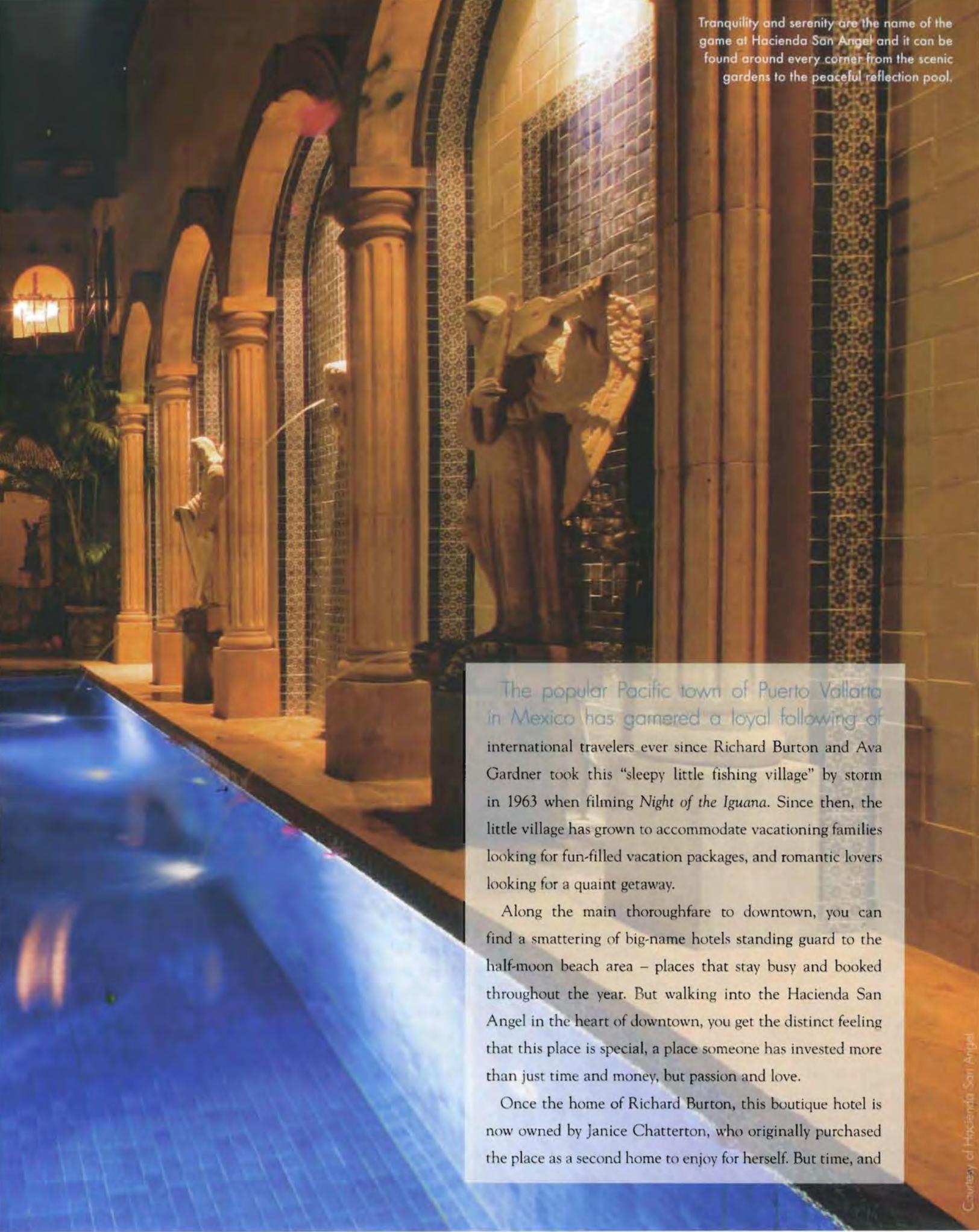


A Hacienda for All to Enjoy

Text by Jessica Dupuy

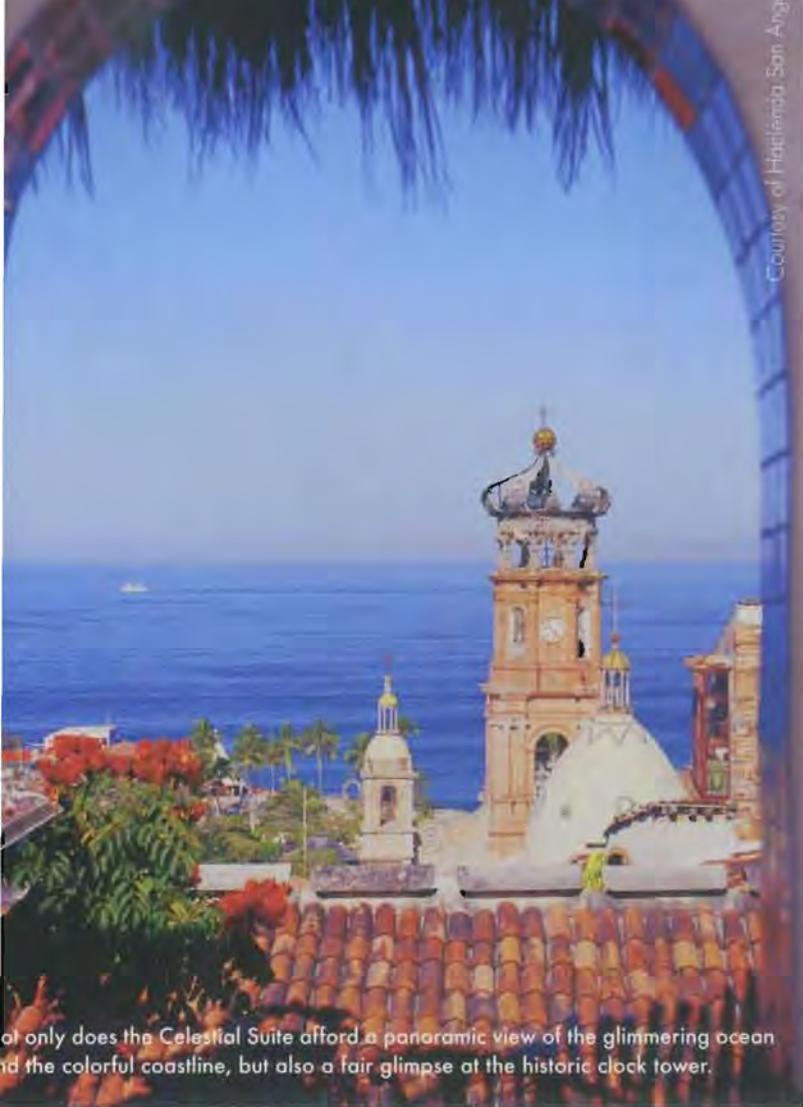


Tranquility and serenity are the name of the game at Hacienda San Angel and it can be found around every corner from the scenic gardens to the peaceful reflection pool.

The popular Pacific town of Puerto Vallarta in Mexico has garnered a loyal following of international travelers ever since Richard Burton and Ava Gardner took this “sleepy little fishing village” by storm in 1963 when filming *Night of the Iguana*. Since then, the little