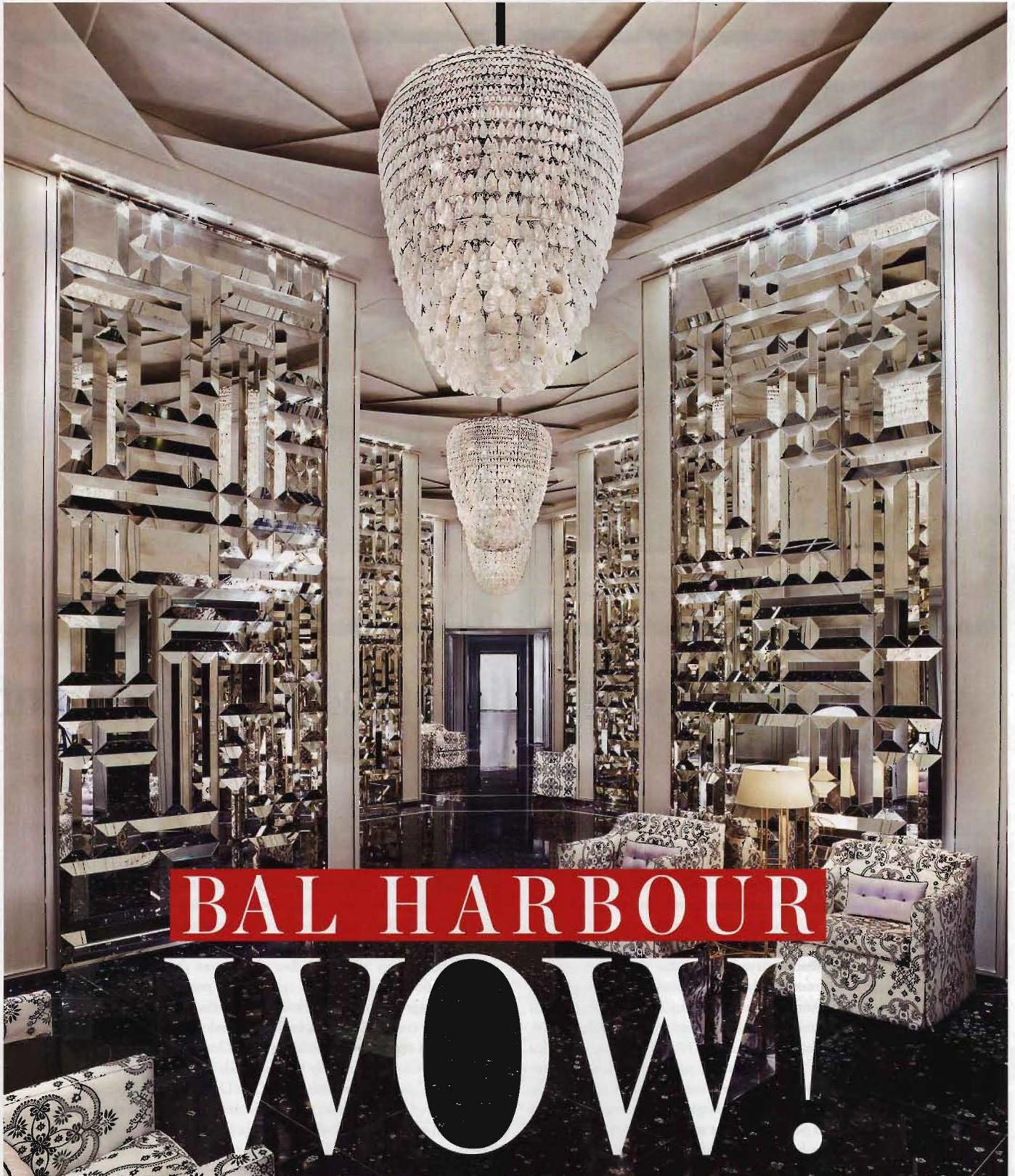


DEPARTURES

JULY/AUGUST 2012



BAL HARBOUR

WOW!

After four years in the making, the St. Regis flings open its doors to a new kind of grown-up Miami glamour. BY ANDREW SESSA

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These breezy Surfside Royal Cabanas provide ultimate comfort with their privacy sheers and double chaise longue beds, where one can get spa treatments, while the air-conditioned Presidential Cabana Suite is a private luxe oasis, complete with flatscreen TV, bath and, of course, butler service. Opposite: The lobby sparkles with beveled mirrors and black Godflower marble floors from China.

COURTESY ST REGIS BAL HARBOUR RESORT



Yabu Pushelberg designed bas-relief ginkgo leaves and flowers on the walls of the bar, which also has on display a mural by Miami artist Santiago Rubino.



Above the headboards in the Deluxe Oceanfront Suites are antique mirrors that were "stitched" together in a quilt-like pattern.

The hotel drips with just the right amount of

As under the radar as it is over the top, as sleepy as it is glamorous, Miami Beach's Bal Harbour has long been a sophisticated, in-the-know retreat. But it's never been cool, exactly. Sure, in the open-air Bal Harbour Shops—don't call it a mall—this moneyed enclave has the largest concentration of luxury jewelry and watch boutiques and the highest-grossing retail real estate in the country, with revenues up double digits this year from an already record-breaking 2011. Homes are up in price as well, by nearly a third from last year, with about 20 percent more sales. But that's not all. In the last few months this soigné stretch of sandbar, where powdery beach meets turquoise waters, has seen a whole new kind of buzz. The recently opened St. Regis Bal Harbour, just across Collins Avenue from the Shops, has a lot to do with that.

