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# BAAZAR

EDITED BY CATHERINE FAIRWEATHER

## ESCAPE

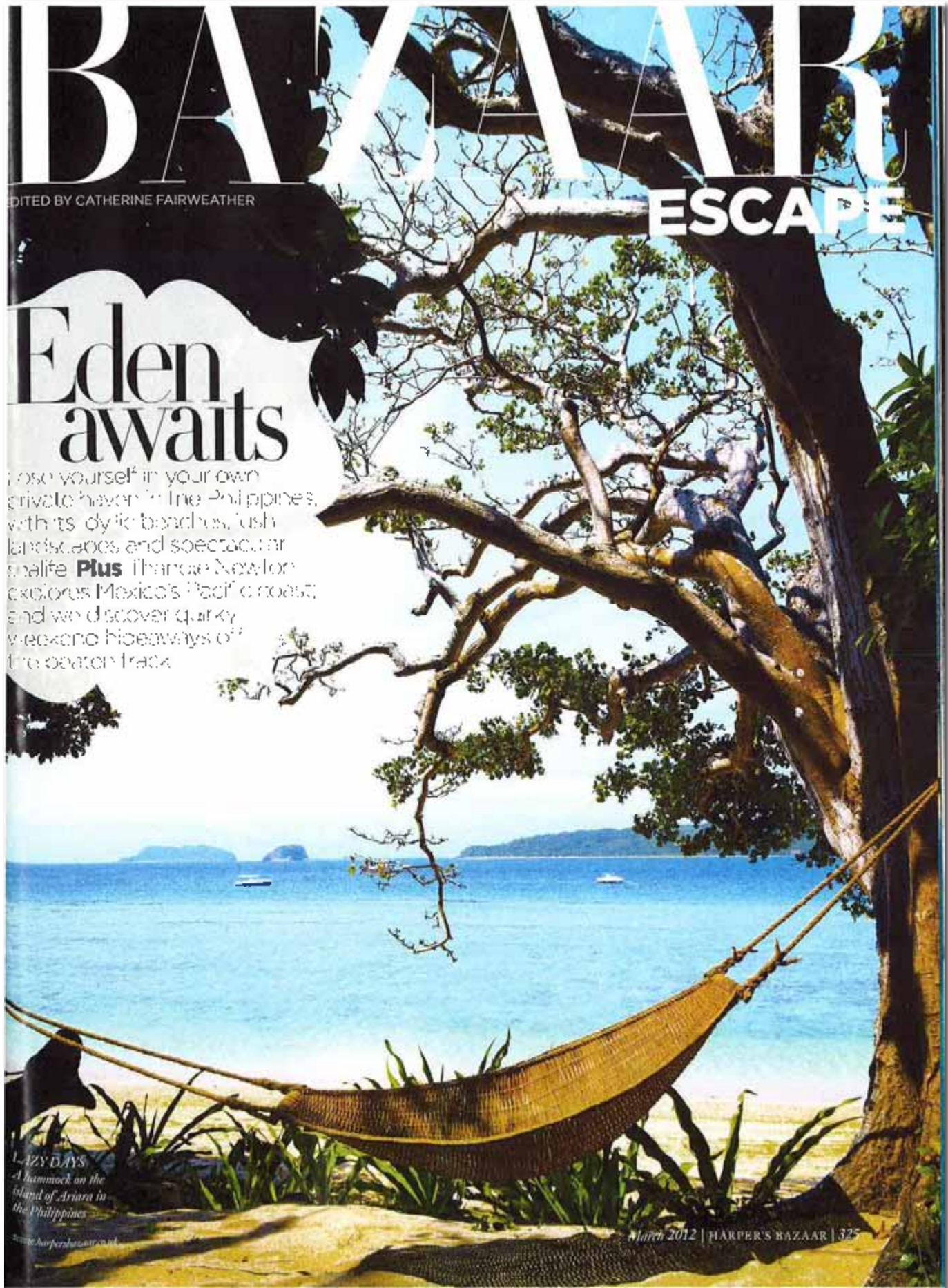
### Eden awaits

lose yourself in your own private haven in the Philippines, with its dyke beaches, lush landscapes and spectacular marine life **Plus** Tharisa Newton explores Mexico's Pacific coast; and we discover quirky weekend hideaways off the beaten track

**LAZY DAYS**  
*A hammock on the island of Ariara in the Philippines*

[www.harperbazaar.com](http://www.harperbazaar.com)

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# ESCAPE

barrel sponges in the shape of Greek urns, and walls of twinkling live coral, heaving with fish. Rainbow-hue parrotfish crunch on coral. A rare leatherback turtle floats by like some strange Stone Age creature, and a manta-ray pops its head out of a hole. And wherever you look, brilliantly coloured fish dart and flash: single spotted show-offs with white fins and slothful nudibranchs striped in iridescent purple and yellow.

