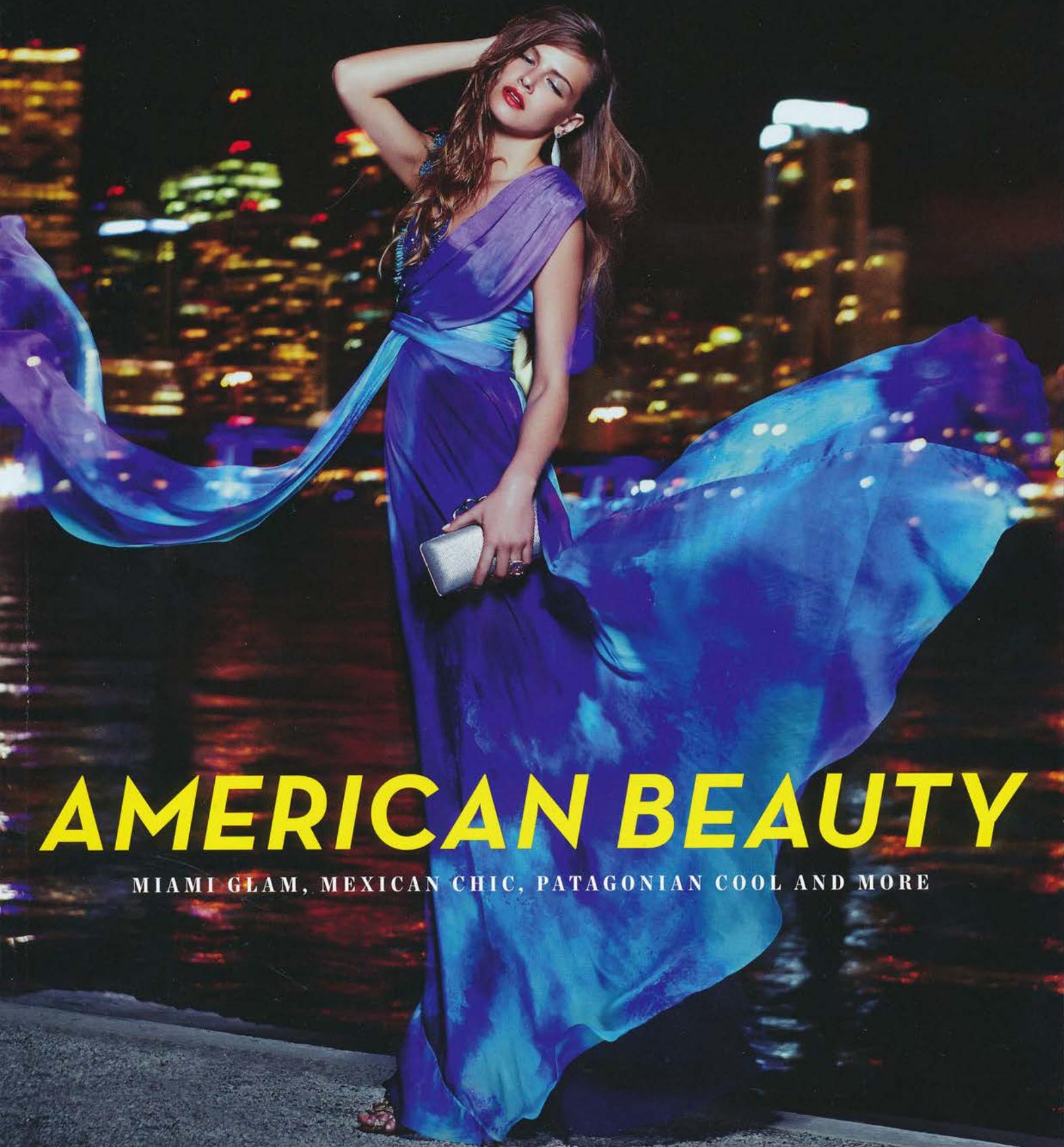


# DEPARTURES

[www.departures-international.com](http://www.departures-international.com)