Up until now, the area has been surprisingly short on top-flight hotels. This began to change with the arrival of ONE Bal Harbour in 2009, but the deal is really sealed now that the St. Regis has opened. On the bit of beach that once housed Morris Lapidus's famously Rat

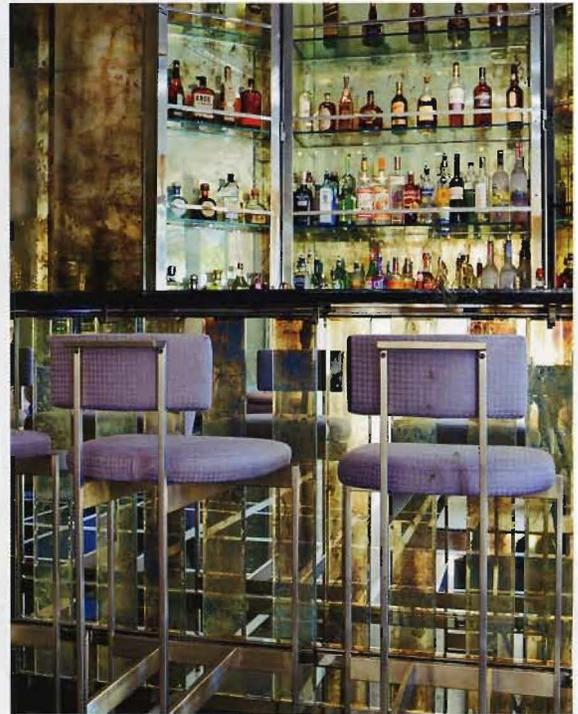
Pack-frequented Americana Hotel, the St. Regis's glass tower stretches 27 stories skyward, each of its 243 rooms and suites having wide ocean views and spacious square balconies. (Be sure to request a room on the southern side for the best sunlight.) Inside, the New York-based design firm Yabu Pushelberg spared no expense—or indulgence. The bleached African *movingui* wood used throughout cost \$25 million alone.

The hotel drips with luxe, but always just the right amount—"A little polish and a little gleam on every surface," as designer George Yabu put it. And what surfaces they are: acres of bevel-edged antiqued mirrors, bulbous chandeliers featuring raw Brazilian crystal and floors of sparkling black Godflower marble that was quarried in China exclusively for the hotel. "We were mining Dorothy Draper," says Yabu, "with some Don Draper thrown in too."

But a hotel is much more than its decor, even when the decor is as lavish as it is here. The devil, as they say, is in the details, and the St. Regis's service details are decadently devilish indeed. On the beach, an attendant appears to set up a chaise right away, the pool staff having radioed ahead about your arrival. Once there, not 30 minutes go by without someone offering sunscreen, frozen grapes, fruit-



A serene moment amid all the glitz, Remède Spa offers Champagne and truffles in the relaxation room.



Aside from spirits, the bar has a Wine Vault that carries one of south Florida's largest wine collections.

luxe: a little polish and gleam on every surface.

infused water or a berry mojito, to say nothing of the poolside reflexology massage. Ultra-fit husband-and-wife trainers Christopher and Tracie Wright Vlaun—who have already had guests ask them to become their own personal trainers—lead complementary fitness classes on the beach, including a yoga–Pilates–boot camp mash-up that leaves you panting and in just the right amount of pain. (Rest easy, Remède Spa treats every ache, butlers service every room and the hotel Bentley will take you anywhere you want to go in a six-mile radius, gratis.)

“The hotel is a social hub,” says designer Glenn Pushelberg. “Instead of meeting at the mall, which is kind of déclassé, people say, ‘Let’s meet at the St. Regis.’” And indeed they do. The restaurant here, Jean-Georges Vongerichten’s J&G Grill, is packed almost every evening—one customer even booked a weekly din-

Shopping the Shops

The couture class has been abuzz with news that Louis Vuitton and Dior at the Bal Harbour Shops have decamped for new digs in Miami. But little matter; The waiting list for retail space here goes on and on, and the latest arrivals prove there’s no shortage of fashion to be had. July sees the debut of Alexander McQueen, IWC and, for those already thinking about their winter wardrobes, Moncler. The most recent arrivals include Canali, Stella McCartney, Balenciaga, Breguet, Panerai and CH Carolina Herrera, the designer’s more accessibly priced label, which does men’s as well as women’s. At 9700 Collins Ave.; balharbourshops.com.

ner at his favorite table for the next six months. Gathering the best signature dishes from the chef’s restaurants around the world, J&G Grill manages to be both relaxed and refined at the same time—a major part of its attraction.

As for the bar—with its lychee martinis, a fantastical black-and-white triptych mural by Miami artist Santiago Rubino and music ranging from Brazilian to jazz to Mediterranean and references to the classic King Cole Bar at the St. Regis’s beloved New York flagship—it fills nightly with guests and locals alike. “And when a bar is full of locals,” says general manager Marco Selva, “you know you’re doing something right.” Especially with locals as discerning as Bal Harbour’s. ■

The St. Regis Bal Harbour is at 9703 Collins Ave. Rooms start at \$850. To book, call 305-993-3300 or go to stregisbalharbour.com.