and an iron-fisted campaign against the illicit cultivation of coca, this emerging country is enjoying a deserved moment in time, celebrating the colonial grandeur, new-fashioned cities, ecological wonders, and rich cultures that, until recently, were unknown to those beyond its borders.

The explosion of big city sophistication in the country's capital, Bogotá, is the talk of Latin America, and hoteliers are scrambling to be part of the action. In the past few years, Marriott, Hyatt, Aloft, and Sheraton all joined the neighborhood. Most recently, higher-end brands have started moving in. First, the hypermodern **W Bogotá** (from \$150; starwood.com) arrived in September 2014 and now Four Seasons will open not one but two memorable properties: the **Four Seasons Hotel Casa Medina Bogotá** (from \$199; fourseasons.com/bogotacm), a reimagined version of the historic Hotel Casa Medina Bogotá, and the more contemporary **Four Seasons Hotel Bogotá** (from \$199; fourseasons.com/bogota).

Beyond the adventures and bragging rights of "discovering" the capital of this reborn nation, Colombia's seduction lies in its coastal crown jewel: Cartagena. Even during the country's darker years, the exquisitely preserved 16th-century architecture of Cartagena's walled city-center—evidenced by sprawling plazas, grandiose churches, monasteries, and colonial mansions—had branded it one of South America's superlative honeymoon spots. Nowadays, its cobblestone streets are candy-coated with stylish hotels, art galleries, open-air cafés, and fashion designer boutiques to match the lavish, flower-filled balconies and colonial majesty. It's the type of city where no itinerary is needed, and much of the romance lies in throwing away the map and simply getting lost.

In the heart of this dreamy, coastal Old Town, **Casa San Agustin** (from \$400; hotelcasasanagustin.com) meticulously incorporates modernity into the historic surrounds. Three whitewashed colonial-era buildings transformed into a boutique hotel, San Agustin's 30 singular rooms excite with wrought-iron four-poster beds, vintage Colombian artifacts, and, in some cases, plunge pools lined with jade tile—molded after the hotel's principal swimming pool. A few blocks north, Cartagena's grand dame,





Clockwise from left: Casa San Agustin; Casa Medina;

