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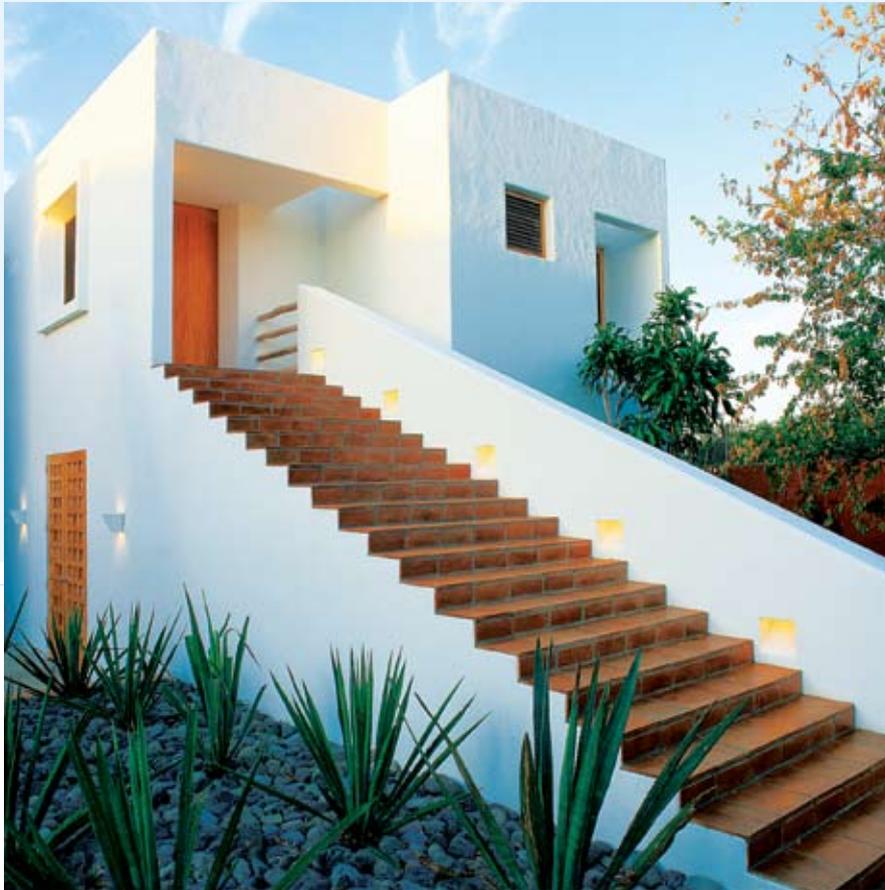
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# MEXICAN MEMENTO

A honeymooning couple discover their  
dream vacation property



BY ALEXANDRA DROSU



hen former Yahoo! CEO-turned-venture capitalist Tim Koogle and his bride, marketing executive Pam Scott, went to Puerto Vallarta for their honeymoon in 2003, they hoped to bring home a few mementos from their trip. They never imagined, however, that they would purchase a souvenir too massive to bring back.

“I thought we might buy T-shirts,” jokes Scott. While on vacation, the couple fell in love with—and subsequently purchased—Casa Gaviotas, a contemporary Mexican retreat perched on a Punta Mita cliff, just 40 minutes northwest of Puerto Vallarta. The home’s name celebrates its most frequent visitors: *gaviotas*, or seagulls.

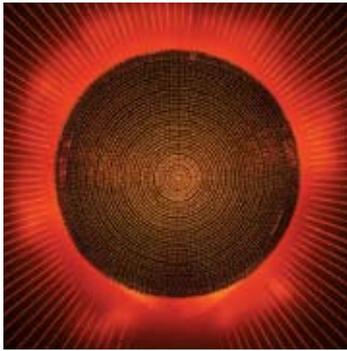
The newlyweds saw a picture of Casa Gaviotas while flipping through a local magazine. Already taken with Punta Mita’s quaint charm and seduced by the untamed spirit of Mexico, they toyed with the idea of buying a vacation home in the area. The multitude of recreational opportunities on the peninsula also



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appeared to the high-energy couple—world-class golf on courses designed by Jack Nicklaus and Tom Weiskopf, kayaking, whale watching, snorkeling, sailing and canopy tours. “The longer we were there, the more we fell in love,” Scott says. So they scheduled a visit to the cliffside dwelling. The estate, with its sweeping ocean views and contemporary Mexican architecture, was an easy sell. “It was everything we had hoped for in a house, and yet more than we could have imagined,” says Scott.



