



Here & Abroad

HACIENDA TO RENT

ZIHUA WITH STYLE



By their own account, Yvonne and Jacques Baldassari's **El Murmullo**, the magnificent cliff-hugging villa recently added to La Casa Que Canta in Mexico, may never be completely finished. "We are always changing things in order to stay current," Baldassari says. Still, the four-suite *palacio* on Zihuatanejo Bay, on the Pacific Coast, looks

awfully good as it is. The couple (he's French, she's Mexican) have unfailing good taste; they directed the renovation of El Murmullo themselves, adding plunge pools to every suite, an infinity pool steps away from the new palapa-roofed dining promontory, and a collection of joyful Mexican folk art. The rooms, each with terraces, are done in white adobe with wood beams, stone floors, and hand-painted furniture (it's best to take all four rooms at once, since the house is a bit too intimate to share with strangers). There isn't much to do here: An activity-packed resort it's not; nor is it an isolated par-

adise with its own undisturbed sand. But being at El Murmullo, as at Que Canta, just 25 yards away, you're seduced into the slow and easy Mexican way of life. In fact, there's nothing inauthentic here, from the thatched rooftops to the views of colorful little Zihuatanejo up the coast. The food and drink are some of the best traditional Mexican we've had (citrusy whitefish ceviche and a Michelada, lime juice and beer on the rocks, are perfect poolside), and the all-local Murmullo staff (including chef) are enthusiastic but never fussy. This is one thing that can't be improved. Rates, \$575; \$2,750 for all four suites; 888-523-5050; www.elmurmullodelacasaquecanta.com **JEFFRIES BLACKERBY**

LUXE GOODS

PUTTING ON THE DOG

New York interior designer Betsy Boggs, who's been gussying up human digs for years, is now doing the same for canines. Inspired by Precious, her papillon-King Charles spaniel mix rescued from a road accident in South Carolina, Boggs began **Precious Palaces** dog beds with the ornate Marie Antoinette model—fit, of course, for a queen. Since then she's come up with an S&M studded faux-leather ottoman, for little toughies like her Luvy, and a Louis XVI canopy fourposter, purchased by the Princess of Dubai for her Pekingese. Among other favorites: the Chinoiserie-style Precious Pagoda (right, \$3,500). 212-980-3677.

KATHLEEN FITZPATRICK

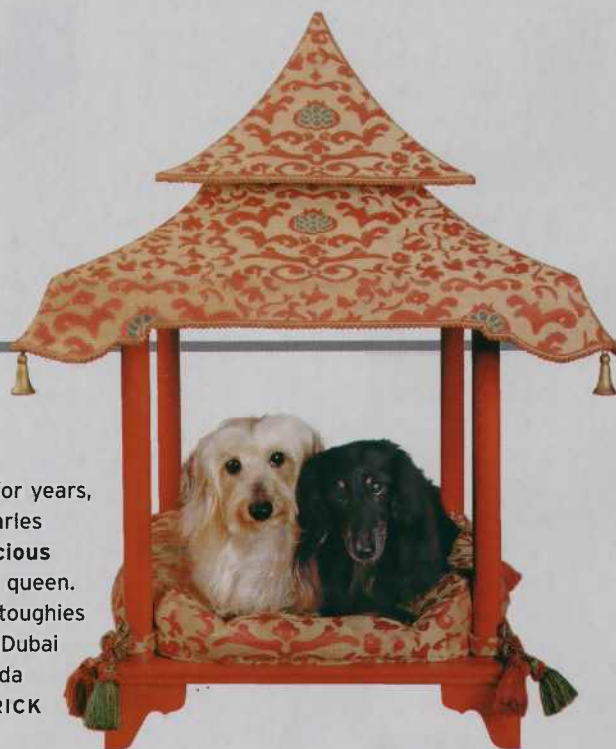


Espai Coch

JUST OUTSIDE BARCELONA

Checking In

Santi Santamaria, a jovial Catalan with three Michelin stars, is already well respected by his compatriots for his restaurant **Can Fabes**. About half an hour outside Barcelona, in his hometown of Sant Celoni, it serves simple, innovative dishes like eels in garlic and capsicum oil and John Dory with squid in sausage sauce. Now Santamaria has added hotelier to his résumé, opening up five rooms above the restaurant. The sleek decor is nothing like the rustic Can Fabes: Everything is black, white, and gray, with lots of clean surfaces, and midcentury modern furniture. Santamaria didn't stop there. He also opened another restaurant in the building called **Espai Coch**, serving casual meals from a menu that changes weekly. With any luck, you'll catch the rock mussels in tomato sauce and duck with dried fruit. Hotel rates, \$300-\$350. Dinner at Can Fabes, \$300. Dinner at Espai Coch, \$125. At 6 Sant Joan, Sant Celoni; 34-93-867-28-51; www.canfabes.com. **GISELA WILLIAMS**



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: JEFFRIES BLACKERBY (2); COURTESY CAN FABES; LORI SASH-GAIL/TONY PASSERA