



Itinerary | Cartagena's Burgeoning Style Scene

TRAVEL | By MAURA EGAN | MAY 16, 2014 11:30 AM



Clockwise from left: Courtesy of St. Dom; Kiko Kairuz (2).
From left: fashion emporium St. Dom; seating and seafood at Maria.

The sultry city of Cartagena has for some time been a weekend destination for wealthy Colombians and in-the-know international globetrotters. They come to stroll the cobblestone streets lined with faded colonial homes, dance and drink rum at the always bustling Club Havana, and then sleep off their hangovers on the postcard-perfect beaches on the nearby islands. Recently, though, Cartagena has seen an influx of more stylish restaurants, shops and hotels (the Ritz Carlton and Four Seasons are coming soon), which can make the city worthy of a longer stay. And with a new, direct JetBlue flight available from New York, it's more convenient than ever.

St. Dom: A fashion emporium

Started by a Colombian-Croatian couple — they met while they were both working at Ralph Lauren in New York City — this **lifestyle emporium** features high-end Colombian fashion and design. In addition to Azulu, the couple's own line, the store features fashion-forward designers like Polite, Lobo Rosa, Primavera Accesorios and Kika Vargas. You'll also find a well-curated mix of art books, furniture and ceramics designed by local artisans. *Calle Santo Domingo 33-70, Centro, 571-635-4380*

Nohra Haime Gallery: The art destination

After running this New York gallery for years, the Colombian-born Gina Olmo de Trucco recently opened a **Cartagena outpost**. Olmo de Trucco shows a mix of blue-chip artists including the French artist Niki de Saint Phalle, who died in 2002, as well as the 82-year-old Bogotá legend Olga de Amaral, who is known for her large textile pieces. This past spring, Olmo de Trucco was the force behind the city's first art biennial, which hosted an impressive roster of international talent including Oscar Murillo and Ruby Rumie. *Carrera 2 # 33-36, 575-664-0561.*

María: The seafood spot

The chef Alejandro Ramírez worked his way through army mess tents to the best kitchens abroad (Gordon Ramsay's empire in London, Prague, Tokyo and Daniel restaurant in Manhattan) before returning home. At his **bistro-style restaurant**, Ramírez offers a Mediterranean-inspired menu featuring the best of local seafood as well as artisanal cocktails. *Centro Calle del Colegio 6A, 011-57-5-660-5380.*

Demente: After-hours tapas

Located in the heart of the fast-gentrifying Getsamani neighborhood (Cartagena's answer to Brooklyn), **Demente** draws a late-night crowd for its classic tapas. Nicolas Wiesner, who started out in banking and finance before trying his hand at cooking in Spain, has created a relaxed atmosphere with rocking chairs, a retractable roof and the local Aguila beer on tap. *Plaza de La Trinidad, 011-57-5-660-4226.*

Frank & Frank: Four stories of fun

This **clubby restaurant** is housed in a four-story colonial manse. The menu is eclectic and the crowd is hip, and guests can easily move from the more formal dining room downstairs to the casual terraces on the top floors. The friendly owners (who once ran an advertising firm) turn every night into a stylish house party. *Calle del Colegio 34-25, 011-57-5-668-6124.*

Casa San Agustin: A modern room in an old mansion

Tucked on a busy street in the city center, this former 17th-century mansion now houses an **elegant 31-room hideaway**. Though the setting feels very tropical — palm-filled courtyards, a turquoise lap pool in the center of the lobby — the rooms (air-conditioning, iPod docks) are state of the art. *Calle de la Universidad 36-44, 011-57-5-681-0000.*