

# Harper's BAZAAR

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## THE HOTLIST

Latin America's finest retreats, from cutting-edge design on the Mexican coast to colonial grandeur at the tip of the Iguazú Falls. *BY LYDIA BELL*

### BEST FOR NATURAL SPLENDOUR *Hotel das Cataratas, Brazil*

This incredible colonial-Portuguese mansion in tropical gardens of palms, rare orchids and bromeliads, acquired and renovated by Orient-Express, has a freshly minted commitment to environmental sustainability and a new look. It's one of the best-situated hotels in the world, alone on the Brazilian side of the Iguazú National Park, within earshot of the 275 thundering waterfalls, over which 1.5 million litres of water cascade every second, with rainbows blooming in the clouds of spray. The hotel's decor is true to its colonial genesis, with azulejos (painted tiles) and cool verandahs. Activities on tap include taking a chopper over the falls, and rainforest and river safaris (to see deer, jaguars and cougars). In the two restaurants, fish dishes predominate, due to the proximity of rivers. Then there is the Amazonian spa, where tropical fruits, butters and plant extracts are used in pampering post-hike treatments.

*Five nights, from £1,720 a person B&B, including flights and transfers, with Cazenove + Loyd (020 7384 2332; [www.cazloyd.com](http://www.cazloyd.com)).*



Luxe for LESS

### BEST FOR JUNGLE RELAXATION *Cuna del Angel, Costa Rica*

Remote Dominical, accessed by dusty, potholed roads, is a surfer town on the Central Pacific coast of Costa Rica with giant waves and a mellow feel. Five miles south of Dominical Beach is Cuna del Angel, a four-star resort with a five-star setting, in the rainforest overlooking the sea. This is the perfect spot to spend a mellow week immersed in the sounds of the jungle, with a breathtaking array of nature activities on tap. Cuna del Angel is the kind of unpretentious place where everyone knows your name. The rooms are pleasant and comfortable; there is a spa for a hydrotherapy, massages, facials and reflexology; and the restaurant is open for all meals – or staff can direct you to authentic local options.

*Cuna del Angel (+506 2787 8012; [www.cunadelangel.com](http://www.cunadelangel.com)), from about £85 a room a night.*

### BEST FOR UNSPOILT TRANQUILLITY *Kenoa, Brazil*

The arrival of an international airport is proof that things are on the up for the Brazilian state of Alagoas, north of Bahia but a long haul from Natal. This is still genuinely off-the-beaten-track territory though, and part of its appeal is the gentle Caribbean-style beauty of its beaches. The new Kenoa beach resort is a real game-changer for this tranquil backwater. It's sleekly modern in design, and built on a scale more commonly found in the plusher Far East resorts, with 23 villa-style suites and cabanas of sustainable local wood and stonework, and open-air bathrooms. Its position, right on the beach, is rare in Brazil. The spa offers 'back to nature'-style pampering, with massages by the waves, yogic stretching classes, and a level of sophistication you might not expect this far off the tourist trail, with heavenly Shiseido cranio-facial treatments available.

*Seven nights in a beachfront villa with infinity pool, from £2,910 a person, including flights, with Dehouche (+55 21 2512 3895; [www.dehouche.com](http://www.dehouche.com)).*



### BEST FOR BEACH LOUNGING *Be Tulum, Mexico*

The ruin-speckled white sands, tropical forests, unspoilt lagoons and dolphin-filled Caribbean waters of Riviera Maya once drew only hippies in hammocks. But the coast has grown up, and the 'linen suit and Jackie-O shades' brigade from Mexico City and Miami now jet in to its gleaming hotels. Tulum is one beach retaining a hidden allure, with its sexy little boltholes. One of these is the adults-only Be Tulum, its 20 light-drenched suites made of natural materials, with big terraces, private pools and designer furniture. There's a small spa, beach club and lounge bar. Best of all, the beaches are deserted and the vibe is chilled.

*Seven nights, from £1,548 a person, including flights and transfers, with Journey Latin America (020 8747 8315; [www.journeylatinamerica.co.uk](http://www.journeylatinamerica.co.uk)).*



### BEST FOR COOL DESIGN *Playa Vik José Ignacio, Uruguay*

For the in-crowd in this part of the world, the barefoot and boho village of José Ignacio is the new Punta del Este (which is only seven miles down the road). A growing crowd flocks to its rugged, windswept beaches, boutique boltholes, artist studios, insider restaurants and tucked-away villas. Estancia Vik José Ignacio, a 12-suite colonial-style ranch house with polo field and stable, has been up and running for a year; and in June, Playa Vik José Ignacio arrived. Playa Vik has designers bristling with envy, for architects James Turrell, Anselm Kiefer and Zaha Hadid all had a hand in its six unique casas, surrounding a central 'sculpture' building designed by the Uruguayan Carlos Ott, with a cantilevered pool hanging 32 feet over the beach garden below. □

*Six nights, including three at Playa Vik José Ignacio and three at Estancia Vik José Ignacio, plus transfers and activities, costs from about £2,430 a person B&B, with Aracari Destiny (020 7193 0423; [www.aracaridestiny.com](http://www.aracaridestiny.com)).*