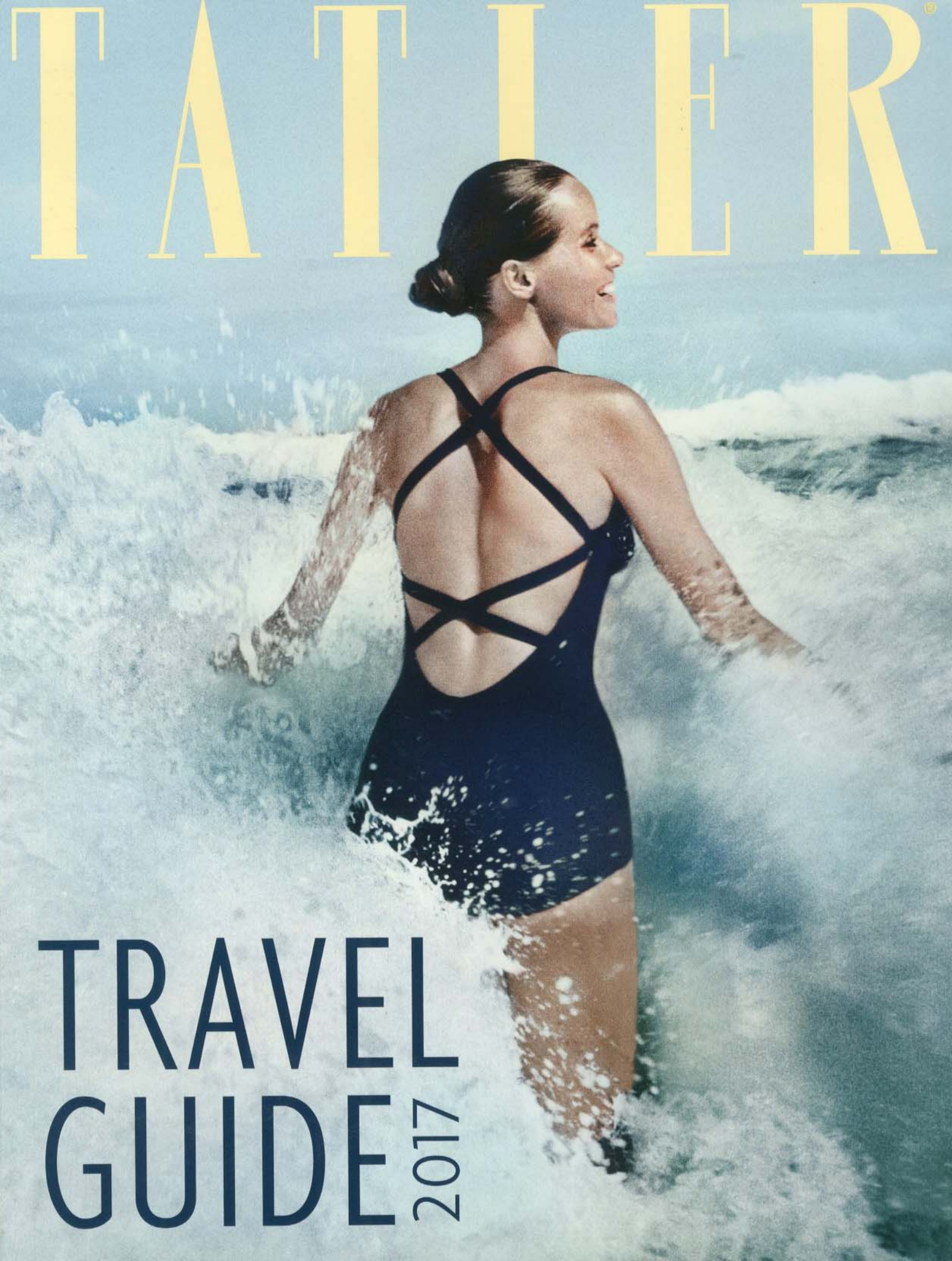


TATTLER[®]

A woman with dark hair in a bun, wearing a black one-piece swimsuit with a crisscross back, stands in the ocean waves. She is looking over her shoulder towards the camera with a slight smile. The water is splashing around her legs and arms.