The couple had always wanted to collaborate on a business venture, and found their chance near Casa Gaviotas, which they purchased a few months after their honeymoon. “We wanted to do something big,” explains Scott. And, for the second time during their honeymoon, serendipity was at hand. While looking at Casa Gaviotas, the Realtor suggested the couple view the property from the water. As they sailed the Bay of Banderas, they came across an expanse of undeveloped land book-ended by two cliffs. The land was known as El Banco.

“It’s an amazingly peaceful, almost spiritual, place,” says Koogler. “I thought it could be really fulfilling to do something that creative that was also great business at the same time.” After returning home from the honeymoon and deliberating further, the pair decided to buy the parcel of land—to build



Left: The great room's floor-to-ceiling glass wall offers an unobstructed view of the ocean beyond. "It has been a challenge to find things to put in the room because of its scale," says Koogle.

Opposite, top: A stainless steel cable truss system suspends the tempered glass wall in the great room. Middle: A hammered-metal sconce casts a warm glow in the palapa. Bottom: The triangular pool glows at night.

Previous pages: The palapa-roof casita welcomes visitors as they enter the beachfront home in Punta Mita, which also includes a guesthouse with a dramatic stepped staircase. "It's a great house for entertaining," says Scott.



a private development. They enlisted the help of Casa Gaviotas' architect Juan Munguia, and began working on a master plan that would incorporate Old World elegance with new architectural elements. "We're trying to be good stewards of the land," explains Koogle, when describing the low-density development they decided to develop on El Banco. It will consist of 11 oceanfront estate lots, the Hacienda Hotel, Spa and Cultural Center, and second-phase developments: Casitas by the Lake, Beach Villas and Villas by the Park.

The development and planning of El Banco has temporarily turned Casa Gaviotas into a "working" vacation home. Nevertheless, the couple is always eager to return. As soon as Koogle moved in, he outfitted the entire compound with wireless satellite broadband Internet. Now he can get online anywhere on the premises, including the pool. "Some people have to put in a great kitchen. We have to put in great Internet," Scott says.

Radiating from the pool are four master suites, a palapa-roof casita, a library and the spectacular great room with its connected gourmet kitchen. The whitewashed structures boast clean modern lines, locally quarried stone, indigenous wood and hand-carved metalwork.

The extraordinary landscape surrounding the estate augments the home's beauty. Munguia, ever modest, is fond of saying: "The ocean views did most of the hard work." Inspired by the symmetrical designs of old Mexican haciendas, he mixed traditional materials and Old World carpentry with surprisingly modern elements, such as a colossal glass wall and triangular pool, both featured in the great room. The contemporary-yet-timeless architecture of the home was one of its biggest selling



CENTER AND FAR RIGHT: SCALLANPHOTO.COM; BELOW AND LEFT: MIGUEL GARCIA





points, say Koogle and Scott. “There’s an amazing tension that happens when you combine old with new in architecture,” says Scott.

Living up to its name, the great room features a spectacular tempered glass wall, 42 feet long and 21 feet tall, that bisects the living space without interrupting the stunning ceiling fresco. Designed and built by German engineering firm Aluminio Constructa, glass panels hang from stainless steel cable trusses, allowing access to the covered, exterior area beyond, blurring the line between indoor and outdoor living. “It’s a shock to walk into this big stone structure that feels old, but then it has this very modern element,” says Koogle.



Beyond the great room’s three stone arches, a triangular infinity pool juts toward the Pacific Ocean. “The pool reminds us of a boat bow penetrating the blue water of the bay,” says Munguia. The couple has spent many evenings in this pool, toasting the setting sun. “It’s kind of required that you sit in the corner of that triangular pool and watch the sunset with a beer in your hand,” says Scott.

And they have already begun to pepper the home with their own things: a ritual mask of a fantastic tiger hangs in the kitchen, two large paintings purchased in San Miguel de Allende grace the great room and folk art decorates one of the guest suites. “We’ve been traveling through central Mexico bringing back pieces to Casa Gaviotas,” says Scott. “Little by little,” adds Koogle, “so it all has meaning.” A fitting way to add more memories to their spectacular honeymoon memento. 

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Above: “Nature did most of the hard work,” says architect Juan Munguia, of the lush surroundings (left and right). The triangular pool reflects Koogle and Scott’s architectural style—traditional elements with a contemporary twist (middle).

Left: Casa Gaviotas is part of Scott and Koogle’s low-density El Banco development on Mexico’s west coast. “When we come here, our shoulders fall from our ears,” says Scott.