



VILLA CAMILLA

By Asia Sherman

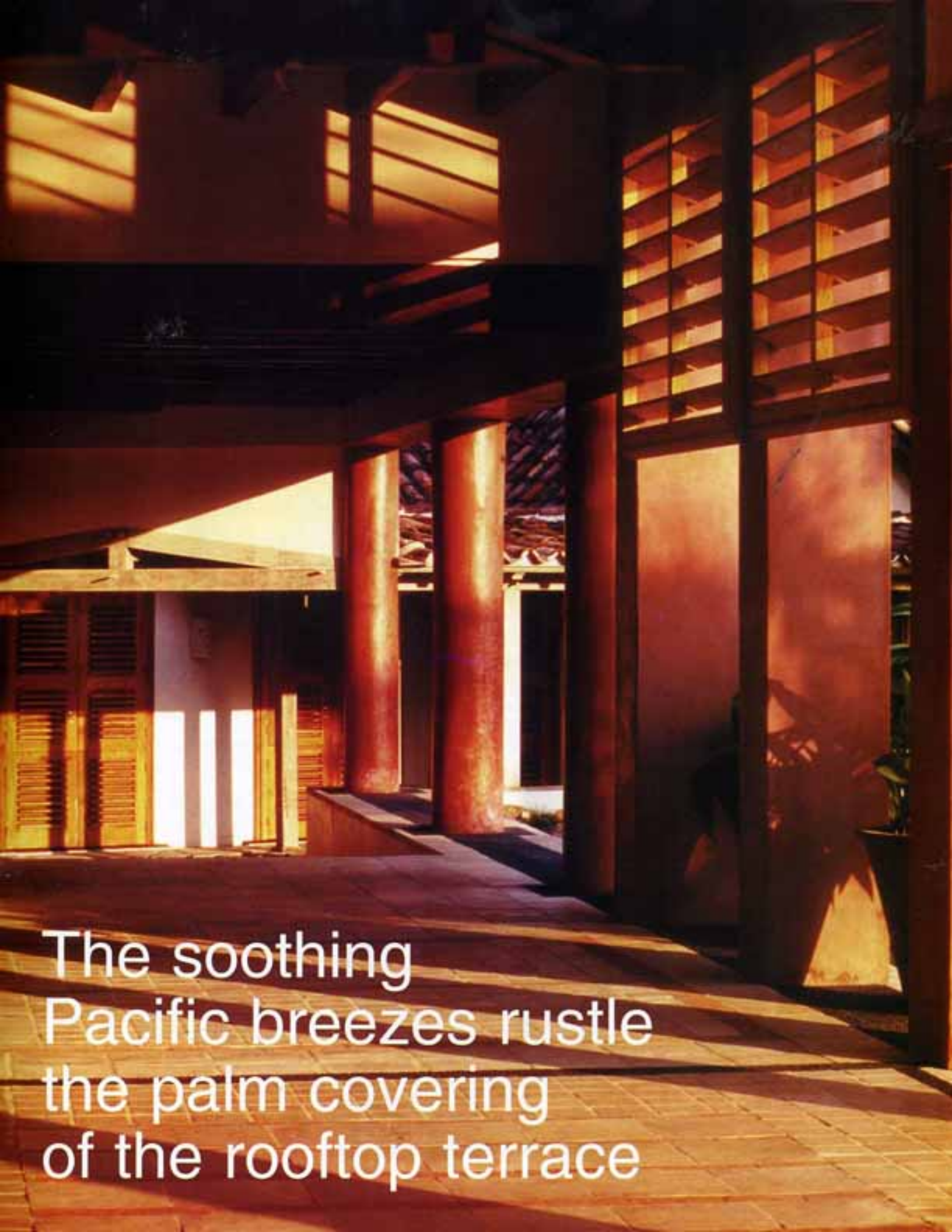
Travel down a country road from Pedasi, a fishing village on the coast of Panama's Azuero Peninsula. The road winds through dry tropical forests, crosses streams, passes pastureland where horses and cattle graze. Then, seemingly out of nowhere, the dream begins. On the right appears a walled enclosure, a smooth color of Spanish terracotta. Stop at an unmarked teak portal, ring the cast iron bell. Villa Camilla's large teak door swings open to reveal a unique tropical retreat.

