



Revitalized Tacoma's New Museum
Satisfying Users: Would You Bet Your Profit?
Peru Embassy: Fortress Without Apology

Costa Rica Marriott

*San Jose, Costa Rica
Zürcher Architectos
Spillis Candela & Partners
Associated Architects*

Spanish colonial architecture stands in startling contrast to Spillis Candela's sleek curving facades for USAA's Tampa regional offices [ARCHITECTURAL RECORD, July, 1994, pages 56-61]. But the designers had their reasons (see text).

Like fantasy environments offered by many current resorts, the surroundings at the just-opened Costa Rica Marriott evoke an escape to another time and place—in this case, the tropical country's colonial past. The approach is through a coffee plantation reminiscent of an era when small-scale farming was profitable and bean plants' shiny green leaves covered the countryside. The hotel's architecture

too recalls history—despite modern plumbing, two swimming pools, four tennis courts, and a golf-driving range.

Unlike typical resorts' fantasy environments, this one was created for more reasons than luring guests. A wave of demolition to make way for new construction in the 1950s destroyed much of Costa Rica's colonial heritage; local developer-



builders, Guido Castro and his wife Ileana, were determined to put some of it back. There could be little question about their new building's style—as well as many of its ancient components.

Designer Aramis Alvarez, a principal in Miami-based architect Spillis Candela & Partners, spent 10 days before starting work traveling with the couple, studying Spanish colonial buildings

from Guadalajara to Mexico City—measuring proportions and photographing details. Doña Ileana scoured Costa Rica demolition storage yards for authentic colonial building parts. Finds included local grey volcanic-stone portals, columns, and 5 in.-thick pavers, a monumental wooden town-house carriage entrance with pedestrian passages, and enough ancient terra-cotta barrel tile to cover the whole roof.

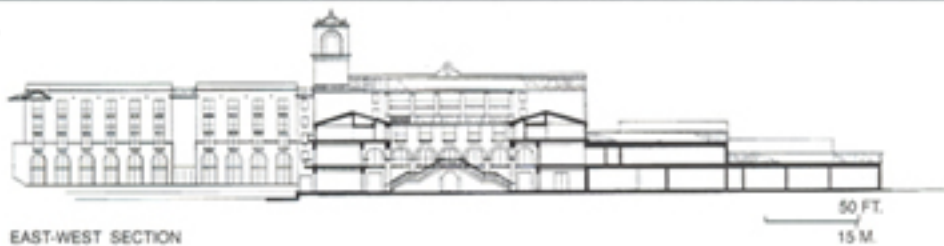
The new hotel was to be much bigger than any colonial-era hacienda—an effect exaggerated when Marriott came on the scene at the end of design and raised the room count from 180 to 250, requiring an extra story on the west wing and an extension of the east wing. Still, Alvarez worked hard to keep down the scale of the building, as well as to assure the best views. He located the building on an abrupt 10-ft

drop in the sloping site so that the first floor of public rooms and service spaces (plans overleaf) opens to views and grounds to the south, and is buried into a hillside on the north—invisible to arriving guests. He had a platform erected where the new second-floor entry level was to be and stood on it, adjusting both building orientation and floor levels for optimal sight lines on the spot.



The central courtyard (left) replaces the grand lobby found in hotels in less clement climates and captures the building's originally intended scale before the west wing (opposite, left) grew by a floor and the east wing grew by a bay for Marriott.

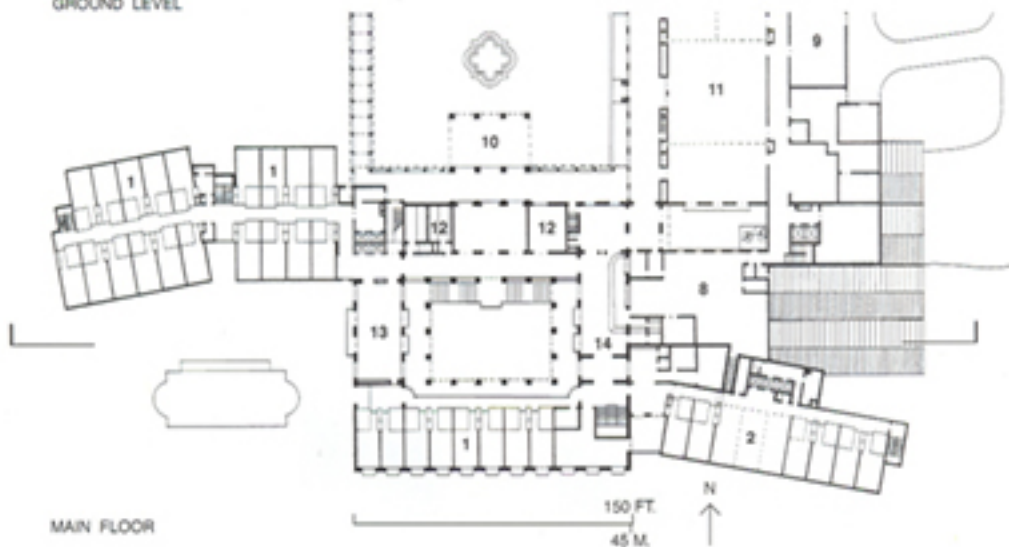
A steep slope across the middle of the site allows many of the first-floor support facilities to be buried unobtrusively under ground while public spaces on this floor face the grounds and the view to the south (plan and section, right).



