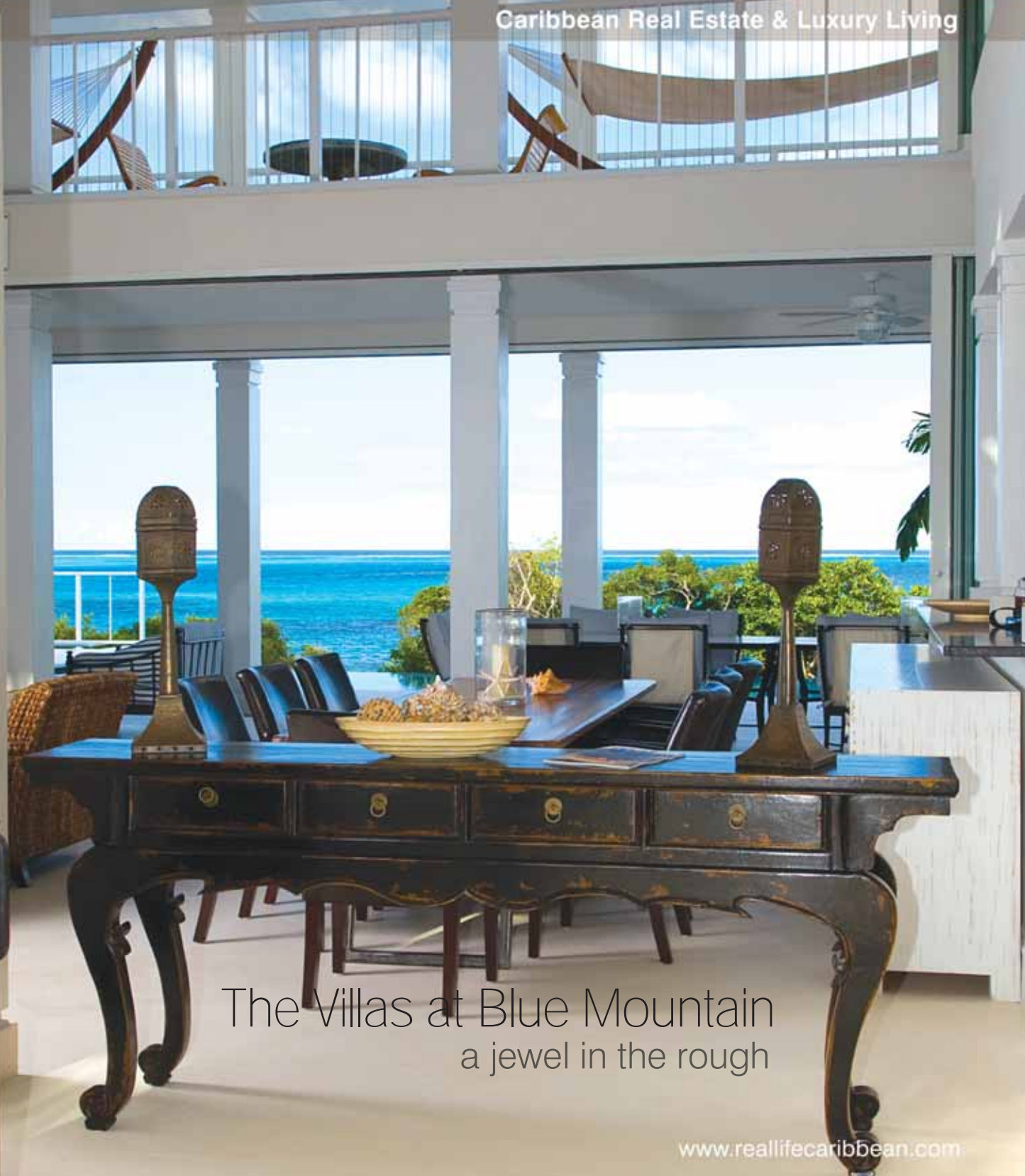


real life

Caribbean Real Estate & Luxury Living



The Villas at Blue Mountain
a jewel in the rough



They sneak up on you out of nowhere. Hidden discretely among the lush indigenous landscape and bold terrain, they begin as a tiny dot on your radar. As the wheels of your car slowly crawl down the long, winding road, you catch your first glimpse. As you turn another corner, the turquoise Caribbean Sea strikes your eye, beckoning you to continue on your journey, one last corner and there they are – in all their rare and splendid glory. Gleaming like brilliant, sapphire gems that have fallen from the sky are the signature blue rooftops of The Villas at Blue Mountain.

