

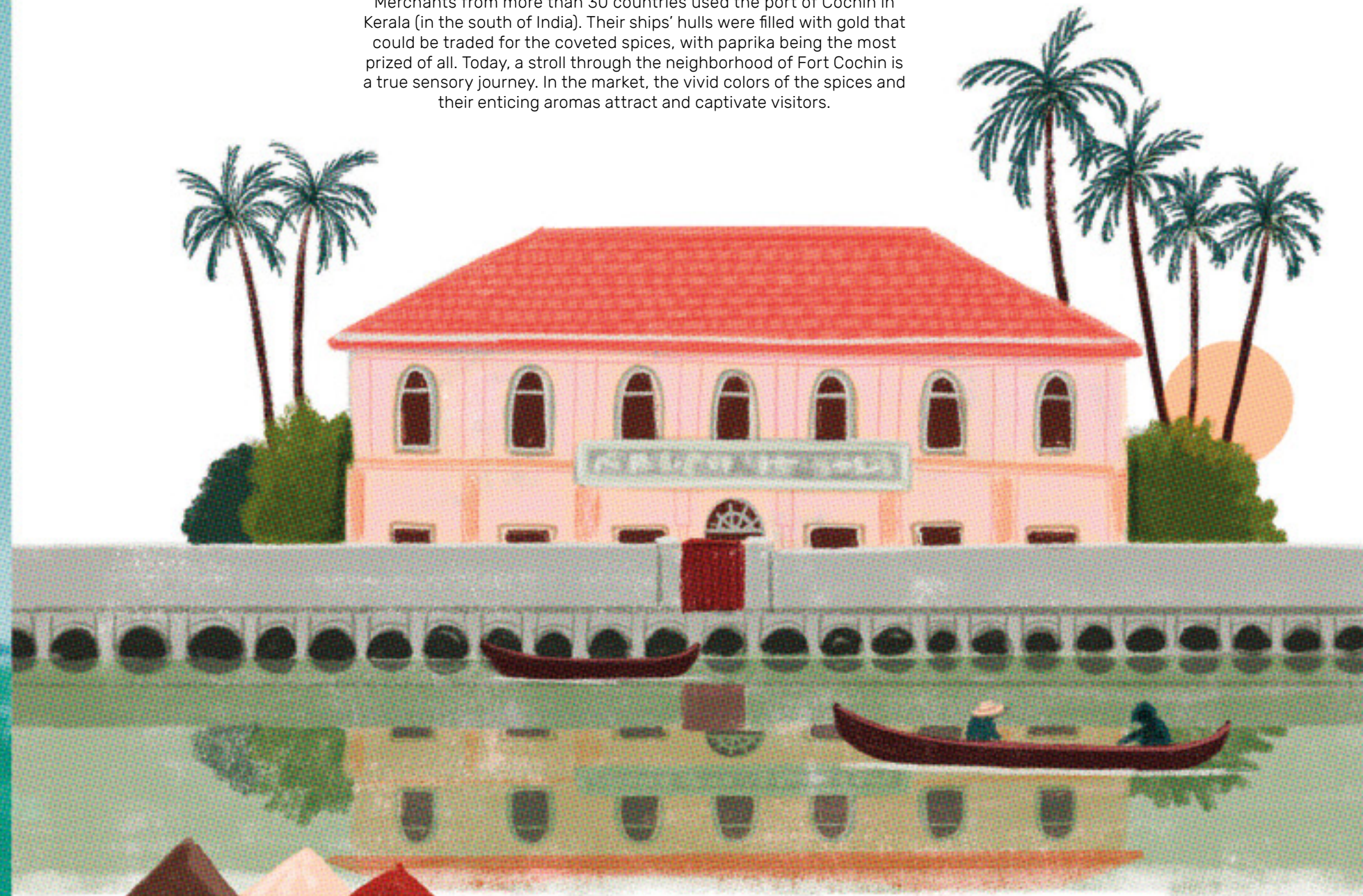
THE MALUKU ISLANDS

Formerly known as the Spice Islands, these form a chain of mountainous islands that stretch across the Pacific Ocean between Sulawesi and New Guinea. They are where cloves and nutmeg originally came from.



FORT COCHIN, KERALA

Merchants from more than 30 countries used the port of Cochin in Kerala (in the south of India). Their ships' hulls were filled with gold that could be traded for the coveted spices, with paprika being the most prized of all. Today, a stroll through the neighborhood of Fort Cochin is a true sensory journey. In the market, the vivid colors of the spices and their enticing aromas attract and captivate visitors.



THE SPICES

These were used to flavor dishes and to help preserve food. They were also used for medicinal purposes due to their antiseptic properties (which means they kill germs). Since it was very challenging to obtain them at the time, they were surrounded by myths and legends.

VASCO DA GAMA (c. 1469–1524)

In 1497, the Portuguese explorer Vasco da Gama set sail with four ships and 170 men in search of a new sea route to India. They circumnavigated Africa and succeeded in reaching Calicut (today's Kozhikode) the following year, going on to make Portugal the leading importer of Eastern spices.

Christopher Columbus was actually also trying to find a new route to India during the same period when he stumbled upon the Americas.

