

Press Coverage 2018: Casa San Agustín

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COUNTRY LIFE's favourite hotels: Latin America

Casa San Agustín, Cartagena, Colombia

AMONG the cobbled alleys, arcaded squares and pastel-coloured houses draped in bougainvillea, Casa San Agustín has been swiftly gathering plaudits. A trio of characterfully restored, whitewashed 17th-century colonial homes in Cartagena's old walled city, this handsome hotel is rooted in earthy Colombian style, but has been given a contemporary shake-up.

A peaceful retreat from the throng of the streets below, terracotta-paved corridors lead to 30 elegant rooms and suites, done up in creamy tones with dashes of aquamarine. Four-poster, ironwork beds are paired with rustic furniture, over-sized lamps and local artwork. The marble bathrooms are lined with Moorish tiles and Ortigia products. Low-beamed ceilings give the whole place a cosy feel. Floor-to-ceiling windows flood every inch with light, leading out onto private patios (some with plunge pools)—book the Suite Del Virrey for the best rooftop views.

A strong sense of heritage runs throughout. The library features original frescoes on the wall—curl up with a good paperback on one of the capacious wicker chairs. In the charming courtyard downstairs, framed by palm trees, the 300-year-old aqueduct takes pride of place with the heated freshwater pool running beneath it. The glorious weather can be soaked up further on the upstairs terrace, dotted with stylish rattan sunloungers and redolent with purple flowers.

The golden-hued Aurum spa offers relaxing treatments, harnessing local ingredients—plump for the detoxifying Coffee Body Scrub.

As the day draws to a close, settle in at Alma, one of the best restaurants in the city. Chef Heberto Eljach conjures up innovative takes on coastal Colombian classics—top marks to the seafood chowder (a delicious medley of octopus, prawns, lobster and mussels). On Friday, go to hear some local tunes live—Cartagena has one of the best music scenes in Latin America.

Harriet Compston

Rates start from £370 for a double room on a B&B basis (00 57 5 6810000; www.hotelcasasanagustin.com)

