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FALL/WINTER 2019



# Finding La Pura Vida

A brand-new eco-retreat in Costa Rica offers a remote escape to travelers seeking their very own tropical Eden. Elizabeth Harvey takes a first look.

The Sunset Lounge at Kasiya, which offers 360-degree views of the peninsula and is the ideal spot for stargazing.



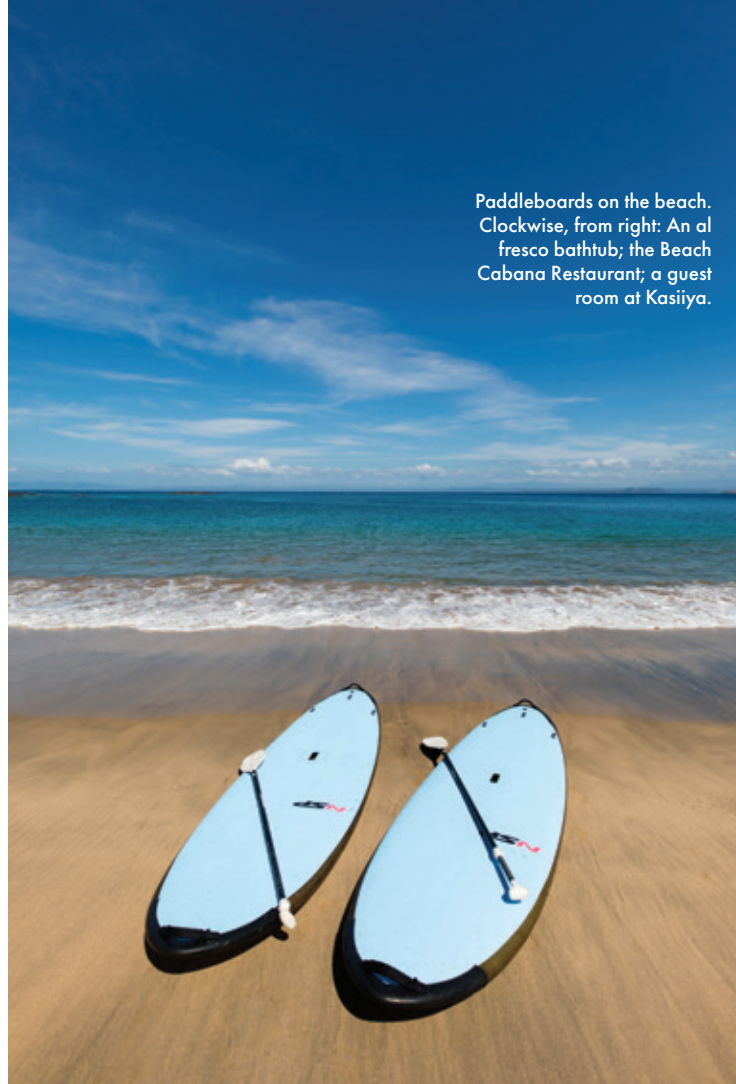
IT IS 6:00 P.M. in Costa Rica, and I am sitting on top of a mountain wondering when the last time was that I was surrounded by such quiet.

Of course, it isn't exactly *silent*: the sea is roaring as it crashes against the curves of the cove below, the cicadas are warming up for their nightly performance, and a light breeze is rustling the branches where a few monkeys are perhaps hiding. But the only sign of a human presence besides my own is the tinkling of ice hitting a margarita glass in the kitchen some ten feet behind me. Ahead of me, the sky is exploding in color.

Moments like these are frequent at **Kasiya Papagayo**, a luxury eco-retreat that opened this year on 123 private acres of dry tropical forest in the northwestern corner of Costa Rica. Nestled between the mountains and the Pacific, the property was designed to immerse visitors in the surrounding nature and create a true escape from urban life. The five tented suites, two restaurants and spa are barely visible among the trees, forming a secret jungle world accessible only by boat, helicopter or by driving up a steep, winding dirt road.

Every element of Kasiya was crafted with the environment in mind, making it one of a very few properties that truly deliver on their sustainability promise. Electricity and Wi-Fi are powered by solar panels, water is sourced from the on-property well and rain barrels, and single-use plastics are all but nonexistent. The eco-friendliness extends to the cleaning products and bath accessories, which include a natural homemade bug spray oil that doubles as a fresh, herb-scented perfume. Even the toilets are composting. Costa Rica's answer to a great African safari lodge, Kasiya strives to make no permanent imprint on the land it occupies, to the extent of constructing its wood and canvas buildings so that they can be easily dismantled, leaving the forest and its flora intact.

