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# GARDEN DESIGN

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Drought-tolerant masses of 'Varenon Lataf' helle, compact Moroccan sage and lavender give a European feel to this expertly designed garden in front of the resort lobby at Santa Barbara, California. Veiled in star jasmine and 'Autumn Sensation' ferns, the mossy fern 'Sociolobus' Begonia offers a shady place for guests to escape the afternoon heat.

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7 HOTELS whose gardens  
alone are WORTH THE TRIP  
STORY BY EMILY YOUNG

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Top left: Raymond Jungles' roadside monoliths stand sentry above 'Copperfence' bromeliads, thatch palms and fakahatchee grass. Above: From the back in area, a sandy path leads past coconut palms to the hotel's private island and Florida Bay. Opposite: Indigenous plants and Cuban peticoat palms lend privacy to the second-floor Jungles suite, which is located above the lobby.

## Casa Morada ISLAMORADA, FLORIDA

A vacation in the Florida Keys can feel like escaping to the end of the Earth. Nowhere is that truer than at Casa Morada in Islamorada, where eight years ago Miami landscape architect Raymond Jungles transformed a nondescript 1050s hotel and its asphalt parking lot into a stylish getaway nestled in a verdant setting worthy of his last name. While mid-century modernism moos Caribbean cool inside the 15 renovated suites, the grounds of the 17-acre property are densely planted to showcase native trees and plants with low-water needs. Three brightly painted concrete monoliths — measuring 15 feet tall and inspired by the work of architects Luis Barragán, Roberto Burle Marx and artist Richard Serra — tower above the greenery. They double as can't-miss signposts from the road and an artful pedestrian entryway through gumbo-limbo trees, green and silver thatch palms and a host of salt-tolerant shrubs, grasses and groundcovers. Further into the property, mab and hurricane palms mark an area newly excavated to form a shady limestone grotto. Guests congregate across the narrow footbridge on the private island that Jungles transformed into a giant mailbox for adults: A dreamy daybed, a cabana, a dining terrace and a bar invite guests to frolic under coconut, Cuban peticoat and Papi fan palms swaying in the breeze at the water's edge. ▶

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### A CONVERSATION WITH RAYMOND JUNGLES

**Q: How does art inform the space you create?**

**A:** I'm a frustrated sculptor. Whenever I have an opportunity to do something — whether it's a swimming pool, a wall or some other built object — I like the way sculpture defines space and adds a sense of permanence. My gardens are about space and scale. Those monoliths are bold forms, but they do create a peaceful drama. They form an enclosure, but not really. Two of them function as shade structures.

**Q: What feeling do you want guests to come away with?**

**A:** I want them to develop an appreciation for native plants and to see how they're used right in the Florida Keys. I want them to understand that our gardens do not have to be high maintenance, water-gobbling gardens that look like somewhere else in the South Pacific. It's meant to be a peaceful sort of place. There must be TVs in the rooms, but I don't think I've once turned one on.

MONUMENTALS: CONNERY KINZIE/JANNEY; OPPOSITE: EDWARD FOLEY

