

La Bella Vita

MEXICAN VILLAS OFFER
GROUND-FLOOR
OPPORTUNITY IN
GATED COMMUNITY



By Colleen Seto | Photos by Don Molyneux

In a rented SUV, bouncing down a sandy road in the Sonoran state of Mexico, I wasn't sure what to expect at the end of the road. We were headed to La Bella

Vita, villas located in the **37-acre gated community of Playa La Jolla** on the Sea of Cortez.

WE HAD PASSED THROUGH THE nearest town of Puerto Peñasco and were now driving by houses on the beach—some palatial mansions, others weathered and shanty-like, but no two the same. When we pull up, I'm relieved to see La Bella Vita is on the palatial end of the spectrum.

Having flown into Phoenix from Calgary early that morning, then made the 3.5-hour drive from Phoenix, I was primed for some R and R. I unloaded my bags, and headed straight up to the rooftop terrace looking out to the ocean. I could feel my body relax as I soaked in the sunshine and looked out at the sparkling blue-green water. The terraces, equipped with patio sets and barbecues, beckon you to cook

up your own Mexican meal and enjoy a few cervezas. The next night we would do just that with fresh seafood from the Old Port in Puerto Peñasco, about 15 kilometres away.

Currently, La Bella Vita is made up of two- and three-storey villas that offer three bedrooms, two and a half baths, a full kitchen and a laundry—perfect for families or couples. The two storeys have three bedrooms and two and a half baths, the three storeys have three bedrooms and three bathrooms. The master plan allows for up to 52 villas, 120 bungalow style walk-up apartments and 62 custom homes. The three-storey homes offer a garage big enough to house a car and boat or to add a fourth bedroom. With marble tile flooring



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throughout, hand-forged steel railings, and tasteful furnishings and décor, the villas do impress. Most importantly for this desert climate, they have air conditioning.

Outside, a group of workers are hard at work constructing the villas, both inside and out. Stamped concrete driveways and attractive landscaping come to being before our very eyes. The pride in workmanship is apparent among the staff as they work steadfastly in the blazing sun and continually sweep the dust from the work areas to keep them

tidy. As Marcos Vucovich, Director General of the project, tells us, La Bella Vita “is being built with sweat and Gatorade.” (They go through 24 gallons of Gatorade for their crew of 30, every day.) Speaking with Vucovich, you get the sense that things are in good hands. He points out little details like doorframes and plumbing in the garage with the same enthusiasm as big plans for future desalination plants and explaining how sand makes for a stable building foundation. And, he’s making his own plans to buy in the area, which I always consider a good sign.

After changing out of our Arctic-like wear, my husband and I take the three-minute stroll down to the Beach and dip our toes in the beautiful and oh-so-salty Sea of Cortez. We walk along the water, letting the warm ocean lap at our legs. As we head back, we visit La Bella Vita’s piece de resistance, the Casa del Mar, a custom equity-shared beachfront home. The luxuriously finished house showcases three bedrooms and bathrooms, a gourmet kitchen and a stunning stone-tiled domed skylight, a popular architectural feature in the area. There is also a two-bedroom guest house finished to the same high standards. The Casa del Mar demonstrates



THE TERRACES, EQUIPPED WITH PATIO SETS AND BBQS, BECKON YOU TO **COOK UP YOUR OWN MEXICAN MEAL** AND ENJOY A FEW CERVESAS.



what's possible for custom home builds, also available through La Bella Vita. The last equity share is available for \$298,900 US.

A few steps down the beach sit the shared facilities including a pool, hot tub, tennis court, covered seating area, and clubhouse, with future plans for a fitness area, owners' lounge and upgrades to all of the existing amenities. Though these facilities are shared among all homeowners in the Playa La Jolla community, La Bella Vita has taken a lead role in the development of the facilities, recognizing their importance to existing and future owners in the community.

La Bella Vita is represented in Puerto Peñasco by the Coastal Group,

but is actually the brainchild of Calgary businessman, Sam Sidhom. He has owned a home in Playa La Jolla for years and has always believed in the potential of the area. That's why he has made it a priority to expose Western Canadians to the Puerto Peñasco area and to La Bella Vita. In fact, La Bella Vita will host serious potential buyers for free so they may experience the entire area firsthand. If folks decide to buy, La Bella Vita will reimburse travel costs.

So how much for a piece of this paradise? I'm amazed to discover the price tag is very reasonable. One-eighth fractional ownership of a two-storey, 1400-square-foot villa runs between \$48,800 to \$58,000US, while a quarter ownership is \$75,000. Full ownership starts at \$289,900US, and for a 2,000 square-foot, three-storey villa, it costs \$378,800US. Single-level bungalow apartments start at \$145,900US.

Expected possession is fall 2008. Custom homes start at \$325,000 US and up. The first spec home will be ready by the end of the year with a price tag of \$555,000 US.

To date, including equity shares in Casa del Mar, the majority of the purchasers of La Bella Vita are Canadians.

With value like that, it's easy to see why people are choosing the beautiful life at La Bella Vita. R

