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Life at Sea

THE SEA OF CORTEZ SHORES UP ITS CACHET WITH A CLUSTER OF LUXURY HAVENS, ONE OF WHICH MAY BE THE ONLY THING YOU LACK—AT LEAST UNTIL YOU CLOSE ESCROW AT OASIS PALMILLA OR VILLAS DEL MAR.

By Amanda Fier



IF YOUR DREAM LIFE CONSISTS OF a tropical place huddled against an azure panorama, plus prime access to fruity drinks, tremendous golf and all the relaxation—or stimulation—you can handle, Oasis Palmilla or Villas Del Mar may just be *su casa* away from *su casa*.

Chiseled into Baja's sea-meets-desert landscape in the corridor between San José del Cabo and Cabo San Lucas, Oasis Palmilla and Villas Del Mar are residential treasures being brought to life by Del Mar Development (DMD) as part of its Palmilla master plan. The overall concept could be dubbed a one-two punch: i.e., one sublime idea belonging

to two men, Ron Hatfield and the late Ken Schnitzer, who established their vision—and their company, DMD—while visiting the Cabo Corridor during the mid-1990's. Today, Hatfield and DMD are building upon that vision by growing Villas Del Mar and more recently introducing Oasis Palmilla.

First, a look at Villas Del Mar: The community, whose buys will ultimately total 177, balances on a rocky cliff-turned-slope that sweeps dramatically into the shoreline. The residences are unforgettably plush in style and comfort, and nearly every window is filled with the sight of the sea.

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Day-to-day living is turnkey and carefree—as the property management team concern themselves with any hassles so you never have to. Therefore, you can forget about bills, repairs, grocery shopping, cleaning or cooking if you so desire. (And believe me, the skills of the butlers and chefs will make you want to forfeit your right to plan and cook.) This “whatever you need is no trouble” environment is world class, which is exactly why the enclave appeals to the affluent and celebrity sets that expect their needs anticipated and their expectations exceeded.

Though it is nearly 10 years old, Villas Del Mar continues to set the bar for Baja luxury. Chris Snell, president and founder of Snell Real Estate, handler of 80 percent of the high-end real estate market in Mexico and the firm exclusively representing Palmilla properties, has been living in Cabo for 15 years. “I know every development down there, the ins and outs,” says Snell, who resides south of the border full-time. “I choose to live in Villas Del Mar...It’s the only development I rep where the owners are truly happy. It’s just worry-free ownership.”

A happy and worry-free resident himself, Snell recently sold one property, was renting another and was preparing to move into a newly built casita in late 2006. And while he loves Villas Del Mar, he has already begun wading into the water of DMD’s next big splash, Oasis Palmilla, by reserving

a lot. “Anything Del Mar Development is doing, I’m interested in,” he says. “From a construction standpoint, nobody is delivering product to that level of finish and quality.”

Villas Del Mar will no doubt be a tough act to follow, but fortunately DMD knows just how to fill its own shoes. “Oasis Palmilla is going to be unique among anything else you’ll see in Cabo. It offers the elegance of a premier, gated-community setting, but it also offers a lot of space,” says JJ Abraham, vice president of development. “Villas Del Mar homeowners who are buying there have a need and desire for more space and privacy.”

At Oasis, luxury perches on a gentle rise overlooking the 27 holes of Nicklaus Signature golf, the very first links laid in Mexico by the Golden Bear. The 240-acre community will host approximately 40 single-story custom estates (Phase 1); and each hacienda-style dwelling will occupy an acre or so of land; measure 3,500 to 6,500 square feet; and stare across ocean, mountain or arroyo views. Outdoor cooking and entertaining amenities, a two-car garage and a private pool are standard fare; and parks, trails, a clubhouse, a soccer field and then some will further up the leisure ante. Lastly, Oasis will offer the same easy, breezy atmosphere as Villas Del Mar thanks to its own top-drawer property management program.

Beyond the bells and whistles gracing Villas Del Mar and



Oasis Palmilla, there's still more sumptuousness to be found a golf-cart-ride away at the One&Only Palmilla (see sidebar) and Club Ninety Six, a high-end, waterfront haunt strictly limited to members (who must be homeowners) and their guests. Named after the year the first home was built at Villas Del Mar, the \$8-million club, which opened in May 2005, boasts watery views best enjoyed from the restaurant patio with a margarita in hand. Snell is particularly fond of Club Ninety Six, saying, "It has wine storage, a full gym, a lap pool and bars. It's a great place to hang out with friends and whoever's in town."

And he's right—it is a great place to be, especially in the late afternoon or evening. But really, anywhere in this dream development is a great place to be, anytime. Once you're there, you won't want to leave, which explains why the real estate sales are doing so well—and why you'll wind up buying a DMD dwelling of your own. *EW*

to learn more

Del Mar Development's residential portfolio costs a pretty penny, but what you get is even prettier: a light-hearted coastal lifestyle whose natural and engineered components are equal in beauty. To secure your own

DMD delight, you can expect to pay the following prices: \$1.9 million to \$6.5 million for Villas Del Mar properties (28 one-story cottages at Las Entradas and 15 grand estates at Las Haciendas are set to take the stage mid-2007) and \$695,000 to \$1.75 million for a homesite in the first 40-lot phase of Oasis Palmilla. Membership at Club Ninety Six is included. Oasis Palmilla & Villas Del Mar, 877.847.1662, www.oasispalmilla.com, www.villasdelmar.com. For more information about home ownership in Mexico (which entitles you to the same rights offered in the United States or Canada), contact Snell Real Estate, 866.650.5845, www.snellrealestate.com.