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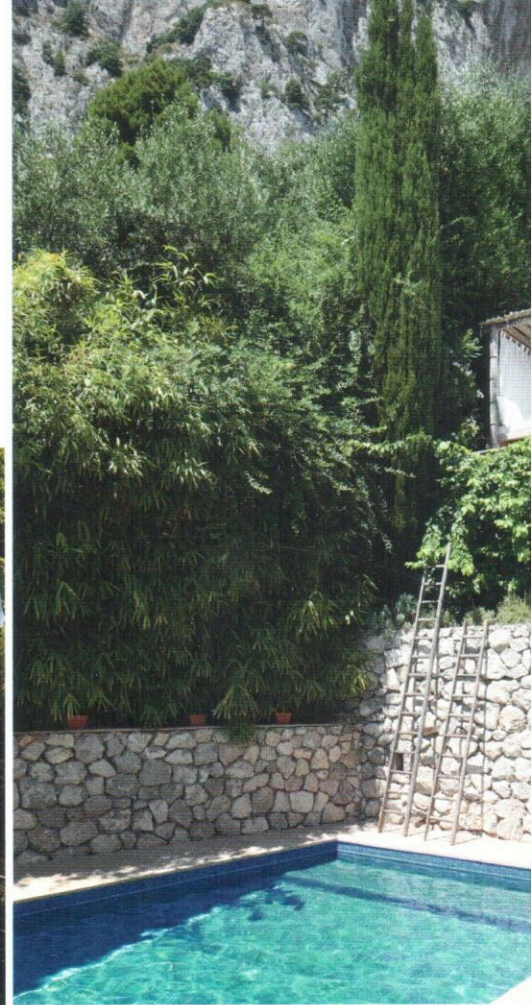
HOUSE & Garden

AND MORE!

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estate.



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Transporting pieces and chic gifts inspired by the styles of faraway lands.