Villa Camilla, a guesthouse set on the crown of a hill overlooking the

Pacific, is the first testament to an internationally acclaimed architect's dream of creating an elegant lifestyle nestled in nature. In 1997, Gilles Saint-Gilles and his wife Camille arrived from Paris to visit friends and were immediately seduced by the peninsula's folkloric character and the rolling hills, which reminded them of Tuscany. Drawing from a portfolio which includes Arab palaces, high-end apartments, designer boutiques and renovation of medieval French castles, the couple stayed to create Azueros, an ocean-side community in harmony with the environment, blending exquisite design with Old World craftsmanship.

At Villa Camilla, bougainvillea climbs the hand-rubbed venetian plaster walls. Water trickles over the wide edges of the pool. The soothing Pacific breezes rustle the palm covering of the rooftop terrace. Footpaths set in river stone wander through immaculate gardens of tropical flowers and trees. Unspoiled vistas stretch over gentle hills into a wide Pacific blue.

By day, the friendly staff serves refreshing beverages - chilled coconut, lemongrass, mint infused waters, fresh fruit juices. In the evenings, guests gather for tropical cocktails in the grand salon with its



The soothing
Pacific breezes rustle
the palm covering
of the rooftop terrace



collection of pre-Columbian antiques or on the terrace as the sun sets into a vibrant sky. Fireflies begin to flicker around the garden. All is simply orchestrated. The 20-foot wooden dining table is laid with a crisp white tablecloth, careful table settings and beautiful flowers. Guests also have the option of dining privately on the poolside terrace.

At every corner, details testify to the architect's aesthetic. Water from an outdoor faucet is caught on an elevated flat river rock. Outdoor pool showers are artfully concealed on either side of an antique wooden door. A stacked stone wall surrounds a large mango tree, laden with fruit in season. An intricate iron gate leads to an entry courtyard with a gurgling fountain and a circular bread oven.

And within the comforts of seven unique guestrooms are more details to be discovered. From the Jacaranda room's towering dome made of 3,669 red bricks to the Roble room's parquet floor of oak imported from France and native hardwoods; from the vast baths and showers to the dream-like wall appliques, from the four-poster beds to the wood-pegged beams; from the terracotta floors made from the red earth of the region to the locally handmade tiles; from the exposed structure of the Hibiscus Cottage's roof to custom-made furniture of Gilles Saint-Gilles design, all celebrates expertise and provides visual enchantment.

Beyond the Villa's gardens, guests can amble down paths to Azueros' smooth sand beaches or past the workshops where local craftsmen trained by Old World master artisans create furnishings and woodwork for the gracious homes being built on the property. For guests who prefer other modes of meandering, mountain bikes and horses can be arranged.

There is much to be explored on the Peninsula, famed for its rich folkloric history, national parks and festivals. A trip through the Los Santos Province gives the feeling of stepping



back in time. Cowboys ride along newly paved roads. Men wearing sombreros gather in roadside cantinas. Local tours take visitors to arts & crafts workshops where polleras, the colorful and elaborate national dress, originated. Offshore is Panama's famed Tuna Coast where world-class fishing and secluded islands await.



How to Get There:

40 minutes by charter plane from Panama City, or by car, a 4-hour drive from Panama City over the Pan-American Highway through colonial roadside towns.

Rates:

From \$300 to \$450 a night

Accommodations:

Two rooms with twin beds, 4 rooms with queen size beds and a separate cottage with one queen and twin beds

Facilities and Amenities:

Pool with panoramic views, grand salon with wireless Internet, air-conditioning, laundry service, national and international phone access, bar and restaurant.

