

TRUTH IN TRAVEL

CONDÉ NAST

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Traveler

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A different outfit for
the road: Phillip's art pieces
and other gear hang
and dry at night under



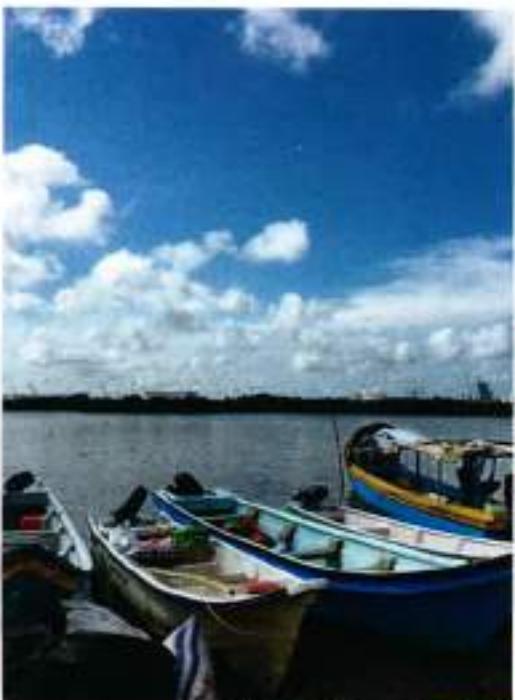
SOMEWHERE NEW HOW DESIGNER PHILLIP LIM GOT OUT OF HIS TRAVEL RUT IN COLOMBIA



► "The road opened my mind as a designer," says New York-based Phillip Lim, and, though they were expected to hit cities—such as Miami, Paris, again and again, he's at the point where everything's "a destination." Which is why last summer Lim spontaneously hopped his plane to Cambodia and traveled around its southern border himself. Two weeks later he returned reinvigorated by the trip's mix of rugged beauty, the bins, the humor, the madly started plotting his next trip without a flight plan. "We were looking for a place that was 'over-played' but also not too rough," he adds. "We wanted some culture, but 'rough' is cool." Another recent sojourn to Colombia had him at once spellbound by its landscape shifts—Andean peaks, dense rain forests, tropical beach towns—Cultural touchstones

Days 1 and 2: Museo Botero and Street Food

"I'm a very fanatical traveler," says Lim, from Bogota, says the urban capital, where he stayed at the Four Seasons Hotel. "I grew up in Bogota." In thinking back on his young days, he says, "You'd see the gritty ends of things; I'd try to go to your nose if I'm pride that people have in their culture. Much of their art was kept in La Candelaria, the old town where traditional Spanish colonial houses were wedged between the rough city blocks. At the Deco government building, "Nowhere you'll find most of the sights you can't see like the



Colombia's coastal life is highly influenced by indigenous culture, including Colombia's indigenous people, who have inhabited the country for thousands of years.



After one more night in Bogotá, the group made their way to the city's main square, Plaza de Bolívar, the Museo Botero (known for its robust collection of the Colombian artist's works) as well as pieces by Dalí, Chagall, and de Kooning, and the Museo del Oro, which has one of the world's largest collections of pre-Columbian gold objects. They also shopped the San Alejo flea market for salsa ponchos and more artisan bags, pausing at food carts when they got hungry. "I couldn't stop with the arepas, sweet plantain over bread, and I was obsessed with the carne desestillada, a beef stew the locals swear cures anything,"

Days 3 and 4: Birds, Hikes, and Hammocks

From Bogotá, Lom and his friends took an hour-long flight to Armenia in the coffee-growing region where many affluent Colombians have second homes. They used the farmhouse turned hotel [Hacienda Bambara](#), about 12 miles outside of the city, as their base. One day they hired a jeep and a driver and went to the Cocora Valley, to hike and bird watch. "It's a nature lover's dream—you're in the rainforest, birds everywhere, and it's like the plants are on steroids." They spent another day wandering around Salento, a colonial village with the Andes jutting up in the background. The group packed a lunch two days but still had time to relax in the hotel's hammocks with a drink. "Actually, everywhere I turned people were like, 'Beer?' I'd have breakfast... and then a beer."

Days 5–8: Beach and Bikes

Finally they made their way to Cartagena, the 16th-century port town that faces the Caribbean and is divided into two parts: the historic walled city and a cluster of new high-rise beach neighborhoods.

"Immediately you sense the Afro-Caribbean influence in the food and music," says Lom. "It's so different from Bogotá—it's more vibrant, and there's that crazy tropical blue water." They booked three nights at the 20-room [Casa San Agustín](#) (wood-beamed ceilings, bougainvillea, the courtyard), in the center of the old city, which feels like a tour-de-force medieval tower where horses still pull carts teetering with fruit. They chartered a boat to go snorkeling off the Rosario Islands and ducked in to the Bazu, a market for just-caught shrimp. Lom especially loved hiking around the city. "It was our last day and we rode for hours. If you when you're a kid and then it was dusk and the public squares became communal living rooms—people dancing, cooking, even exercising. We had a reservation at a must-try restaurant but we blew it off, he says. "We ended up eating delicious charcoal chicken from a street vendor instead."

