

*House of Mustique in Old San Juan is the place for gorgeous designer swimwear by Malai.*

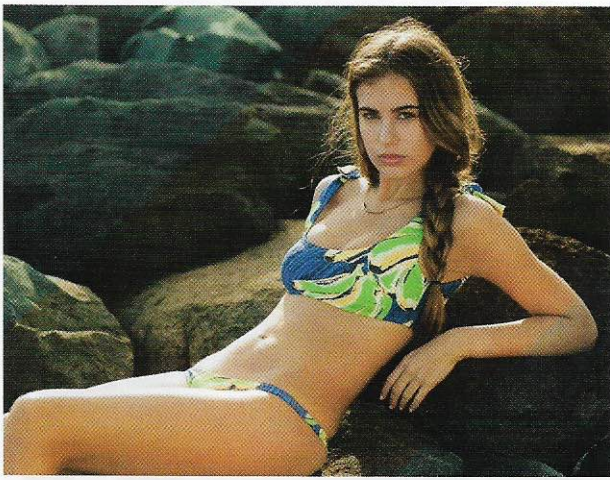
# LOOKING HOT HOT HOT!

By **AMY GORDON**

**W**ith nearly 300 beaches and more than 270 miles of coastline, Puerto Rico is a sun worshipper's dream. Add in a dash of urban glam and it's no surprise that this tropical paradise is considered the fashion capital of the Caribbean. Sexy, chic, and trendy describes Puerto Rico's style in a nutshell.



Photo by Manuel Velez



Ombak Swimwear is designed by Ana Cristina Ortiz for the adventurous, chic, jet-setter.



Photo by Jose Rodrigo Madeira

Drench yourself in flawless style in this Mare Cheia Halter Monokini with side cutouts.

The island's picturesque sandy stretches, powder blue skies, and poolside promenades double as year-round, real-world runways for the most stylish. High fashion meets low tide in Puerto Rico.

Beachgoers come here to strut their stuff, while designers draw inspiration from the postcard perfect scenery and energetic culture. The W Vieques Retreat & Spa, one of Puerto Rico's most chic destination resorts played host last summer to Swimsuit Fashion Week. The four-day event showcased collections from 16 local and international designers like Eddie Guerrero, Sonia Rivera, Lizete Miro,

Ruben Dario, and Luis Antonio that wowed guests and industry insiders with their creations, which embraced modern trends ranging from flowy floral cover-ups and kimonos to form-fitting cutout bikinis.

"Puerto Rico's climate inspires you to dress light with tropical pops of color, which often means wearing a bathing suit under a cotton cover-up," says Soleil Gray, owner of the resort's on-site Sol Creation Boutique, where guests can find pieces by hot designers like Amuse Society and Acacia Swimwear. "Since beaches line the majority of Puerto Rico, the most important thing is to always be beach ready!"

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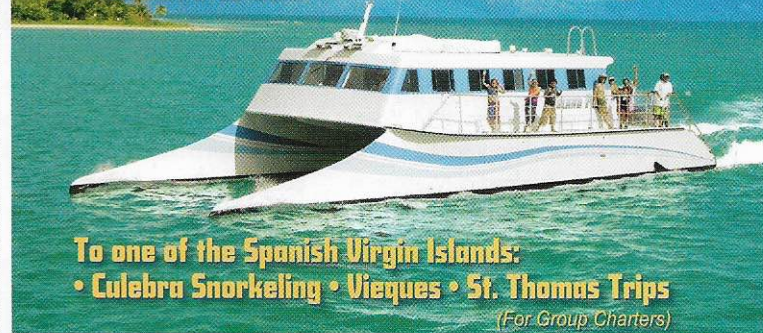


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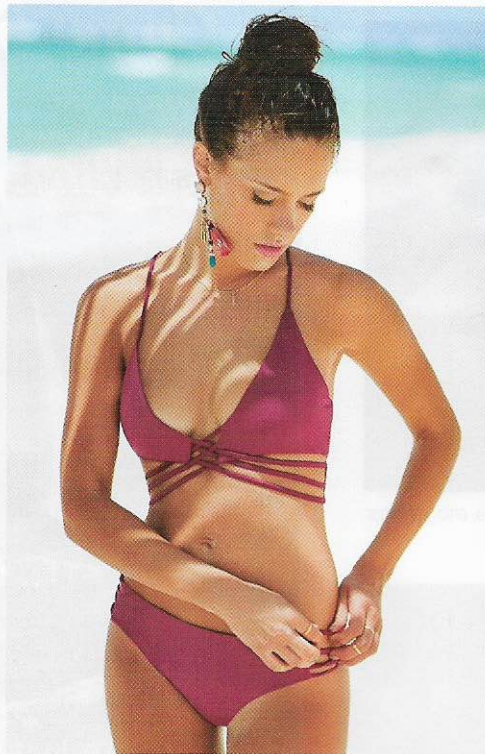