Designed by the French firm AW<sup>2</sup>, the resort's tented suites are proof that environmental responsibility and modern luxury do not have to be mutually exclusive. The rooms are spacious and sleek, with dark wood furnishings punctuated by cheery turquoise and canary-yellow accents, pillowy king-size beds clad in silky-soft white linens, atmospheric column candles and wicker light fixtures. Wooden walls, canvas roofs and glass windows keep in the



Paddleboards on the beach. Clockwise, from right: An al fresco bathtub; the Beach Cabana Restaurant; a guest room at Kasiya.



“

This is a special place, and you should absolutely be sending people here, particularly while it's still just five rooms. We both agree that Kasiya is one of the top five places we've stayed in the world.”

~ LYNNE DUJMOVICH AND CRAIG STEVENSON, MEMBERS SINCE 2012 (AND THE VERY FIRST TO STAY AT KASIYA)







Kasiya's Sunset Lounge. Above right, from top: white-faced monkeys in Guanacaste, a view from the water.



welcome and powerful air-conditioning while still allowing a breezy feel and immediate access to the outdoors. The suites, positioned either on the beach or on the mountainside, have private sun decks where guests can spend their mornings sipping French press coffee and observing the resident white-faced monkeys hunting for mangoes overhead. Each accommodation is unique, with its own combination of indoor and outdoor bathroom spaces. The best of these includes a massive copper tub, hidden on a platform in the trees, from which you have sweeping views of the ocean that include, between October and February, migrating whales.

Days at Kasiya can be spent in reflection and meditation or be action packed, depending on your preference. The staff makes every experience memorable. A deep-tissue massage, chakra alignment and seaside meditation with the property's healer, Yamuna, had me in tears; an "animal movements" session with Bruno—who is much more than a yoga teacher—flexed muscles dormant since childhood gymnastics; and swimming, snorkeling and kayaking with Alejandro, a native Costa Rican and the resident naturalist, left me sandy, salty and exhilarated. The remoteness of the property means that guests have the jungle and

two volcanic-sand beaches entirely to themselves for customized adventures, romance or some much-needed alone time. There are no private beaches in Costa Rica, but Kasiya's are so hard to access that they are rarely visited, except for a few fishermen, whose daily catch you will likely enjoy for dinner.

While the main beach has beautiful views, as well as the second-best snorkeling in the region, the real gem is Portuguesa, a virgin stretch reached by an arduous hike or by boat, which can be set up for private candlelit picnic dinners and yoga sessions. In development is a program, which guests will be able to participate in, to protect the sea turtles who come here to lay their eggs.

Kasiya means "find your pace" in Swahili, and this, combined with the national motto of Costa Rica—Pura Vida, or "pure life"—is exactly why one comes here. Every element is designed to help you disconnect, calibrate and reconnect with the things that truly matter: the natural world, the people around you and the voice that sings inside you. That voice can be hard to hear amid the din of daily life, but in the forests of Guanacaste, with the stars above and the sea below, the world gets a little bit quieter. ■

BECKIE DAV

## Kasiya Papagayo: The Indagare Way

Indagare's **Elizabeth Harvey** shares her discoveries and advice for anyone considering a trip to Kasiya.

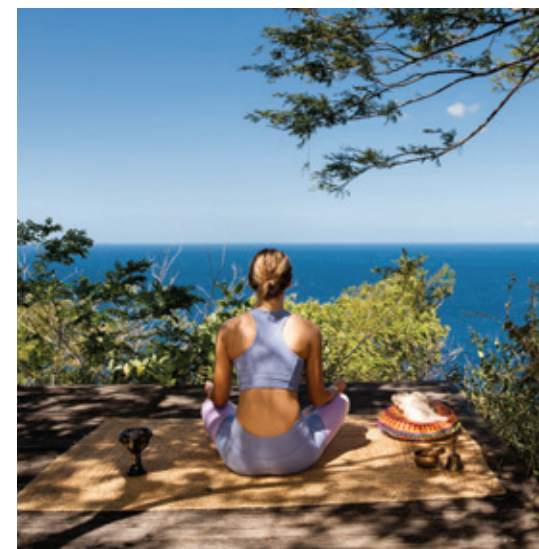


WHERE I WENT: **Guanacaste, Costa Rica**

WHEN I WENT: **May**

TRAVEL COMPANIONS: **My sister**

LENGTH OF STAY: **3 nights**



### Moment To Remember

Meditation and prayer by the ocean, led by the property's on-site healer, Yamuna, who also offers massages, reiki, chakra sessions and natural body treatments.



### Favorite Activities

A boat tour of the Papagayo gulf, during which you can fish for mahi-mahi and tuna, snorkel, dive and spot sea turtles; a horseback ride through jungles, mountains and beaches while searching for monkeys and indigenous tropical birds.



### Insider Tip

Now is the time to visit. Kasiya Papagayo currently has just five tented suites with a maximum capacity of 15 guests—so you can experience it at its most intimate. You may even have the place to yourself, depending on the time of year. By the end of 2020, five to 15 more suites are expected to be added.

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