village has grown to accommodate vacationing families looking for fun-filled vacation packages, and romantic lovers looking for a quaint getaway.

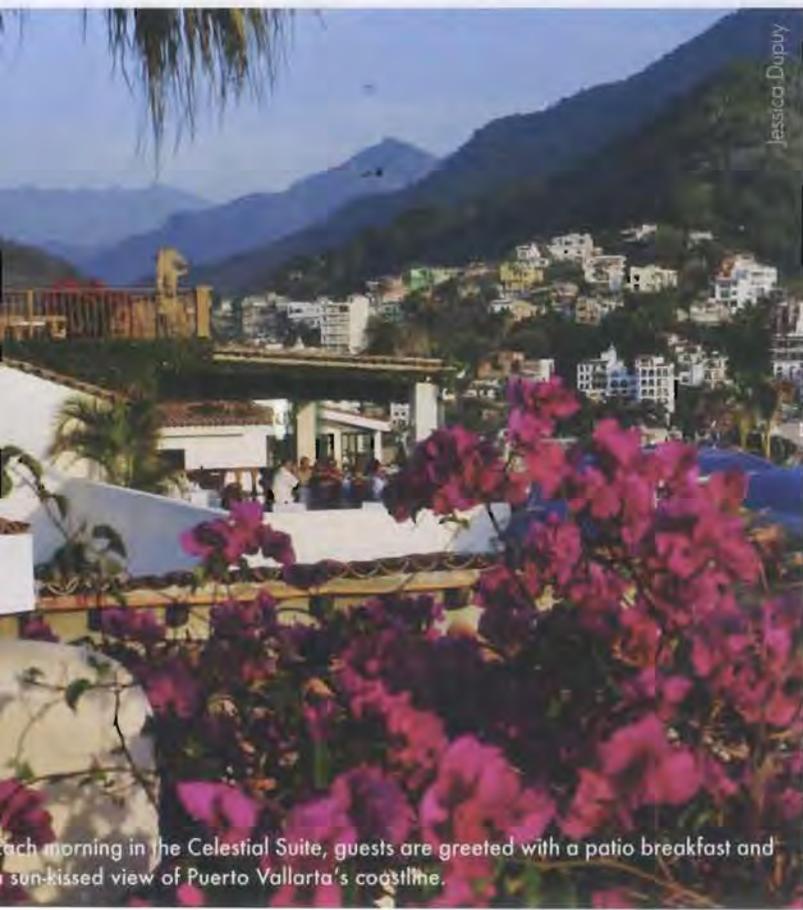
Along the main thoroughfare to downtown, you can find a smattering of big-name hotels standing guard to the half-moon beach area – places that stay busy and booked throughout the year. But walking into the Hacienda San Angel in the heart of downtown, you get the distinct feeling that this place is special, a place someone has invested more than just time and money, but passion and love.