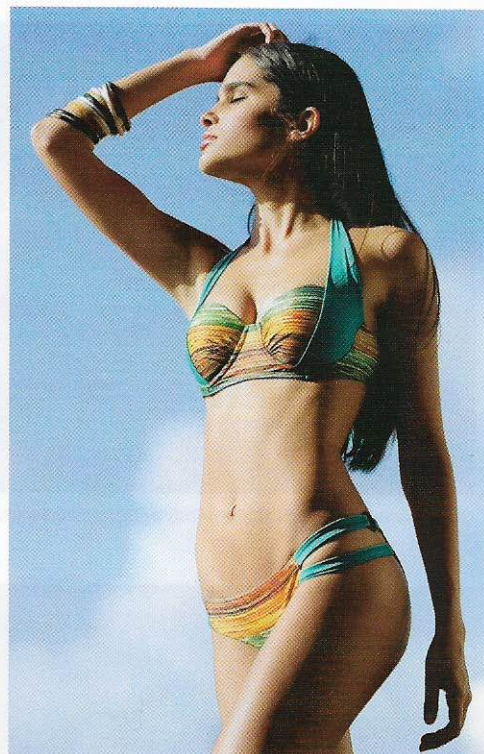
Women in Puerto Rico dress to impress, even on the beach; but this awe-inspiring tropical paradise is also the perfect place to find your own signature style. Local, independent designers sell their wares at boutiques and department stores all over the island. Ana Cristina Ortiz's Ombak Swimwear, for example, is inspired by tropical vistas across Puerto Rico and around the world. Ortiz uses plunging necklines, strappy backs and other on-trend elements in her line, which is available at Playero, a family-run mini-chain with outposts in San Juan, Rincon, and Ponce.

Local talents Lorel Torres and Shirley Fred design Mare Cheia Swimwear with the sexy Caribbean traveler in mind. The elegant yet eclectic line of bathing suits, cover-ups, and accessories enhances classic, simple looks with statement pieces like metal rings and pom poms designed with precise tailoring and sensual cuts to make one-of-a-kind pieces that fit like a glove. House of Mustique in Old San Juan and the Piña Colada Club Store in Condado sell this popular Puerto Rican brand.

Luis Salazar y Melanie Lopes are the owners of House of Mustique, a boutique shop inspired by the small private island of Mustique in



*With dozens of beautiful designs, colors, and patterns you can find the swimwear you love at House of Mustique in Old San Juan.*



*Mare Cheia Swimwear is a worldwide brand incepted from the island of Puerto Rico.*

Photo by Jose Rodrigo Modera

the West Indies. It offers chic resort wear clothing and accessories that include designer swimwear such as mix and match bikinis, and one pieces by Malai, Ancora, Manglar and Mare Cheia.

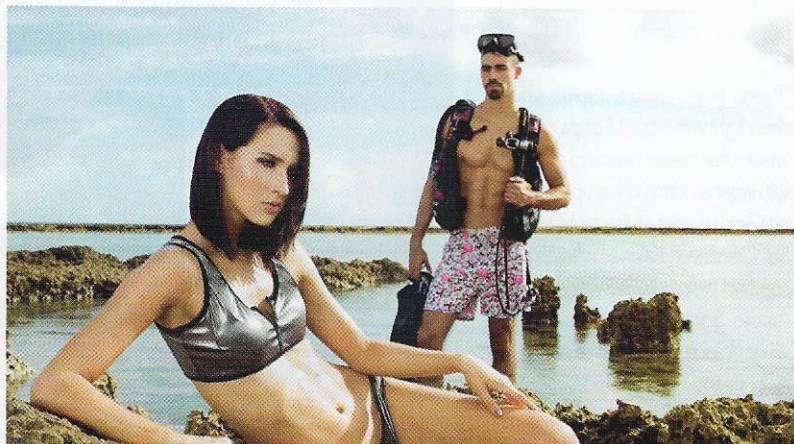
"To sell a bathing suit to a woman, one must understand their tastes and preferences," said Salazar. "We (House of Mustique) have swimwear from different designers where each brand adjusts to different body types."

For bright colors, youthful playful patterns, chunky accessories, and other trendy looks, stop into at Coco Box, Stitilo Boutique by Camille or Tangerine in San Juan. Or head to Tres Palmas Surf Shop to dress like a bona fide Puerto Rican glamour queen; the store carries SolAzul, a playful, sexy brand that's also the official swimwear line of the Miss Universe Puerto Rico pageant. Its swimsuits, sold at the most surf shops and boutiques, is based on colorful solids and exotic prints to provide a great silhouette.