Seven acres of natural beauty set the stage for 10 luxurious villas that make up this exclusive oceanfront community. Nestled at the foot of Blue Mountain, just west of Turtle Cove on the North Shore of Provo, the secluded enclave renders stunning views of both the east and west tips of the island – a sight that no other area of Provo can lay claim to. High elevations (25-65 feet above sea level) and a vibrant, diverse topography set the stage for yearlong breezes which give relief on even the hottest days. A cascading waterfall flowing from a grotto is just a short stop along a path peppered with

native vegetation, which effortlessly leads to a 140-foot secluded beach, creating a most peaceful and private setting worthy of a picture postcard.

The British poet William Blake got it right when he wrote, “Great things are done when men and mountains meet.” Of course, it doesn’t hurt to have a former US Senate Chief of Staff at the helm. Building anything on a mountain has never been an easy task, but Mark Franz, the developer of The Villas at Blue Mountain, has put together an eclectic and experienced team to, quite literally, move a mountain ▶





(well, at least the difficult task of cutting into limestone to create the perfect alignment for each villa). That team includes John Redmond, a locally based, international architect with over 36 years experience; Ken Brown, an expert custom-home builder with almost 20 years of experience on-island; and Natalie Zaidan, a spunky and youthful landscape designer (sorry Blake, she is a woman) who owns Environmental Arts, one of the fastest growing landscape firms in Provo. Franz, who holds weekly meetings with his team, credits their collective experiences, teamwork abilities, and the fact that they all live in Provo year-round, and hence available, as the reason why this project has been so successful. And a success it is – what has been created is one of the most unique developments that Provo has ever seen.

The Villas at Blue Mountain bridges a much-needed gap in the housing market, between owning a high-end condo and building your own, private, custom-built villa. Although owners still get all the benefits and amenities of a condo, it is without

the maintenance, upkeep or high strata fees. What is being offered is a professional, fully managed free-hold title home in a private and secluded community, plus the benefit of the developer and his family living right on the premise for ease and comfort. Franz's team started putting in the infrastructure in 2004 from what was essentially raw land. They paved the roads, put in the storm-water drainage and all the underground utilities. As it currently stands, each villa takes less than a year to build, so the waiting period before moving in is much quicker than that of large condo developments, which can sometimes take up to five years to build.

Designed in the British West Indies style of architecture, there are five villa styles to choose from, each carrying the name of a native bird species (Royal Tern, Osprey, Turnstone, Whimbrel and Kingfisher). According to Redmond, each style shares the same fundamentals in their pitched roofs and large timber members, cathedral ceilings and classical proportions, but have modern interpretations as well. Or, as Franz simply puts it, all the villas have a "contemporary finish

with a traditional frame, if you will." While some villas have a more traditional, West Indies aesthetic in the rounded columns, archways, turrets, and eight-foot-tall French doors that open out to the patio and pool areas, others are more contemporary with cleaner lines, such as floor-to-ceiling glass sliding doors made of half-inch-thick, hurricane-rated impact glass. All villas have four bedrooms and four and a half baths and large, private pool and patio areas (in some cases up to 5,000 square feet), which are brought into the open-concept living area to create one unified space. Ten-foot-high ceilings and eight-foot-high doors feature throughout, as well as the signature cobalt blue Spanish tile roofs and white exterior stucco walls.

Other amenities in all the villas include a "great room" with vaulted ceilings (modelled after old British Colonial homes), monitored security systems with multiple CCTV cameras, wiring for high speed internet and satellite TV, gourmet kitchens including wine coolers, granite counters, walk-in pantries and custom cabinetry, outdoor kitchens with

stainless steel gas grills and wet bars, travertine marble, limestone or hardwood floors, Kohler bathroom fixtures, large covered terraces and covered parking. Design packages provided by Fenimore Rosenberg Kolb, a sophisticated New York and Provo-based interior design firm, are optional. Either way, the villas range in size from 3,400 to 5,000 square feet and are built in either one- or two-stories. The latter villas have upper-level balconies and pergolas that produce about a 50 percent reduction in the glare from the sun, creating a cool and breezy lounge area all year round.

Whichever shape or style, each villa has its own "wow" factor. "With all of the designs, when you as you come through the entrance, you have the a view of the ocean. We wanted the villas to be arranged in such a way that when you are sitting in your villa, you see your patio, the pool and the ocean and not the next villa. You will never have one set of windows facing another, so there is privacy from neighbours," says Redmond. The spaces between each villa are being detailed as carefully as the villas themselves. He continues, "The goal, ►



right from the beginning, was to create visual barriers, vistas, private places, shady places and screening from the wind." So what about sound? "You could be throwing a huge party on your pool deck, overlooking the ocean, and your neighbours would never know or hear," says Franz. (Assuming they haven't been invited, of course.)

In the pool and patio areas, the paved tiles are actually made of ground conch shells mixed together with concrete. Franz and his team meticulously worked with a local artisan, Phil Thompson, to get just the right texture of smooth, milky white tiles (40,000 square feet to be exact) that are consistently cool to the touch, even after sitting in the hot sun all day. Conch is Turks and Caicos' biggest (and only) export, and the shells have traditionally been used in decorative pieces such as necklaces, lamps and bowls, so the fact that shells are now being used for functional purposes such as countertops and patio tiles is a refreshing concept and great for the local economy.