Once the home of Richard Burton, this boutique hotel is now owned by Janice Chatterton, who originally purchased the place as a second home to enjoy for herself. But time, and



Courtesy of Hacienda San Angel

Not only does the Celestial Suite afford a panoramic view of the glimmering ocean and the colorful coastline, but also a fair glimpse at the historic clock tower.



Jessica Dupuy

Each morning in the Celestial Suite, guests are greeted with a patio breakfast and a sun-kissed view of Puerto Vallarta's coastline.

a growing interest in architecture and design soon led her to share her home with others as a guest hotel.

The rustic wooden street door opens into an expansive patio reception area complete with saltillo tile floors, tropical plants, a towering fountain, and a covered area for sitting and socializing. As you check in with one of the friendly staff members, you're greeted with a refreshing cocktail and freshly-made guacamole with warm tortilla chips; a delicious snack to enjoy while taking in the finer points of the reception area.

The beauty of San Angel is in the little details sprinkled throughout the compound. From the hand-carved cherub door that leads to the reflection pool, to the subtly-tiled arches along the covered patio and an antique horse cart from San Miguel de Allende uses as a kitchen table in the communal breakfast area. It's details such as these that lurk around every corner of this maze of a villa-style hotel and make this place so special. To say the design is immaculate is an understatement. But rather than being too extravagant and far-reaching, the hotel is balanced with elements that complement the regional culture and give a distinct feeling of home.

But this charming hotel wasn't always intended to be for guests to enjoy. In fact, Chatterton had hoped to simply make it a place to live a few months out of the year when she bought what was then only a 3-bedroom villa in 1990. Originally from Oklahoma, Chatterton came to Puerto Vallarta by way of the Bay Area of California. She had vacationed in the popular Mexican town previously and could never shake the warmth and charm she felt when visiting.

"The town was so quaint and the people are just so friendly," says Chatterton. "I used to vacation in Hawaii, but once this place got a hold of me, I just couldn't get it out of my mind. So I finally bought my own property."

And though she had intended the original villa to be a personal vacation spot, it seems the property had different plans for her.

"It started in much the same way many other boutique hotels begin," says Chatterton. "After spending a bit of time here, I decided things needed a face lift. At the time I had three dogs and I needed an area to walk them, so I bought the property behind me and expanded my home to include more space and a garden for my dogs."

The second property had a guesthouse, which she decided to build out and complete with additional rooms and a more expanded view. Before long, she bought a third property adjacent to the first two that were remodeled to include what is now the hotel restaurant and one of the pool areas.

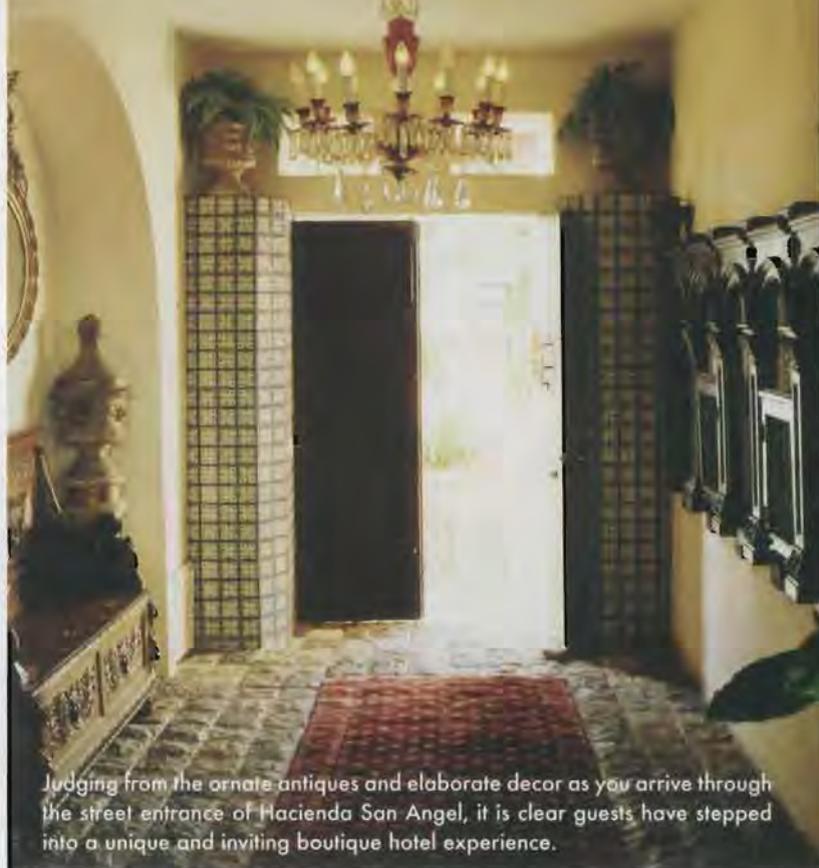
But she didn't stop there. Before long, the property across the street became available and Chatterton acquired it to create an ornately decorated chapel with a full open wall offering panoramic views of the ocean as well as seven more suites to build out.

