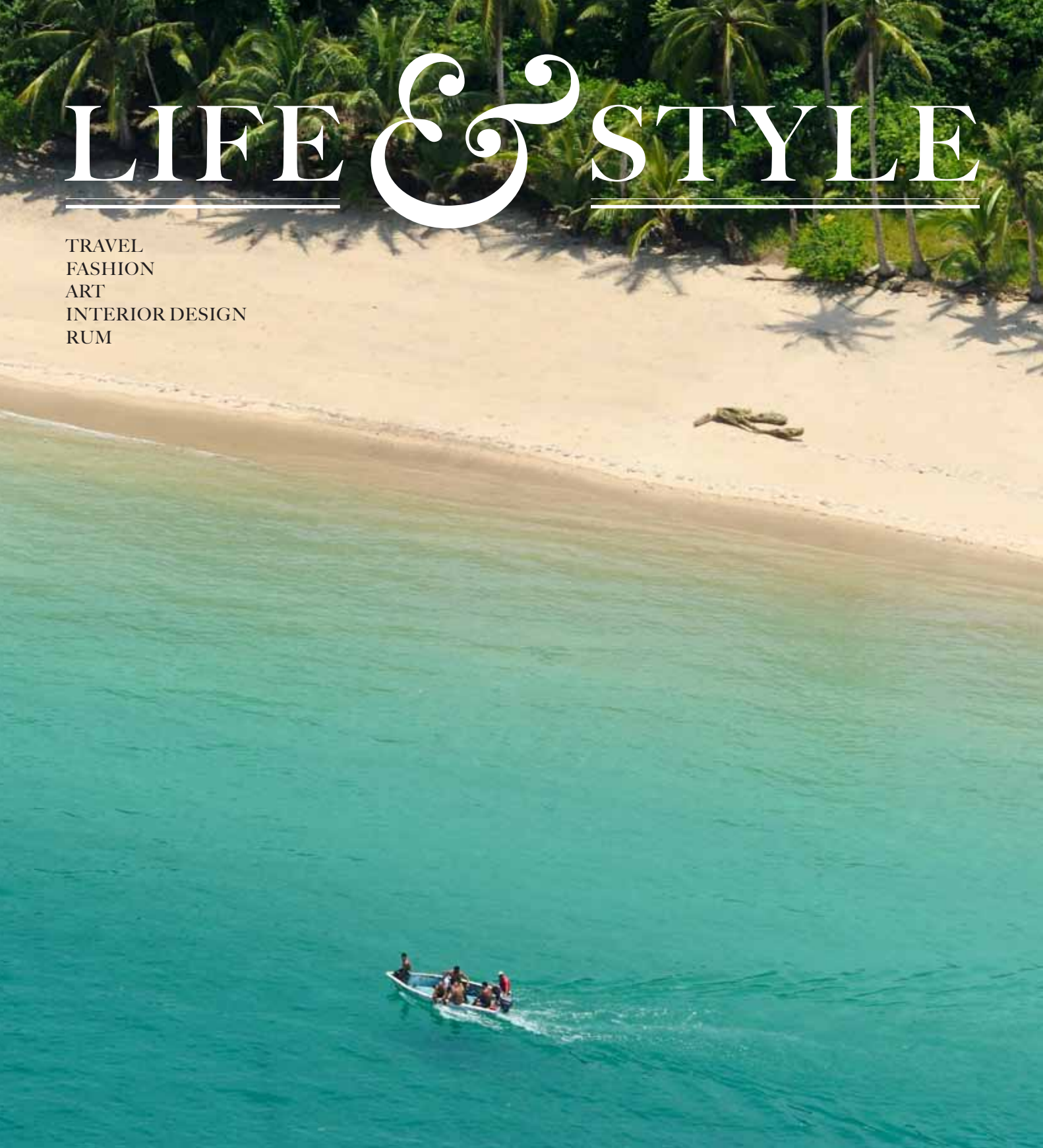


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LEO BEAR

With so many new resorts, upgrades and revamps taking place, the Caribbean has never looked so good. From the sun-drenched shores of St Lucia to a private island paradise in Panama, here are our top picks...

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Ritz-Carlton Reserve, Pearl Island, Panama

Hot on the heels of the recently opened Dorado Beach in Puerto Rico, Ritz-Carlton Reserve is breathing life into a pristine reef and beach-fringed private island 45 miles south of Panama City. Details are only just emerging, but what we do know is the resort will have a strong focus on individualised service, a relaxed atmosphere and a dedication to preserving the diverse species of fish, birds, turtles and whales that call the island home. Eighty rooms will boast private plunge pools and outdoor terraces. Pearl Island will also offer three swimming pools, three restaurants, a spa offering indigenous outdoor treatments and beach club as well as access to a marina, fishing village and equestrian centre. Guests can be choppered in to Pearl Island or land their private planes on its airstrip, but by whatever means you travel, you're certain to enjoy the view: over 70 per cent of the 3,500-acre island is protected virgin forest. Next up for Ritz-Carlton Reserve? Molasses Reef, Turks & Caicos. Watch this space.

Hotel St Barth Isle de France, St Barth

Reopening this October following a complete renovation of all its rooms, suites and villas, Hotel St Barth Isle de France is now under the strong guiding hand of luxury fashion, beauty and hospitality group LVMH. The extensive lick and polish has taken twelve months and CPI can report it's looking better than ever. Located on one of the most exquisite beaches in St Barths, the hotel was already a go-to destination for travellers seeking five-star fly-and-flop indulgence, and now with a brand-new breezy image (vintage French fabrics, sheer linens and neutral tones), it's certain to attract the in-crowd. Not to mention wine-lovers.

