THE LIFESTYLE ENTHUSIAST

A LUXURY FOOD & TRAVEL BLOG

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Hotel Casa San Agustin – the best boutique hotel in Cartagena, Colombia

I found it. I found my Latin American paradise. A milieu of all my favourite colours – bronzing terracotta, bright turquoise and lush greens – that's what I see when walking into Hotel Casa San Agustin. All the vivid colours. These colours are paired with slick marble flooring, original wooden beaming's and indulgently heavy linen – I couldn't have designed a better-looking Colombian hotel in my dreams.

Hotel Casa San Agustin is a truly unique place to stay, blending fascinating history with modern luxury. The hotel is made up of three former colonial houses from the 17th Century within the walled Centro Historico in Cartegena. These have been delicately restored from XVII century whitewashed Colonial-era homes into a dreamy hotel; it's luxurious, charming, pretty and filled to the brim with history.

The heart of the hotel is a gorgeous geometric turquoise haven of a pool, fit for a 21st century sultan. This is the centre point of Casa San Agustin and doubles as a tranquil spot for relaxation in the shadow of the 17th Century original aqueduct. The dramatic shadows that it casts and the unusual frames that it creates make it an instant favourite for Instagram.

Classical music, such as Pachbel's "Canon in D Minor" plays in the background, luring you into the most tranquil of pool-side snoozes. It also delightfully disguises the hotel rooms and suites from the eye of anyone walking through the hotels reception. It is heavenly and it took less than 15mins since walking into Hotel Casa San Agustin and one welcome cocktail to reach a state of total and utter relaxation there!

HELLO THERE

Hello! I'm Reena, a twenty something London-based travel and food blogger, with a love for incredible restaurants, great tea, luxury hotels and big, fluffy robes.

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Surrounding the pool are Hotel Casa San Agustin's bedrooms, kept to their original colonial style. The style is truly unique, influenced by each of the colonial homes from the past. One of the houses belonged to a Spanish Viscount who arrived in the Port of Cartagena in 1666 and married a local woman, Maria from Cartagena. Together, they built the house at the centre of the hotel. The second colonial house was once a women's convent. As the hotel is situated adjacent to the city's university, it is said that the men would attend the university and the women would attend the convent that preceded Casa San Agustin's existence.

So, a gorgeous pool and a whimsical history. Wonderful but of course that's not all. Each of the 30 bedrooms could impress even the most particular of discerning customers. Individually designed to incorporate all the modern wants with the classic features of a period property – it's exactly the kind of hotel I love – with the finish and polish of the most fancy of hotels but with all of the boutique details and attention to detail one could desire. What has resulted are the most exquisitely designed rooms with the best of Colombian and Spanish style, surrounding the pool.

Our suite was absolutely enormous. After the first few steps into the room you're struck by the enormity. This is grandeur in terms of both size and design. It's big, opulent and oh so beautiful. I just loved the finishings, elegant tiling and pretty wood-beamed high ceilings! The living room is welcoming, with a large sofa and two big kettle drums that double up as coffee tables. This is the perfect spot to get comfortable and unwind, but don't just yet, it gets even better!

Walk through the living room, through your first corridor. This could be your dressing room; there are more wardrobes than I have at home. For those who love to unpack you'll have ample space for all of your items and more, in case you wish to indulge in the local Colombian boutiques or see what's on offer with the street vendors. One of the wardrobes also encloses a complimentary mini-bar stocked to the brim with soft drinks and beers, attempting to stop you from melting in the Cartagena heat. Even before you get to your bedroom there is another phone... ideal for calling for some champagne on ice!

Grabbed your first drink? Great. Quench that heat and stroll over to the bedroom. Original wood beams lead you there, running parallel across the ceiling and serving as a reminder of the Colonial past of the hotel. These unique features add oodles of character to this luxury boutique hotel.

You're met by the comfiest King-sized bed, which offered us the best night's sleep of our trip thus far. Not just due to the large size nor the high thread-count Italian linens, but helped especially by the most extensive pillow menu that I've ever seen! Now those of you who spend the day staring at your laptop screen may struggle, like I do, with regular neck and shoulder pain. With three different types of orthopaedic pillows designed for pain coming from these regions, as well as, an anti-stress spa pillow (the Doc's preferred option) rest assured that your needs are catered for. I really, really wanted to take the pillow with me for the rest of the trip, but I kept some restrain, reluctantly!

In keeping with the enormity of the room we stayed in, there are also not one but two large widescreen TVs and an unusually big armchair in the corner of the room. It was almost throne-like, perfect to look out through the mahogany French doors at your private garden terrace, if you don't fancy going out to sunbathe.