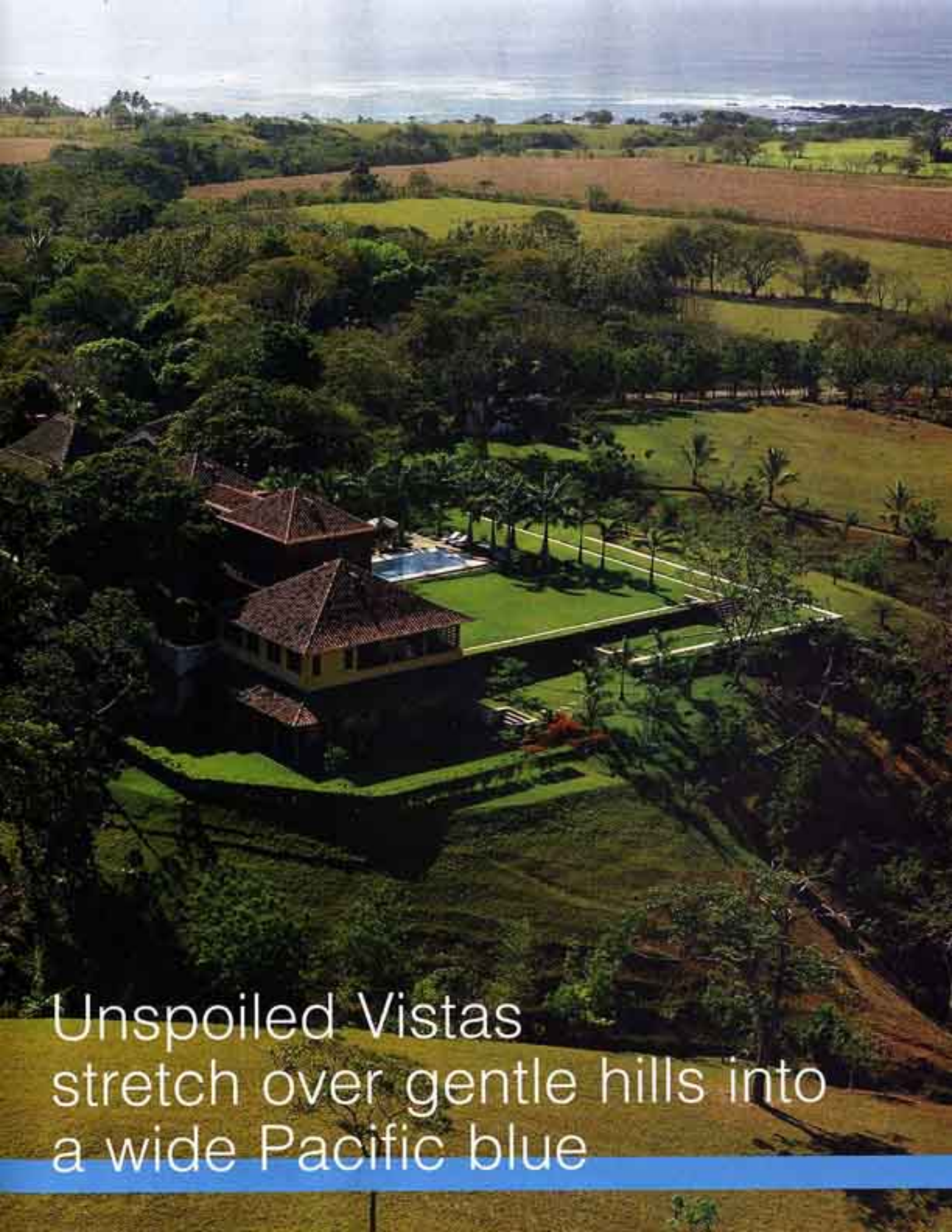
Food: French-inspired Panamanian cuisine

Area Activities: Beach walks, boating, diving, snorkeling, surfing, horseback riding, mountain biking, cultural and island tours

Contact:

Villa Camilla Reservations
reservationsvc@azueros.com
(507) 232-6721 / (507) 6670-6721
www.villacamillahotel.com

Azueros Sales
info@azueros.com
(507) 232-5050
www.azueros.com



Unspoiled Vistas
stretch over gentle hills into
a wide Pacific blue