6 A painted-crystal tumbler.

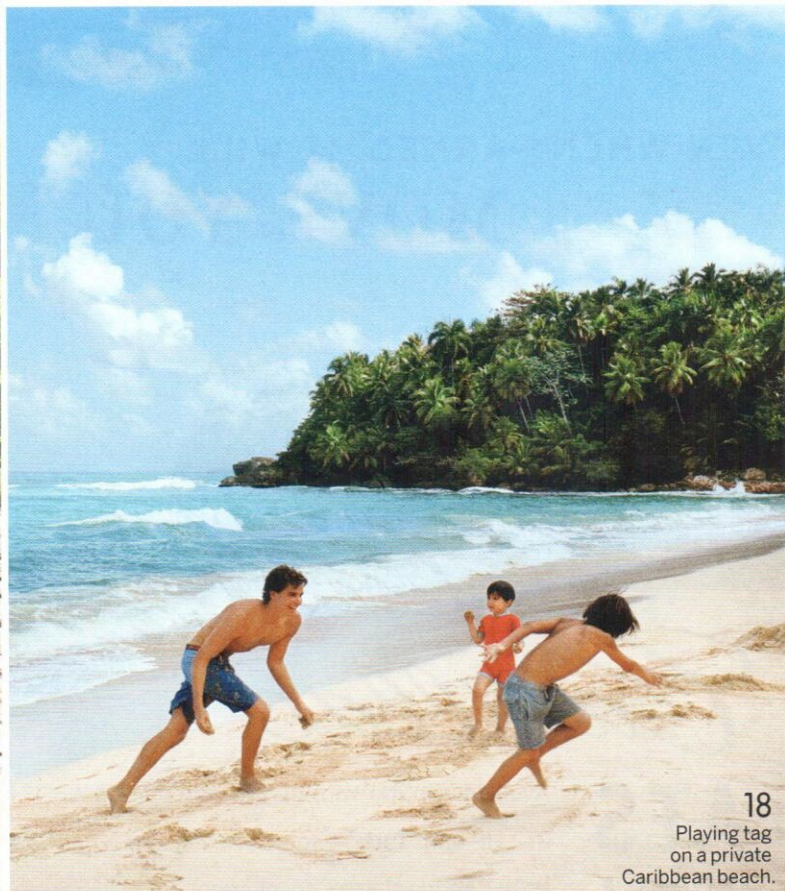
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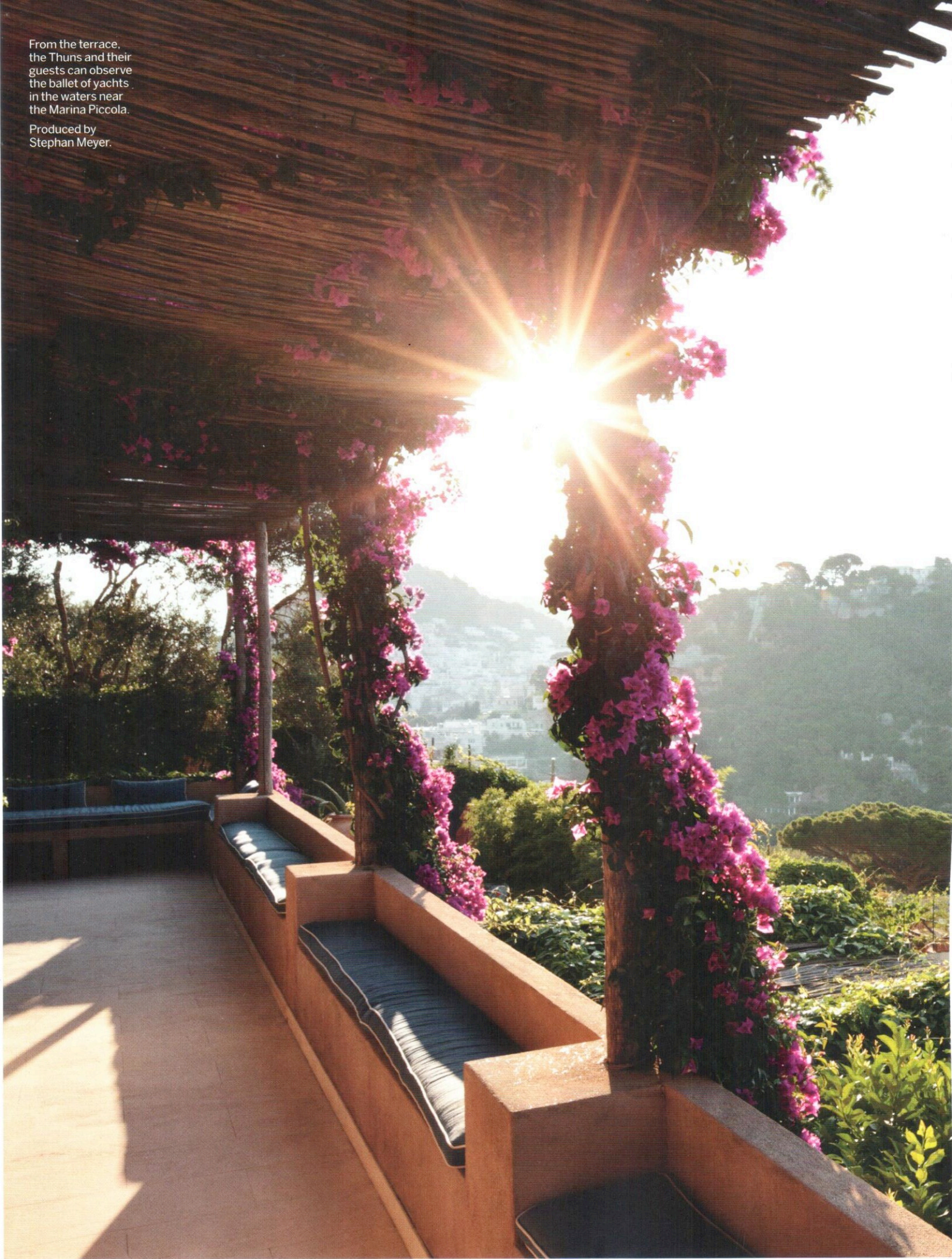
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From the terrace,
the Thuns and their
guests can observe
the ballet of yachts
in the waters near
the Marina Piccola.

Produced by
Stephan Meyer.