If it wasn't for the fact that a tank of oxygen lasts just 50 minutes and the meals are too good to miss, I would have dived all day. The chef, Jonnel Sotto, was formerly head Asian chef in the Amanpulo hotel, and is a whiz at turning fresh local ingredients into healthy, tasty feasts. With cocktails, he might serve kilawin na tanigue (ceviche, made with local lime, peppers and red onions) or tuna carpaccio. Dinner might be grilled lobster with green and mango salad, or slowly roasted pig, finished off with home-made chocolate ice-cream, or creamed coconut with pandan jelly. But then, as he says: 'I can cook most styles,

**Rainbow-hue parrotfish crunch on coral. A leatherback turtle floats by like some Stone Age creature, and a manta-ray pops its head out of a hole**

from Japanese to Indian, so if the guests tell me their favourite dishes, I am happy to make them.'

His attitude is typical, I learnt, of Filipinos. They are naturally hospitable people, but at Ariara this is particularly pronounced because they built the retreat, and care about its success. As we finally sailed away, watching the white-clad staff waving goodbye, I resolved to start saving to return. With 17 guests, it costs about £195 a person a day (excluding alcohol, petrol and massages). Which, for your own private island staffed by super-friendly people, is a bargain. My advice is to round up friends quickly, and book before the McCullochs put the price up – or realise what a paradise they have created, and move there permanently. I would have... □ *Seven nights at Ariara Island cost from £2,250 a person full board (for 15–17 sharing), including international flights with Cathay Pacific, domestic flights and boat transfer to the island, use of all water-sports equipment and two dives a person a week, with Audley (01993 838155; [www.audleytravel.com](http://www.audleytravel.com)).*

## REST OF THE BEST: Private party retreats



### Best for ALL-OUT LUXURY Laucala Island, Fiji

This 3,000-acre private isle has 25 timbered and thatched villas, overlooking lagoons and powder-white beaches. The hilltop spa offers authentic local treatments, and there are five fine-dining options, an equestrian centre, a luxury fleet of boats and an 18-hole golf course.

*From about £2,425 a villa a night (sleeps three); or the whole island is available to rent (sleeps 80; see [www.laucala.com](http://www.laucala.com) for details).*



### Best for BEACH EXPLORING Musha Cay, Bahamas

Brought to life by its owner, the illusionist David Copperfield, this chain of islands is available for private hire for up to 24 guests. Within its lush 700 acres – spread over 11 isles – there are five luxurious guest houses, all with their own private beaches, and over 40 other beaches to explore.

*The whole resort is available to rent; visit [www.mushacay.com](http://www.mushacay.com) for details.*



Luxe for LESS

### Best for PRIVACY Le Grand Banc, France

This totally secluded hamlet in the Luberon is a collection of stone houses grouped together, sleeping up to 24 comfortably. There are staff on demand, reams of cool contemporary art, dining options to sit 40 at one table, and a pool with glorious views. Venture out for walking, cycling and local food markets.

*Le Grand Banc ([www.legrandbanc.co.uk](http://www.legrandbanc.co.uk)), from £1,000 a night (sleeps 24).*



### Best for DECADENCE Blue Bay, Spain

This spectacular estate has just been transformed into one of the most exclusive properties available for rent in Ibiza. Blue Bay is three original fincas sleeping up to 16, with cliff-top views, four-and-a-half acres of landscaped grounds, a 3-D cinema, DJ station, two pools and a powerboat, plus VIP entry to clubs, bars and restaurants.

*The whole estate is available to rent (sleeps 16); visit [www.bluebayibiza.com](http://www.bluebayibiza.com) for details.*



### Best for FAMILIES Ezzahra, Morocco

The Palmeraie is Marrakesh's tranquil corner, away from the wonderful mayhem of downtown. This large private villa is set in extensive gardens with a large swimming pool, spa and a games room. Everything is included in the price, from laundry and the hammam to meals and treatments.

*Ezzahra (+1 212 661 221 714; [www.ezzahra-morocco.com](http://www.ezzahra-morocco.com)). Seven nights, from £24,000 full board (sleeps 14), including transfers.*