The bathroom absolutely epitomises Instagram's popular hashtag #bathroomgoals! From the gorgeous mosaic tiles, Spanish style mirrors, large his and hers sinks to the plethora of towel options, there are many details to make you feel at home and that you will undoubtedly fall in love with.

The rain shower is incredibly powerful and will transport you herbal-essences style with the aid of the intoxicating scents of Italian Ortigia toiletries.

Fluffy robes and the toiletries on offer in hotels equate to my bread-test for restaurants. Casa San Agustin's pass with flying colours. They offer full size bottles of one of my favourite Italian brands, Ortigia. Just perfect to use in the powerful rain shower before wrapping yourself in the soft bath robes.

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It's a beautiful space and a tranquil spot to relax. If you can tear yourself away from your suite, head to breakfast in the hotels famous restaurant, Restaurant Alma. Alma is led by one of the most highly celebrated chefs in all of Colombia, Chef Eljach, who offers a large buffet spread of continental and regional dishes, as well as an extensive a la carte menu.

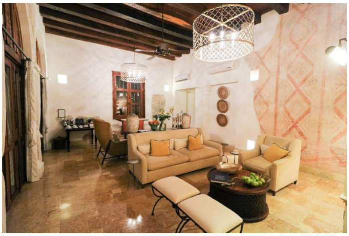
From local specials like the Cartagena breakfast (Yuca with cheese, butifura sausage, egg-filled arepa, tomato and onion salsa, sour cream, local Costeno cheese and corn bread) to classic favourites, like Eggs Benedict or Pancakes, they make to order whatever you like to your taste.

There are over ten types of cereal, tonnes of baked goods, homemade bagels, every tropical fruit you can think of, cured meats, smoked salmon, homemade nut butters and even champagne.

The most wonderful of waitresses, Yuli, offered us the warmest and friendliest of service that we had in Colombia. Together with the fabulous food, mimosas and pretty surroundings, you'll leave breakfast very full and very happy and potentially even a little tipsy!

As a member of the prestigious World's Leading Hotels group, it's unsurprising that service is integral to the ethos of Casa San Agustin. What is surprising is how serious that they take this. Caribbean coast culture seems to be one where the locals treat everyone as guests and welcome strangers into their own homes and Casa San Agustin builds on this to provide warm, friendly and finessed service. From contacting guests in advance to help with their itinerary planning to arranging personalised gifts for visitors during their stay, the staff at the hotel want to make your stay at Casa San Agustin as special as possible. It was especially noticeable at breakfast when the waiting staff knew each guests' first name and were not afraid to spend the time getting to know the guests.

Casa San Agustin is truly a unique boutique hotel and I, for one, have never experienced a place that combines history and luxury so incredibly perfectly. It's no easy feature when there are vast limitations on what changes can be made. In 1984, the walled city in the centre of Casa San Agustin was named a UNESCO Worlds Heritage Site. As such, a lot of the original features of the houses, from the beautiful wooden ceiling beams, the colourful frescoes on the walls of the Tea Room to the impeccable marbled flooring and stunning original windows.



This tea room is a seriously beautiful spot to unwind with a book. The tea room offers a complimentary mini afternoon tea each day from 5-6pm with tea, coffees and homemade cakes. I loved this concept though I was a little disappointed that the afternoon tea didn't include fresh Colombian coffee and instead Nespresso, a shame given how incredible the local coffee is! That said, Casa San Agustin have really good, authentic, English Breakfast Tea, a very rare find in Colombia and a great match for the delicate cakes, so my disappointment dissipated pretty instantly.

I absolutely loved our stay at Casa San Agustin and have already recommended it to so many of my friends. The romantic backdrop of the Colonial architecture, private swimming pools, as well as the unique design has taken my heart. I want to get back to my home from home, *mi casa colombiana*, Casa San Agustin, as soon as possible.

So, for those of you considering a trip to Colombia, get that higher up on your bucket list. It's one of the most beautiful countries I've ever visited and I can't recommend it enough. Put Casa San Agustin on the very top of your list, I just know how much you'll adore this place. Couples, Casa San Agustin epitomises everything you could ask of a romantic hotel. History buffs, I can't tell you how exquisite it is to swim in a pool around an original aqueduct, steeped in years of history. And flashpackers, I totally get it. It's a splurge but if you're looking to escape the bustle of Cartagena's touristy streets and unwind, this is 100% where you should treat yourself. You're going to absolutely love it!

More information and booking details can be found here.

Our stay, on a B&B basis, was complimentary. I loved every second of it and wholeheartedly recommend it – my opinions are completely my own.

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