Matteo Thun may be a world-famous architect with a singular vision, but his vacation home on Capri is a family affair. By Alexander Hosch. Photographed by Hiepler, Brunier.

ABOVE IT ALL



f you live on Capri, you need an escape route. To avoid the swarms of day-trippers going in and out of souvenir shops and boutiques, you'll need to hike into the hills and up to the cliffs. The routes are steep and strenuous, and the air is hot, but if you're lucky, you'll come upon a hidden hotel or private house at the end of a path, somewhere that reminds you why you're on the island—and makes you feel as if you're watching one of Mother Nature's most dramatic productions.

Matteo Thun has just such a house, reachable only by foot (and many stairs). And the hike is clearly worth it. When he travels here from his home in Milan, "the cleansing begins in Naples," Thun says. "The city is the prelude, without which the great theatrical work of Capri would not be possible. For me, the process of

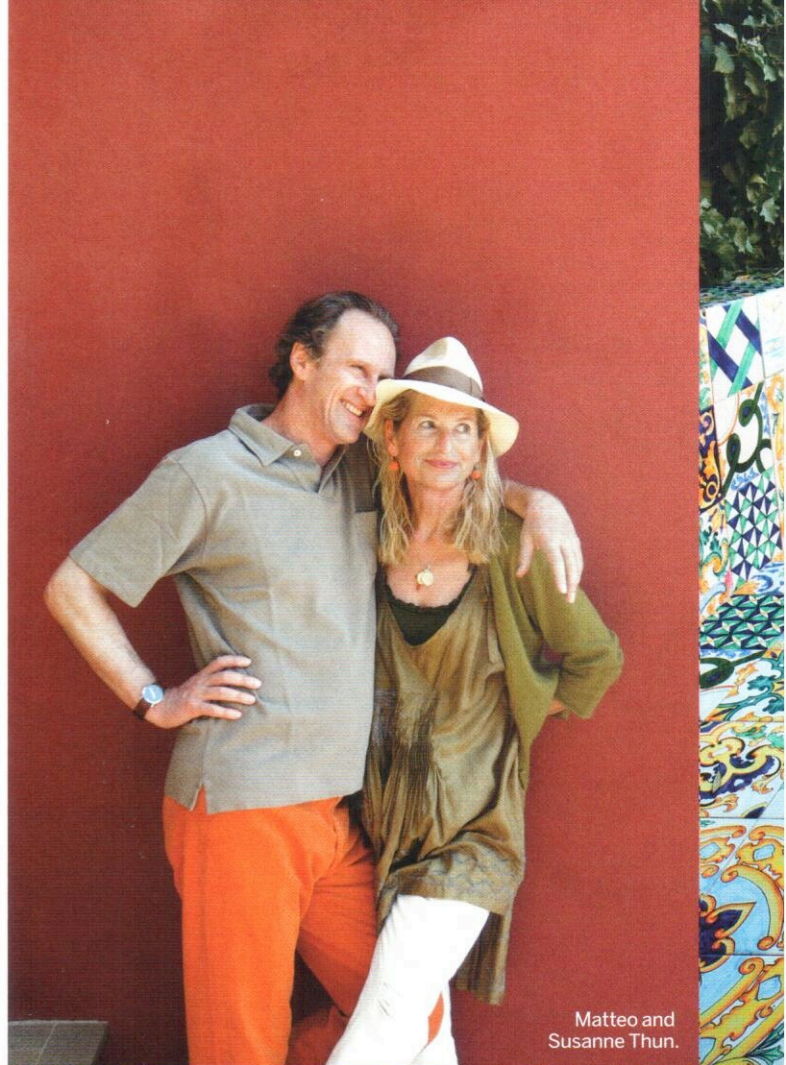
mental liberation takes place on the road from the airport to the ferry, talking to the taxi driver. That is the moment when the languid pace of Capri sets in." The designer and architect, originally from Bolzano in South Tyrol, has been building his house for ten years and still considers it a work in progress; right now, he is constructing a second annex for guests.