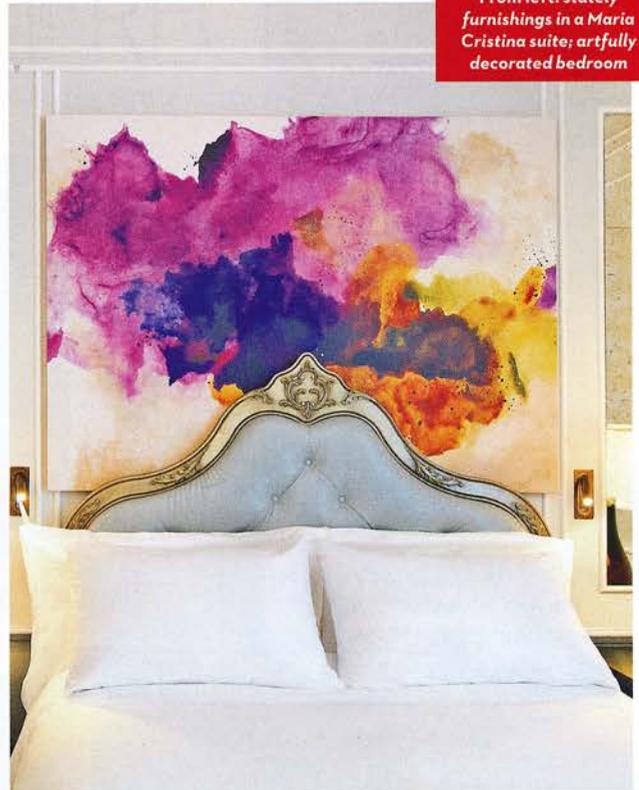
SUMMER 2013



## AMERICAN BEAUTY

MIAMI GLAM, MEXICAN CHIC, PATAGONIAN COOL AND MORE

**THE NEW MUST** COLOMBIA'S RETURN TO TRAVEL RELEVANCE  
**GREAT DRIVE** A PICTURESQUE JOURNEY THROUGH THE FLORIDA KEYS  
**BEYOND STEAK** THE GASTRONOME'S GUIDE TO BUENOS AIRES



From left: stately furnishings in a Maria Cristina suite; artfully decorated bedroom

REINVENTING AN ICON

# ROYAL STANDARD

Retaining her imposing sense of majesty, Hotel Maria Cristina has reopened in true style

In the hotel business, centenaries are marked by great celebrations, wholesale refurbishments or a combination thereof – think of New York’s Plaza Hotel, Marrakech’s La Mamounia or the Ritz in Paris, which is currently undergoing a two-year face-lift. And so it was that late last year with the great pomp and pantomime of a fashion show-cum-multi-course dinner attended by the great and good, San Sebastián’s grande dame, the Hotel Maria Cristina, reopened along the river Urumea in this seaside Basque town as a reborn ode to its namesake, the eponymous former queen of Spain.

Like the Ritz in Paris, it, too, was designed by French architect Charles Mewès in a Belle Époque style that the London-based design firm HBA has largely retained in the commodious



**MUST-DO**

No visit to San Sebastián would be complete without a few hours spent luxuriating in the therapeutic heated saltwater hydrotherapy pools, steam baths and waterfalls of the **La Perla** thalassotherapy centre, located seafront on the city’s Belle Époque promenade. [la-perla.net](http://la-perla.net)

public spaces, with their soaring ceilings, intricate plasterwork and towering marble pillars. The lion’s share of the €20 million investment has been lavished on updating the hotel’s ageing infrastructure and on the 136 exquisitely designed rooms and suites, which are eclectically furnished in muted earth tones, restrained greys and soft pastels.

As befitting the gastronomic credentials of city that has become an international culinary capstone, the two on-site restaurants serve superb food of the Asian and pan-European sort, as well as cocktails that are, much like this northern Spanish city on the Cantabrian coastline, wonderfully intoxicating. **D**

[hotel-mariacristina.com](http://hotel-mariacristina.com)

FARHAD HEYDARI