

Hotel Central

mini foot massage) and you'll get the feeling you've walked into a Gabriel García Márquez novel (the Nobel Prize-winning author still maintains a house in Cartagena). This restored 17th-century home boasts antiques and period furniture with a few modern touches like Wi-Fi in its 11 rooms and suites and chrome barstools in the minimalist lobby bar. Of course no Márquez character ever had it so good, not with a sparkling ground-floor pool and a top-floor whirlpool.

At **Hotel Alfiz** (www.hotelalfiz.com; from \$152), a 16th-century colonial house converted to a hotel in 2007, each of the seven guest rooms evokes an important period in Cartagena's history. Mosquito-netted twin beds furnish the Conquest Room; a hammock beckons in the Indigenous Peoples' room; replicas of tall ships and pillowcases with the tricolor flag and the Union Jack in the Pirates' Room recall the many times French and English pirates tried to sack the city.

The **Tcherassi Hotel and Spa** (www.tcherassihotels.com; from \$295) is a converted, 250-year-old mansion named for Silvia Tcherassi, a Colombia-born designer located in Miami. Her goal was to fashion a hotel that "captures the Caribbean spirit and magic surrealism of Cartagena." Her imprint is everywhere in the seven large guest rooms, from the Egyptian cotton linens to the bathroom amenities to the fabric of the "Do Not Disturb" signs. The hotel's restaurant Vera serves Italian coastal classics like risotto pescatore.



The Tcherassi is Cartagena's newest hotel.

CHECKING IN

Keeping Kids Happy

Hotels upgrade their children's programs.

A lot of hotels' kids clubs are just glorified daycare," says Amie O'Shaughnessy, editor of the website *Ciao Bambino!* To make their programs stand out, hotels are partnering with familiar children's brands or emphasizing experiential activities you can't get at home. At **Azul Beach Hotel** in the Riviera Maya, infants ages six to 18 months get into the rhythm with Fisher-Price's musical toys during playgroup sessions created by the popular toy company; at **Azul Sensatori Hotel**, also in the Yucatán Peninsula, My Gym designed a fitness center with a rope course, trampoline, trapeze, and more, for kids ages six to 13 (www.azulhotel.com). The four **Beaches Resorts** in Turks & Caicos and Jamaica (www.beaches.com/families/sesame.cfm) have partnered with *Sesame Street* for daily themed activities for three- to nine-year-olds, from going on nature walks with Grover to dancing to Caribbean beats with Zoe. In new programs geared to tweens and teens, Beaches Resorts offer DJ lessons taught by instructors trained by Run DMC's Scratch DJ Academy and surfing seminars by Body Glove coaches. Last summer, **Fairmont Scottsdale** in Arizona (www.fairmont.com/scottsdale) launched National Geographic Explorers Camp, where campers get to fish on the property's lagoon with aquatic ecologist Zeb Hogan, make rockets with NASA engineer Kobie Boykins, and learn photography from National Geographic shooter Joel Sartore. —AMY ALIPIO



Capturing a saguaro in the Arizona desert.

STAYS UNDER \$150

Querétaro, Mexico, & Camden, Maine

1 **La Casa del Atrio, Querétaro, Mexico** Located just across the street from the Museum of Art behind a pair of massive wooden doors is one of the most tranquil places to stay in Querétaro, a colonial city and World Heritage site in the heart of Mexico. La Casa del Atrio, opened last July by an art broker and a production designer, occupies a 19th-century mansion and offers three guest rooms outfitted with handcrafted rugs and murals painted by Oaxacan artist Claudia Ramos. Part art gallery and part B&B, the inn also hosts workshops with resident artists from around Mexico. Schedule a massage on-site under the stone arch remnants of the city's aqueduct system or venture out into the city's cobblestone streets filled with cafés and



Comfort at La Casa.

galleries. From \$110, including breakfast; www.lacasadelatrio.com. —KAREN CATCHPOLE

2 **Hawthorn Inn, Camden, Maine** In this luminous midcoast town sandwiched between mountains and sea, the Hawthorn proffers views of both—Mount Battie rising to its west, and schooner-filled Camden Harbor skirting

the inn's back lawn. Sailing on Penobscot Bay and hiking are ever a draw, as is trolling the shops and pubs of the winsome village. The 1894 Victorian Hawthorn sits among maple trees and terraced gardens. Its ten spacious guest rooms, located in both the Main House and Carriage House, are individually decorated with elegant antiques, four-poster beds, claw-foot soaking tubs, and gas-log fireplaces. Ask about Camden's annual Maine Literary Festival, orchestrated by innkeeper Maryanne Shanahan and attended by the likes of Richard Russo and Ruth Reichl. Extend your visit to nearby Rockland to view Wyeth paintings at the Farnsworth Museum. From \$115, including gourmet breakfast; www.camdenhawthorn.com.

—ELISE FORD

ADRIENNE HEITZER (UPPER), ANTONIO CASTANEDA (LOWER LEFT), PATRICIA LAGARDE (LOWER RIGHT)