

CONDÉ NAST

TRAVEL IN TRAVEL

MAY 2013

Traveler

**The Hot List
60 New Hotels We're
Loving Right Now**

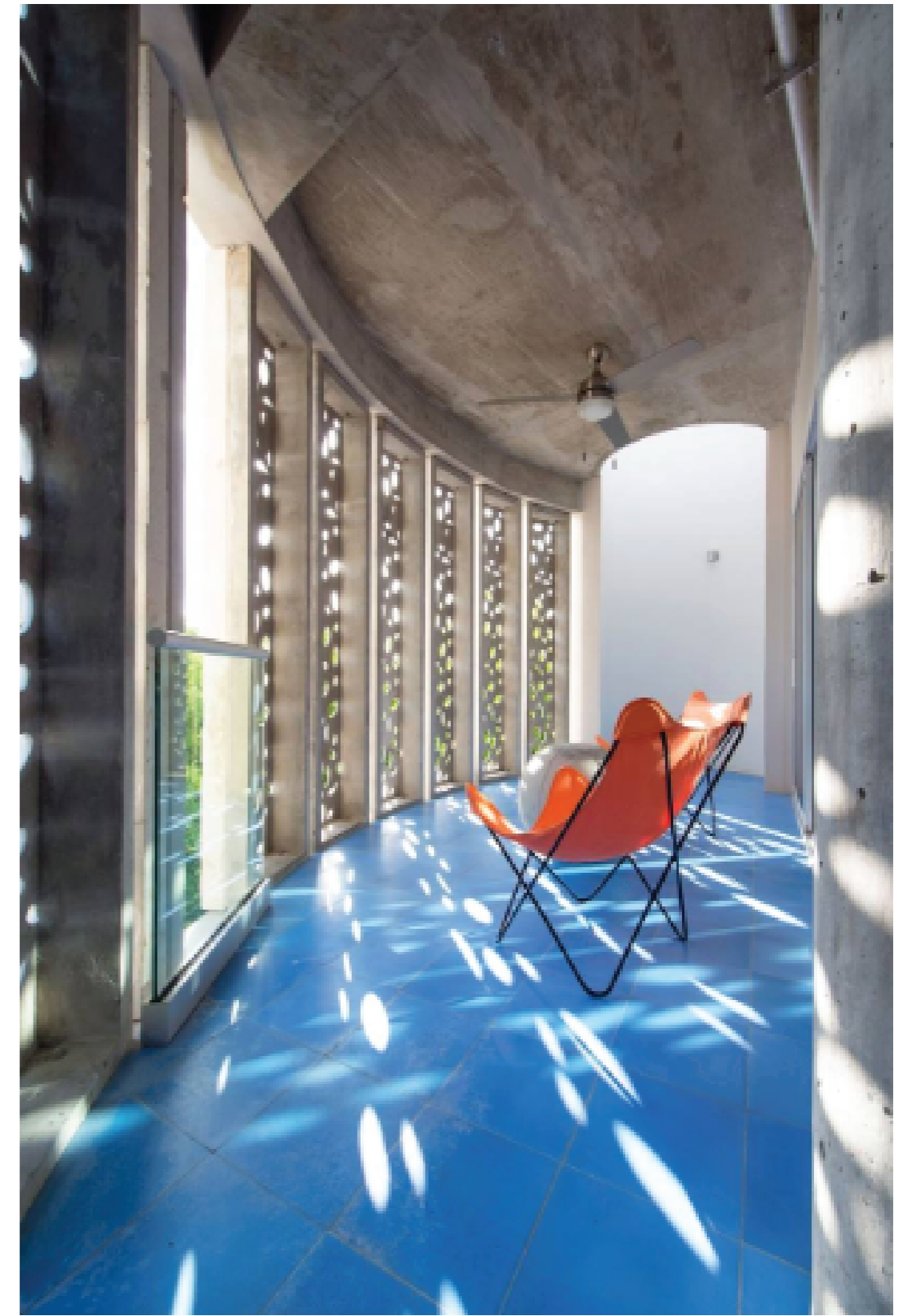


SPAIN'S BEST-KEPT FOOD SECRET / A GUIDE TO INDIA'S SHOPPING CAPITAL / THE CRAZIEST DESERT ON EARTH



**El Blok, Vieques,
Puerto Rico**
Brutalist architecture
is set against a tropical
backdrop at this
22-room hotel, where
carved louvers
transform the bright sun
into artistic shadows.

*elblok.com; from
\$240. ●*



El Blok, Puerto Rico, Caribbean

CREDIT: JAMIE NAVARRO

Under £150

This incongruously brutalist property is in the ramshackle fishing village of Esperanza on Vieques, the low-key island off [Puerto Rico](#) where wild horses run free on sugar-sand beaches. The design, by local firm Fuster + Architects, plays a big part in the hotel's proclaimed eco-sensibility. The façade of curved, perforated concrete panels, for example, references slabs of porous coral; the cut-outs trap cool trade winds, circulating air and providing a constant breeze. Most of the furniture was made on the island using recycled hardwoods, and installations in coconut fibre by San Juan artists Jamie and Javier Suarez add to the Puerto Rican esprit. The 22 rooms are big, if sparsely furnished, with a few colourful touches in butterfly-wing chairs or throws on an otherwise white bed. But then in Puerto Rico life is lived outside, and on warm evenings you'll find New York power players gathered on the roof terrace sipping hand-crafted guanabana-slush cocktails before sitting down for a late supper at the open-air restaurant. Co-owner Simon Baeyertz, a former music-industry executive, has partnered with the island's star chef José Enrique and his restaurant shares equal billing with the hotel. It's across the street from the beach so grills are the order of the day and Enrique's [Caribbean](#) charcuterie board with snapper, lobster sausage and smoked-prawn salad is an absolute must.