

Virtuoso

# Travel + Life

THE GUIDE TO INSPIRED PURSUITS

## Summer Celebration

Chilean oasis, the Virgin Islands,  
and great family vacation spots

# The Americas Issue



Chicago style,  
Southern desserts,  
Panamanian adventure,  
and romance in  
Belize

# UPFRONT

## SHOP TALK | TREADING LOUDLY

Vintage cowboy movies, roots music, and psychedelic artists influence owner/designer/bass guitarist Tony Benattar's designs for Liberty Boot Company's fancified footwear. Tooling, painting, and whipstitching the boots from their stacked heels to their hand-carved toes can involve up to 100 hours of work: Artisans in León, Mexico, insert 750 lemonwood pegs into each arch. The pegs, unlike brass nails, expand and contract at the same rate as the leather when exposed to the elements. Those who have the funding and the patience can shell out between \$500 and \$3,000 for custom-made Liberty boots, which take up to three months to arrive. Available at Back at the Ranch (290 E. Marcy Street, Santa Fe; 888/962-6687; [www.backattheranch.com](http://www.backattheranch.com)) and other stores listed at [www.libertyboot.com](http://www.libertyboot.com).

— KATHY SCHULTZ



## What, This Old Thing?

Norwegian archaeologists in South Africa recently discovered that the human drive to accessorize is longer lived than previously believed. The University of Bergen scientists uncovered a cache of 75,000-year-old shell necklace beads in Blombos Cave near the town of Stilbaai at South Africa's southern tip. The Stone Age jewelry jackpot predates other known adornments by 30 millennia. Travelers pass through Stilbaai en route to Hermanus on Absolute Asia's 13-day independent tour of South Africa. Besides searching the Indian Ocean off Hermanus for breaching whales and tracking the Big Five at Kwandwe Private Game Reserve and Kruger National Park, treasure hunters can shop for modern adornments in Cape Town. Departures: Any day through 2004; from \$6,900.

— KATHLEEN CORDOBA



## Lessons in Leisure

Maroma Resort and Spa takes the conjugational pain out of Spanish lessons. Starting this month the 64-room resort is distributing bracelets to would-be Spanish speakers, so that staff know to converse with them exclusively *en español*. Along with opulent classroom surroundings (Quintana Roo setting, thatched-roof villas, a movie theater, and a spa), Maroma leaves Spanish-English dictionaries and a list of helpful phrases in every room. Students can also opt for private tutoring beachside. Ah, the joys of learning. Rates: Through 2004; from \$340.

— K. C.

Stone Age style: South Africa's coast, cradle of the world's oldest jewelery.