It is night and we are sitting by candlelight on benches set with a patchwork of tile from the Amalfi Coast. Our view stretches down to the Marina Piccola, or Little Harbor, where several spectacular yachts lie at anchor. Thun, wife Susanne, and grown sons Constantin and Leopold can enjoy the view in any number of ways: for a time on the terrace, then perhaps underneath the pergola near lemon trees heavy with huge fruit, later still on the canopy bed high above the infinity pool or at the grand outdoor dining table.

The next morning, thirty-some yachts circle the harbor not far from the celebrated columns of stone that rise out of the coastline, the sea stacks known as *faraglioni*. They cruise ceaselessly in the same small area as if they were stalking each other, afraid to veer away from this prime real estate. From up here, the hustle and bustle looks comical. And with this view of all that's unfolding below, it's no wonder the Thuns leave their home reluctantly (and then just for hiking, cliff jumping, or swimming in secret grottoes).

The house is more than a second residence for them. "It is our family's home," explains Susanne, who hails from Bregenz, Austria. "When the kids were little, we could have only dreamed of this." Between May and October, the family spends at least ten weekends on Capri, Matteo says, "and in July we treat ourselves to fourteen days. A city house can never soothe the soul as much as one on the sea." A smile flashes across his face when he describes the ritual: "On April 1, we go for our first swim in the sea, and on All Saints' Day, November 1, we'll go for our last—as always."

It is hardly the typical architect's house. Although Matteo has spent the past thirty years designing houses as well as everything from furniture and lighting to glassware and kitchen tools, the retreat is no showroom. It is truly a family project. Susanne, herself a design pro (she studied visual arts and has worked as a stylist), explains, "Matteo is often traveling, so I took the reins on many things from the beginning." She designed charming ceiling lamps with banding made from computer CDs, much of the simple white lacquered furniture, and the delicate curtain rods cast in iron by local artisans. A perfect filing system hides inside inconspicuous



Matteo and Susanne Thun.



The terrace of the guest annex features a seating area laid with tiles from Salerno.



A spot for spying on the yachts in the Tyrrhenian Sea.



A path leads up to the siesta bed. (The ladders are for drying towels at the pool.)

A quick dip in
the pool next
to the house.





cabinets. “That is also my handiwork,” she says, laughing. “I am a bit of a control freak.” (Indeed, if something is out of place by the pool, a visitor is usually to blame.)

Drastic structural changes were consciously avoided. “It is an old farmhouse: cow shed, cistern, chicken coop,” Matteo explains. “Each of us got a room with a sea view and a bathroom facing the mountain. We have a big living room and two areas for guests.” Other than that, he says, they live according to Martin Heidegger’s maxim for life: Only that which one really needs—things for sleeping, sitting, eating, drinking. In fact, there is little in the house that is expendable—especially since everything has to be carried up on the Thuns’ own shoulders. “It is a fantastic decision-making aid,” he adds. “I even chose the lightest possible paper stock for my watercolor designs.” All the same, a large Murano glass tree by Archimede Seguso—with at least ten multicolored glass birds sitting on the delicate branches—somehow made it to the top and now adorns an alcove.

Nature itself plays the biggest role in landscape-design considerations. “Where is the best place for the cactus? Which bougainvillea bloom where and when? These are the questions that move us,” Susanne says. “And we want to have as many fruits and herbs as possible here out of our own garden.” Right at the entrance, rosemary and jasmine create an olfactory overture. Next to the overgrown house bloom jasmine, wisteria, plumbago, and agapanthus. Lemon and olive trees flourish on the carefully planned patio. In their shade lies a bocce court surrounded by agave and cacti.

Matteo, fifty-eight, discovered Capri when he was in the national service. He lived on the island and commuted every morning to a military hospital in Naples. In the 1980s, he returned many times with his mentor, the late Ettore Sottsass. Long ago, Thun says, he realized that one must experience life as openly as the people of Capri do. “My maxim is to stay flexible. You can do it only with Neapolitan rules; it is impossible with strict Milanese ones. In Naples, they always find a solution: When it is necessary, they will just drive down a one-way street the wrong way. This is simply where creative people live.”

Matteo also appreciates how this approach to life is reflected in the varied architecture throughout the island. “The only thing I absolutely do not like is the so-called Capri style of the snow-white, prominent facades,” he says. “The houses should disappear into this wonderful landscape as much as possible.” That is why parts of his estate are painted in *rosso pompeiano*, the deep red-orange color associated with ancient Pompeii.

