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Surrounded on three sides by more than nine miles of pristine secluded beaches, Punta Mita derived its name from the Aztec word *mictlan*, meaning “gateway to paradise.” The peninsula, located on the Mexican Riviera north of Puerto Vallarta, encompasses 1,500

acres—two of which contain Palmasola, one of the latest rental additions to the thriving resort community that is Punta Mita.

Like the legendary director John Huston, who became enamored with the area while filming *The Night of the Iguana*, a Bay Area commercial real estate developer and his investment banker wife were so seduced by the stunning natural beauty that they decided to build their own home there two years ago.

Palmasola refers to the lone beachside palm that captivated the owners when they first stayed at the nearby Four Seasons resort. “We fell in love with Punta Mita immediately,” says the husband. “This stretch of beach was gorgeous and



A thatched-roof
estate rounds out
the Mexican Riviera



Curve Appeal

BY DANA MICUCCI > PHOTOS BY MICHAEL CALDERWOOD



Previous pages, clockwise from upper left: Nestled on two beachfront acres in Punta Mita, Palmasolá is comprised of 11 palapas, each serving a different purpose. The indoor/outdoor living room palapa overlooks the infinity-edge swimming pool. The dining palapa can host up to 14 guests. This page: The master residence has three bedrooms and a rooftop terrace.

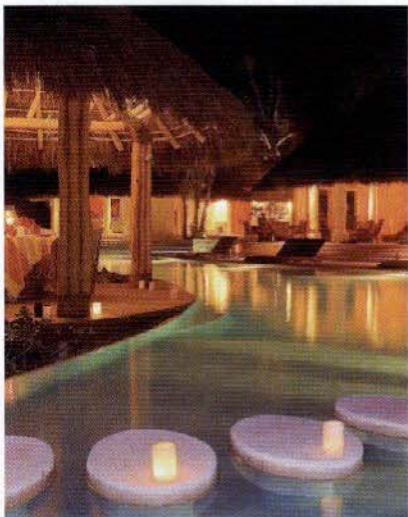
private. We wanted to create a beautiful beachfront retreat where we could bring our family and friends and their kids—a place where we felt far from civilization yet had access to modern conveniences and the cultural and recreational amenities available to the Punta Mita community.”

The 22,000-square-foot estate comprises 11 thatched-roof palapas, in a tropical villagelike setting that can comfortably accommodate up to seven couples or two to three families with children. The structures’ soft curves and fluid interior/exterior living spaces are the work of Mexican architect Manolo Mestre and his associate Juan Collignon as well as interior designers Erica Krayner and Ofelia Uribe, who collaborated closely with the owners. Interspersed between the structures—which include a master residence, guest residence, family room/media center, civic center and pool pavilion—is lush tropical landscaping.

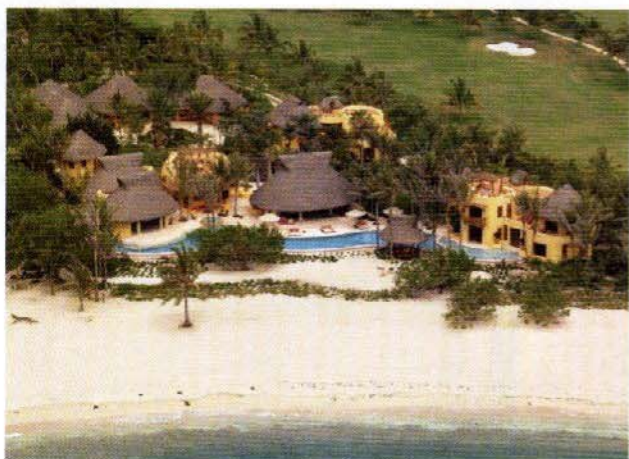
Throughout the estate, the emphasis is on simple, natural materials. Unpolished marble floors, hand-plastered walls and custom furniture handmade in Mexico from native hardwoods blend seamlessly with indigenous art and crafts ranging from contemporary abstract paintings to ceramics and textiles. “Palmasola has a timeless, Pacific coastal look,” says Mestre. “We wanted to create a healing, soothing environment that interacts with nature and



This page, clockwise from upper left: The master bedroom “El Sol” features a king-size four-poster draped with bright linens. The living room overlooks both the expansive 200-foot swimming pool and pristine beach. Palmasola illuminates at night.



Below left: An aerial shot of Palmasola reveals its villagelike layout. Below right: Between the pool and the ocean is a palapita with two hammocks and a circular sofa; beyond it lies the firepit.



has an element of mystery. From the moment you enter, you know you have left the outside world behind.”

Whether you are sipping a margarita at the infinity-edge pool, dining under the stars on the family room’s roof terrace, relaxing around a beachside campfire or tucking into one of the seven spacious suites in the master and guest

residences, there is a continuous sense of intimacy and organic balance.

Complementing the enticing visual tableau is a full-time staff of 12, gourmet Continental/Mexican cuisine prepared by an in-house chef, a gym, massage room, entertainment and business centers, chauffeured transportation to and from the airport and custom bath products. Add to that the use of the Jack Nicklaus–designed golf course and tennis and spa facilities at the nearby Four Seasons resort, and it is no wonder this seaside sanctuary has been booked since the owners began renting it last fall. (Rates range from \$13,000 to \$20,000 per night, with a five- to seven-night minimum stay, depending on the season.)

Within Punta Mita, you can also indulge in activities ranging from surfing, kayaking and scuba diving to excursions that will take you to Spanish Colonial haciendas, the remote moun-



tain villages of the native Huichol or swimming with dolphins.

“Palmasola is like a small luxury resort, where everything is taken care of for you,” says the husband. “Our guests love the unique blend of privacy and community here.” With the addition of two new managers from Sir Richard Branson’s ultra-exclusive Necker Island in the Caribbean, Palmasola will undoubtedly continue to enjoy the spotlight in the ever-developing cinematic paradise of Punta Mita.


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