Snag beachy accessories with touches of turquoise, and eye-catching corals like tassel necklaces, shark-tooth charms, and crochet bracelets at Passo Boutique in Caguas. This modern shop carries funky jewelry from several Puerto Rican designers, including Suher Rashid's Susu Joyeria and Karma Valentin's KV Jewelry.

Planning on going swimming or snorkeling? Be sure to remove your metal jewelry before you get in the water; several sea-dwelling species are attracted to shiny objects.

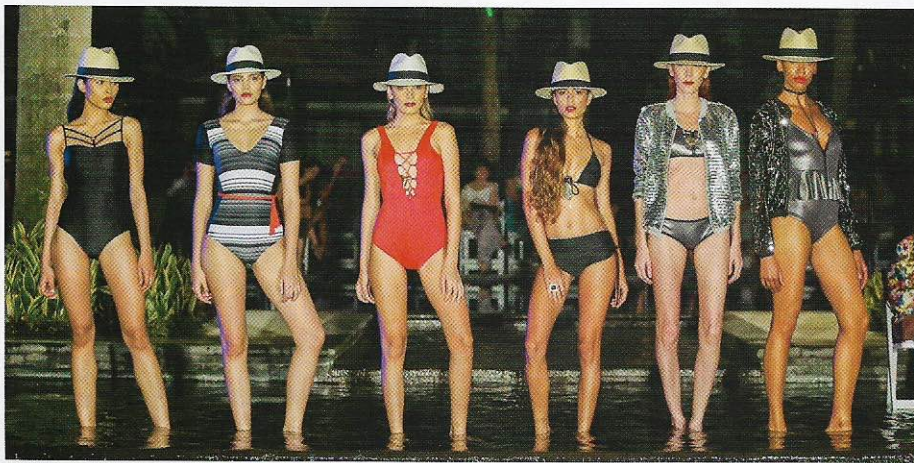
Bienteveo en el Mar by local swimwear designer Alexandra Escudero Thon, celebrates the female figure, combining cheeky bottoms and modern cuts with luxurious fabrics for women who want to be the center of attention on the beach, on the yacht or at the resort pool. The line is available at its eponymous store at the swanky Mall of San Juan. While there, stroll on over to Nordstrom, which sells the latest



*Bienteveo en el Mar is a bathing suit line created by Alexandra Escudero, daughter of local celebrity designer Lisa Thon.*

Photo by Giovan Carabino





The W Vieques Retreat & Spa played host last summer to Swimsuit Fashion Week, where 16 local and international designers showcased their collections.



Find the latest chic resort wear clothing and accessories at House of Mustique in Old San Juan.

swimwear and cover-ups by popular designers like Top Shop, Trina Turk and TAVIK. The department store is also a great place to stock up on everything else you need for your day at the beach, including deluxe totes, shades, and sandals and even after-sun cosmetics.

Or visit Puerto Rico's only Saks Fifth Avenue store to find extravagant swimsuits by renowned designers

like Oscar de la Renta, Roberto Cavalli, La Perla, and Brazilian line Agua de Coco by Liana Thomaz, among others.

With more than 270 retail stores, including Pacsun, Forever 21, and Charlotte Russe, Puerto Rico's second-largest mall, Plaza Carolina, is another fabulous option for beachwear and accessories. Discount shopping hubs like The

Outlet at Route 66 in Canovanas, Puerto Rico Premium Outlets in Barceloneta, and The Outlets at Montehiedra in San Juan offer designer merchandise from stores like Sunglass Hut, and Nautica at incredibly low prices.

If you prefer not to leave your hotel, you can still dress to impress by the pool. Most major hotels and resorts in Puerto Rico like the St. Regis

Bahia Beach in Rio Grande, Caribe Hilton in San Juan, El Conquistador, A Waldorf Resort in Fajardo; Inter-Continental San Juan in Isla Verde, and Tamboo in Rincon, among many others all feature on-site boutiques that carry stylish Caribbean swimwear and accessories.

Get the picture? While in Puerto Rico and on the beach, let your inner goddess out and have all eyes on you. ☑



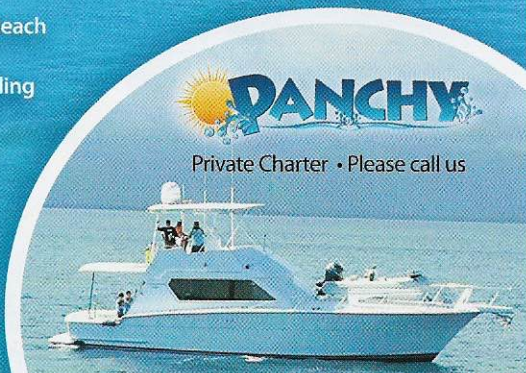
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