TRAVEL
GUIDE 2017

1 DAY

2 DAYS

3 DAYS

4 DAYS

5 DAYS

KEEMALA PHUKET, THAILAND

It's slightly *In The Night Garden*, the new Keemala. A bit trippy, but in a good way, like a bird's-nest village with crazy-curved treehouses on liggly-leggy stilts. There's nothing else like it on Phuket. It's inland, a 10-minute drive from the Andaman Sea, but you won't mind. The offbeat villas make good use of natural dark wood, and have colossal baths, private pools and beds big enough for a thousand Pontipines. The Su Tha restaurant plays laidback pre-clubbing tunes and serves everything from pasta to massaman curry. There's a chance to try Thailand's national sport, Muay Thai kickboxing, or you can kick back with a book in the library built into one of the tree towers. But the centre of chillaxing is the Mala spa, set inside teepee-esque huts, with kindly, expert therapists; we liked the satisfyingly firm Thai Massage. No Igglepiggle, no Makka Pakka, no Upsy Daisy... this is grown-up playtime. **BOOK IT** Double, from £525, including breakfast (keemala.com; 00 66 76 358 777). Thai Airways (thaiairways.co.uk) flies to Phuket via Bangkok, from £485.



WHILE YOU'RE THERE

A walk around old Phuket Town takes in Buddhist and Taoist shrines and the historical red-light district of Phuket's tin-trading period.



ACE HOTEL NEW ORLEANS, USA

If you're coming to New Orleans to carouse in the French Quarter like all the other tourists, don't stay at the new Ace – this is NOT your average Bourbon Street guesthouse. For one thing, the rooms are seriously black – black linen, black bathtubs, black ceilings and a single black condom by the bed, saying 'Use in Case of Fire'. It's almost spartan, but gosh is it cool. The only splash of colour is a huge, acid-green Smeg fridge, crammed with five kinds of whiskey, 10 kinds of house-distilled vermouth and bitters and about two tons of chocolate. Up on the roof, the pool is so cool it makes other cool pools look like the municipal baths. And the hotel's restaurant, Josephine Estelle (named after the daughters of the two head chefs), where the (male) maître d' welcomes you in full make-up and fabulous, four-inch chandelier earrings, is already one of the hottest restaurants in a hot, hot town. **BOOK IT** Double, from £120 (acehotel.com; 001 504 900 1180).

WHILE YOU'RE THERE

The city's Arts District (formerly the Warehouse District) with its galleries and restaurants, is known as the SoHo of the South and is on your doorstep.



PALAZZO DAMA ROME, ITALY

Sometimes even the Eternal City needs a shake-up. Palazzo Dama does just that. Rome's freshest five-star is located in an elegant 19th-century mansion, right next to Piazza del Popolo, and is as grand as you'd hope (it was the home of the aristo Malaspina family), but refreshingly lacking in the pomp found in so many of the city's hotels. Antonio Girardi is the local architectural brains behind it all, and has made the most of the mile-high ceilings and old features – extravagant cornicing, tiled floors, HUGE windows – but whizzed them up to date with a glamorous flair that is drawing in a fashionable crowd. Rooms are pretty, with parquet floors, powder-blue velvet curtains and marble-mosaic bathrooms with chic dark walls. The restaurant has sofas to sink into, ported palms to gaze up at and gorgeous gold lamps and art-deco knick-knacks. Outside: an olive-tree-filled courtyard with a turquoise pool and smart bar, all twinkly in the evenings. Quite the scene, as it happens, so bring earplugs as those fashion types do like to be heard. **BOOK IT** Double, from £310, including breakfast (palazzodama.com; 00 39 068 956 5272). British Airways (ba.com) flies to Rome from £90.

WHILE YOU'RE THERE

Scout over to the up-and-coming, bohemian Monti neighbourhood to cruise its cool boutiques and hipster bars.

