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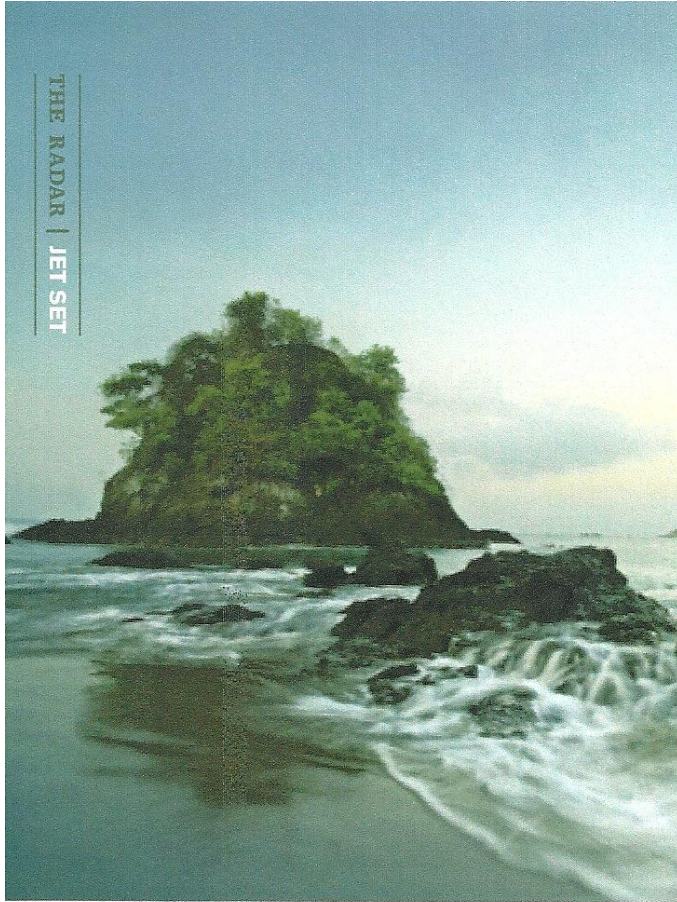
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Into the Mild

New jungle hideaways reassert Costa Rica's place as an adventure-friendly eco-paradise

| By Richard Martin |

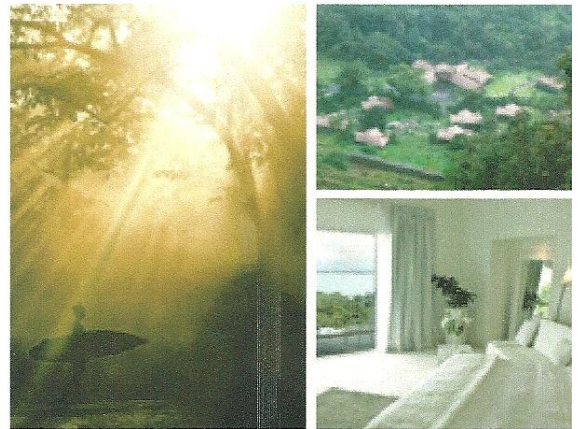
It's a humid, languorous morning in Parque Manuel Antonio on Costa Rica's central Pacific coast, and tourists are milling about on the jungle redoubt's main trail, snapping photos of fluorescent butterflies. All is tranquil—until a fierce fight breaks out. Not among the camera-toting visitors, but overhead in the trees, where a group of agitated white-faced capuchins ("the gangsters of the jungle," a guide quips), and much screeching, sucker punching and, of course, howling ensues. It all seems staged, but it can't be. These are the wilds of Central America, and the handsome yet vulnerable howlers, with their stomach-rattling basso profundo calls, should have known better than to invade the capuchins' space.

Such is life in the jungle, but not up the road at the brand new boutique **Suu Hotel** (rates from \$200, 506.277.773.73, thesuuhotels.com), where monkeys swing undisturbed from trees just off the balconies of 28 spacious ocean-view rooms—each with its own private butler. The setting here is perfect. The restaurant, Gusto,

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is helmed by a Peruvian chef who draws equally from his homeland's on-trend cuisine as well as locally sourced ingredients from land and sea; the tables offer vistas of the forest canopy with the Pacific beyond it. The spa's soundtrack is nature itself; the rooms are practically embedded in the cliff. Not in view, but down a short (albeit steep) trail is the lightly trafficked local black-and-white-sand Biesanz Beach, perfect for sunbathing or a dip in the Caribbean-like cove. For those in search of a surfing lesson or a more expansive coastline, the staff at the Suu make seamless arrangements for these and other nearby activities.

Trips to Costa Rica merit a visit to more than one region, and while tourists often head up the Pacific to Guanacaste (where the venerable Four Seasons will soon have competition from a new Mandarin Oriental), or to the active Arenal Volcano, or to the surging yet remote Caribbean-coast province of Limón, those in search of a more adventurous second act have intriguing options. Though it's about as easy to find as Osama bin Laden, **El Silencio Lodge and Spa** (rates from \$210 per person per night based on double occupancy, three meals included, 506.276.103.01, elsilenciolodge.com) pays dividends on the mountain-climbing, cliff-hugging drive through the cloud forest it asks guests to endure. The 500-acre reserve opened just three years ago, and few have yet to discover its mesmerizing charms. Visitors (usually couples, though solitude seekers and office retreats come through) occupy one of 16 artfully appointed cabins spread throughout the property, each equipped with an outdoor hot tub and gas fireplace. An eco-concierge escorts you on hikes to the reserve's waterfalls and its organic garden, and can arrange day trips—from white-water rafting to a coffee plantation tour. The spa features a yoga platform that bridges a mountain stream, while the lodge's stone fireplace and floor-to-ceiling windows will make you feel like you're in a jungle paradise—exactly why you came to Costa Rica in the first place. ☑



JUNGLE LOVE Clockwise from top left: A Manuel Antonio beach; an overhead view of the lodge and suites at El Silencio; the ocean view from within a suite at Suu Manuel Antonio; surfing at dawn in Costa Rica.