

EDGES *of* GLORY

ELIO IANNACCI maps out some of the world's most distinctive destinations.



ARTISAN-INSPIRED DECOR IN MUKUL'S BEACH CLUB LOUNGE

NICARAGUA

MUKUL

With its misty volcanos, reliable Pacific waves and verdant rainforests, Nicaragua has been a backpacking haven for dedicated surfers, adventure lovers and eco-enthusiasts, who have been exploring the country for years. However, thanks to the wealthy Pellas family, a new type of tourist is discovering the country in a vastly different way.

Instead of waiting for the likes of Donald Trump and André Balazs to invest in Nicaragua, the Pellas clan—known as the force behind Flor de Cañarum rum—built a beachside boutique hotel in Guacalito de la Isla so affluent travellers could have a luxe Central American locale to lounge in. Consider-

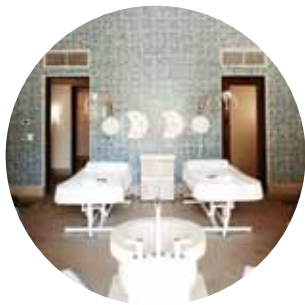
ing the whispers that Madonna and Matthew McConaughey have already had extended stays at the place, the resort's name, Mukul (Mayan for "secret"), may not be applicable in a few months.

The \$250-million property—which includes 37 private villas and *bohios*, an expansive beachfront and an 18-hole golf course—boasts the meticulousness of a Four Seasons establishment with its manicured foliage and brushed sand. Each lodging has a consistent look that links to the hotel's lobby, resto and indoor/outdoor bar space. The property embraces a muted palette of blues, whites and creams derived from »

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LA MESA DINING ROOM



RAIN FOREST SPA

Nicaraguan art and houses furniture by interior designer Paul Duesing made by local craftsmen. Each villa and *bohio* comes with a private dipping pool and a wraparound deck that reminds visitors of the sprawling coastline at every turn (as well, the showers contain large windows so you can bathe in beauty). The eclectic menus reflect the same sense of majesty, as international cuisine is mixed with such local musts as organic steaks, red snapper, ceviche and java.

Those who can bear to leave Mukul's captivating grounds have the option to book a car or helicopter ride to tour the islands or the town of Granada. The former outing offers a rare glimpse of the country's impressive volcanos, and the latter features magnificent cathedrals and buildings constructed in the 1500s.

For those who choose to take a powder, the resort's full-service spa offers guests more than 200 treatments to choose from. Housed in six cabanas—each dedicated to a different spa practice—the facility prides itself on using products that incorporate Nicaragua's most prized ingredients, including volcanic ash and local herbs. The facilities are also located at the highest peak of the property, so spa-goers get to experience panoramic heights while getting pampered.

One of the best reasons to stay at Mukul is the way the professional staff connects with guests. A nearby hotel school, also funded by the Pellas family, employs experts in customer service from around the world who come to guide Mukul's staff through the hosting arts.



INDOOR/OUTDOOR DESIGN SCHEME



A BOHIO OVERLOOKING THE SPARKLING COAST