Susanne knows another reason the area is so close to his heart: The character of the stone reminds him of his native South Tyrol. “The limestone of Capri is very similar,” he acknowledges. “So I can rock-climb with my sons in the same kind of terrain as I once did when I was their age.” Whenever they are all together here, the trio takes off for the hills.

Matteo says he loves the house for one simple reason: the location. The steep hillside plot is not too close to the sea (where it is often quite damp) and not too far away (who wants to trudge endlessly up and down?). “The view across the horizon hypnotizes me,” he says. For that reason, he puts up with the 120 steps to the closest street. Traveling all the way from Milan for a weekend somehow makes sense.

The following day, Matteo will return to his office in the Brera district of Milan, refueled for daily life. There will be one last look from the hydrofoil when the contours of the island disappear in sea spray. But in a few short days, he’ll be back.

Vibrant linens add style to a bedroom.



The only way to reach the steep hillside home is by stairs.



The garden overlooks Capri's famous faraglioni.



Son Constantini's folding bed came from an antique store in Milan.



A Murano glass
paradise tree
by Archimede
Seguso decorates
an alcove.



CREDITS

A Sense of Place, 5: Chaise, photo by Simon Upton/*Country Colour*; designer, Jenny Armit.

Vintage China, 6-7: City wall, photo by Mike McQueen/Corbis. Wallpaper, photo by Achilleos Antonis. Lara Stone, photo by Willy Vanderperre/Art Partner Licensing. Longboard, photo courtesy of Loaded Boards, Inc. Film frame from Arno Spaansen/Getty Images. Chair, \$11,800, roche-bobois.com. Pen, \$5,050, cartier.us.

Ornate India, 8-9: Boat, photo by Eric Martin, Figarophoto/Contour Style by Getty Images. Lakshmi Menon, photo produced on location by Ragi Dholakia and Oliver Hicks for North Six. Product silhouettes (table, puzzle) by Lucas Visser. Film frame from Arno Spaansen/Getty Images. Cocktail table, \$5,510, stephanieodegard.com. Ring, \$12,470, houseofwaris.com. Rug, \$10,600 for an 8' x 10' carpet, jan-kath.de.

Baja Pop, 10-11: Chaise, photo by Simon Upton/*Country Colour*; designer, Jenny Armit. Daria Werbowy, photo by Mert Alas & Marcus Piggott/Art Partner Licensing. Product silhouettes (*molcajete*, chair, hat) by Lucas Visser. Product silhouettes (tiles) by Cathy Crawford. Film frame from dial-a-view/Getty Images. Motorcycle, \$65,000, hazanmotorworks.com.

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Swiss Mod, 14-15: Caroline Trentini, photo produced on location by Romana Fabbris. Fondue pot, photo courtesy of Kuhn Rikon. Film frame from dial-a-view/Getty Images. Skis, \$9,800 (including bindings, bag, and poles), zai.us. Car, from \$20,500, fiatusa.com. Rocking chair, \$8,023, bebitalia.com.

Private Retreats, 17: Houseboat, house, and skier: photos by François Halard. Table, photo by Oberto Gili.

Magic in Majorca, 44-51: Translated from French by Rebecca Foresman.

Eden in Ibiza, 70-75: Translated from Spanish by William Lyon.

Rio Grandeur, 90-99: Architecture by Pedro Paranaguá Arquitetura (pedroparanagua.com.br).

Above It All, 108-115: Translated from German by Jennifer Stahl. For more information: uniquepropertiesandevents.com.

The Getaway Guide, 117: Tree, photo by Amy Toensing/National Geographic Society/Corbis.

Máncora, Peru, 118-119: Surfers, photo by Norman Jean Roy/Condé Nast. Product silhouette (necklace) by Cathy Crawford.

Waiheke, New Zealand, 120-121: Product silhouette (bottle opener) by Lucas Visser. Portrait by Marcus Mam. Kayakers by Waiheke Image Library. Vineyard, photo by Robin Bush/Getty Images.

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