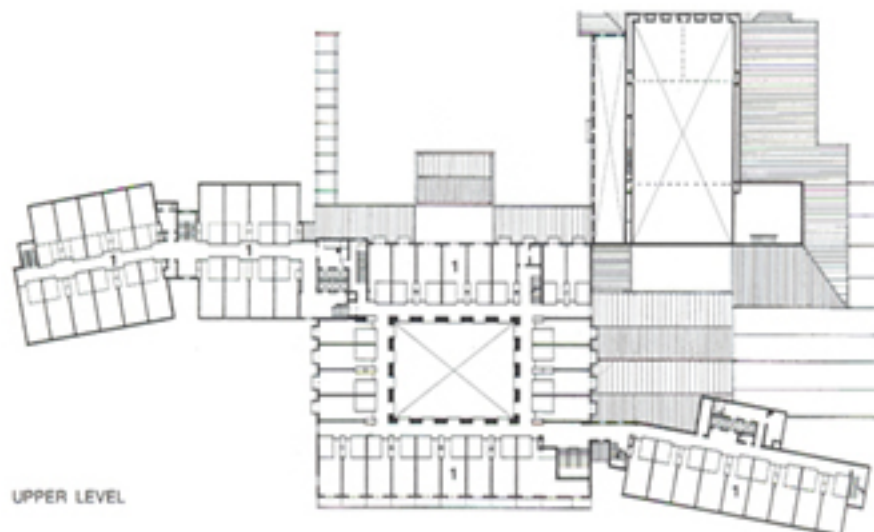
EAST-WEST SECTION



GROUND LEVEL



MAIN FLOOR



UPPER LEVEL

1. Guest rooms
2. Health club
3. Maintenance
4. Lounge
5. Open courtyard
6. Dining
7. Kitchen
8. Administration
9. Mechanical
10. Main entrance
11. Ballroom
12. Support
13. Bar
14. Registration

Like many resorts, this one serves several audiences—relaxed tourists, working conventioners, and locals who use it as a social center. Hence, the architects had already designed support facilities large enough to accommodate the last-minute room-count increase.

Local architect Ronald Zürcher offered help, not only on Costa Rican building practice (he exe-

cuted the construction documents), but on such traditional details as the different shapes of openings in the roof-top ventilator towers, which carry bathroom exhausts and break up the large expanses of tile. Engineers Franz Sauter & Asociados developed the earthquake-resistant egg-crate concrete structure—in effect, a huge truss in which the structure around each room acts as a member. Sections of the

building are isolated by construction joints that allow them to move independently. The roof, according to local custom, is steel joists covered with corrugated metal, then plywood, and finally tile. *Charles K. Hoyt*

Credits

Costa Rica Marriott

San Jose, Costa Rica

Owner: *Marriott Hotel Corporation*

Associated Architects:

Zürcher Arquitectos, S. A.—Ronald Zürcher, architect of record

Spillis Candela & Partners, Inc.—Aramis Alvarez, partner

Engineers: *Franz Sauter & Asociados (structural); Cañas y Sequeira (mechanical, electrical)*

Consultant: *Edward D. Stone & Associates (landscape)*

General Contractor: *Gálvez y Volio Asociados, S. A.*



Benches, paving, lintels, and door frames have been recycled from colonial-era structures (colonnade left and lobby above). Artisans have replicated the period detailing in plaster (left).

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**Costa Rica Marriott
Team Members**

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Manny Soriano Sr. Designer, International Interior Design

Joe Travez Sr. Director, International Design Management

Teri Urovsky Senior Manager, Interior Design

Hansuk Wong Interior Designer, International Interior Design

In collaboration with Zürcher Arquitectos, S.A.