In 2002, she officially converted her space into a fully operating boutique hotel spanning a total of five properties with 20 suites, a restaurant, and a chapel. (She also maintains a couple of *casitas* adjacent to the hotel as her own living quarters.)

Each suite has its own distinct character with luxurious linens, private verandas, and a unique array of antique and Mexican primi-



Owner Janice Chatterton spared no expense nor element of comfort or luxury in finding authentic, hand-carved antique beds for each suite at Hacienda San Angel.



Judging from the ornate antiques and elaborate decor as you arrive through the street entrance of Hacienda San Angel, it is clear guests have stepped into a unique and inviting boutique hotel experience.

tive furniture. What was once Richard Burton, and later Chatterton's master bedroom, is now the Celestial Suite, perhaps the most magnificent of the accommodations. Situated as the top floor of the main villa, the suite is accessed by a stair walkway that aspires to a large veranda complete with a tiled bar area, a small dining table with chairs, a tiled water fountain shrouded by vibrant magenta bougainvillea, thatched roofs, and an almost 360-degree view of the historic city, the mountains to the mainland, the glimmering ocean, and the jagged bluffs that dramatically plunge to draw the two together. The view is, quite simply, breathtaking.

And though you'd likely never want to leave the outdoor oasis, the suite continues on through large, glass-paned French doors with dark wood framing into a spacious bedroom with a hand-carved four-post bed, expansive windows on either wall opening out to overlook the palatial reception area to the east and the setting sun over the ocean to the west.

Beyond the bedroom, the bathroom offers a hand-painted Mexican tile sink, basin, and an open walk-in shower as well as an oversized hand-carved armoire that seems almost designed for the tiled walls that frame it. Breakfast is conveniently served on the veranda dining table each morning, and as the comfort and scenic views from this suite are so alluring, lunch and dinner room service often follow.

You'd think Chatterton had enlisted an army of interior designers to help swath the hotel in rare antique gems from around the country, the truth is, Chatterton did most of it herself – and with no experience. And though she has enjoyed the hospitality side of

providing her guests with a relaxing stay, the most rewarding part of beginning this hotel, has been in discovering her passion for design.

"I did all of the design mainly from looking at books at first," says Chatterton. "I'd see pictures and say, let's do this here and that there. Eventually, I didn't need books. I started to just get an eye for what I thought would work in the spaces I had."

For Chatterton, the experience of starting literally from scratch with the whole hotel – she had to rebuild much of it from the ground up – was thrilling. Something she never would have dreamt of doing before, but a newfound love that gave her new inspiration.

"Everything here has been a new experience for me. I think that's why I found I just couldn't stop. It just gave me such fulfillment and pleasure. Today, it makes me so happy to hear my guests comment on how much they love how the place looks."

In 2011, Chatterton's passion will be revealed in her next boutique hotel endeavor. She has purchased the two properties shared by Richard Burton and Elizabeth Taylor when Burton was filming, *Night of the Iguana*. The two homes are across the street from each other and are joined by a bridge. This location will offer 10 guest suites and a new restaurant and will be named Hacienda Del Puente, House of the Bridge.

"I guess you could say I've gotten carried away with all of this. But it really brings me such joy to create these beautiful places for people to enjoy," says Chatterton. "I love making a little escape for people and having a restaurant onsite and the pools, gardens, and spa amenities makes it so that people almost never want to leave." **THA**