

Condé Nast Traveller

APRIL 2019

THE EDITORS' LIST 2019

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£60 a night*





HOTEL AGUAS CLARAS PUERTO VIEJO, COSTA RICA

THE SCOOP: DOUBLES FROM ABOUT £200

With its expert surf breaks and crowds of wellness seekers, the free-spirited west coast has become a must-visit on most Costa Rican circuits. But on a pocket of the Caribbean's more undiscovered south-east coastline is a funky little town called Puerto Viejo, which moves to an easy reggae beat at the edge of an untouched beach. It is home to the newly renovated boutique hotel Aguas Claras, a labour of love for artist owner Elizabeth Steinvorth who bought a holiday home here 30 years ago – back when it had no electricity or tarmac roads. When the cluster of run-down cabanas on stilts next door went up for sale, Steinvorth recognised their charm and set about rebuilding each one using natural local materials and upcycled furniture. The place is now bang up-to-speed; the bar mixes a mean Guaro Sour, the restaurant serves sophisticated dishes of sea-bass ceviche and plantain with fresh guacamole, and there are bicycles on hand for pootling into town or ambling up the coast. All around is jungle: you may wake to the shouts of a howler monkey and the screech of a macaw, or spot a sloth up a tree or an emerald basilisk in the undergrowth around the pool. But the artistic touches are what set this space apart. Cabanas are done up in breezy whites with cheerful splashes of colour, bright fabrics, paintings inspired by the property's tropical surroundings, and mirrors and lampshades hand-decorated with shells from the beach: all the work of Steinvorth and her network of creative friends. It's a living installation and lovely hotel rolled into one – in an ahead-of-the-curve part of the country. **BOOK IT** +506 2750 0131; hotelaguasclaras.com