In terms of the villas' placements, there are two elevations

to choose from and according to Brown, this was the biggest challenge of the project since the placement was dictated by the natural topography – his construction team had to get just the right angles and proportions when cutting into the natural limestone. Franz gives the perfect analogy, "Every little decision is affected by another decision like a Rubik's Cube. Turn one piece and the other pieces have to change. A few degrees can make all the difference in the world, in terms of light, breezes and privacy. Situating a villa just five degrees the other way will give a completely different feel." He credits Brown and Redmond's professional expertise, developed after living on the island for years, to really grasp the concept of positioning here. The end result was a plan for each villa to sit on a slightly different angle and elevation (within the two broader elevations) so that none are situated in a cookie-cutter fashion.

The team also crafted every interior element with painstaking detail, from the column widths and the size of the pergola crosspieces (both changed numerous times to get the right positioning and spacing), right down to deciding which wall placement would give the least wear and tear from trade winds and which appliances would be prone to rust, if placed in certain areas. The outdoor landscaping was also given careful consideration, but you would never know it by its seamless blend with the natural beauty already in place. It helped that Franz and Zaidan share the same philosophy: they both believe in preserving the natural environment and being as "eco-friendly" as possible. Zaidan credits Blue Mountain's fertile soil for the accelerated growth of the lush vegetation. However, Mother Nature can't take full credit, she also knows exactly what to plant to facilitate this growth. She always ensures that all the plants she imported plants are healthy and disease-free. Before any limestone was even cut or any infrastructure built, Zaidan did a walk-through of the site to see what was available (something rare in the world of luxury developments, where "bulldoze now, replant later" is a common theme). Says Zaidan, "I encourage clients to re-plant with indigenous plants, especially on the perimeters of their properties. They'll appreciate it in two years time when their water bills are cut in half."

At The Villas at Blue Mountain, 80 percent of the landscape is planted with indigenous plants and the remaining 20 percent with imported, exotic plants. As you walk along the various cobblestone pathways, from the sides and fronts of the villas all the way down to the stunning grotto area and secluded beach, you are greeted with a green infusion and feel like you have stepped into a fabled forest. Oleanders, bougainvilleas, silver and green buttonwood shrubs, yellow elders and cork trees are just some of the indigenous plants mixed in with a various assortment of exotic shrubs, grasses, flowering plants and trees such as silver thatched and date palms. You can see Zaidan's distinct style in her simple yet methodical arrangement of the textured foliage, which is more wild than manicured and uncluttered, more green-fusion than multi-coloured. "When the blue roofs sparkle in the sun against the light, all you need is some good contrast," says Zaidan.

The grotto area was built over a natural sinkhole, and now





closely resembles its original state. As you stroll along the wooden boardwalk that stands on stilts, your pathway twists and turns, tall foliage surrounding you from every angle you turn, leaving you with a sense of anticipation and wonder at what your destination will bring you. Alas, the most beautiful white, sandy beach rests in a V-shaped alcove protected by a wall of rock and coral as it slowly widens out to the crystal blue Caribbean Sea. As you stand there, you feel like the only person in the universe – all your cares instantly melt away as you sink into a peaceful, state of tropical bliss.

Access to the grotto and beach area, as well as the custom-designed landscaping, come with each owners' package, which starts at US\$3.4 million for a fully furnished, completed villa. Pre-construction rates range from US\$3.0 million up to US\$4.0 million for single-story oceanfront villas. Franz adds that if you buy a villa at pre-construction rates, you could be living in it in less than a year. He has also implemented a homeowners association. The fee will be in the US\$2,500 per month range and include all of your landscaping, pool maintenance, security monitoring, rental management and common upkeep. Compared to the high strata-fees for condos, which can be as high as US\$5,000 per month, Franz sees this as a wise investment.

Just like their signature blue rooftops, The Villas at Blue Mountain are a rare gem that sets them apart from Provo's current condo-market. Years from now, North Shore seafarers will continue to point to the brilliant blue sapphires perched high up on the mountaintop and marvel at their heavenly beauty, eloquently placed just so, among a palette of earthly greens. You can almost hear them mumble to themselves, *so, that is why they call it "Blue" Mountain.* ■



FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE VISIT WWW.BLUEMOUNTAIN.TC.
THE MODEL HOME IS OPEN DAILY.

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The Villas at Blue Mountain is the Turks & Caicos Islands' first managed oceanfront community of luxury estate homes.

Each thoughtfully designed 4 bedroom villa sits on at least a half acre of lushly landscaped property overlooking Provo's stunning north shore and barrier reef. The open floor plans ensure ocean breezes and views from all living spaces which blend seamlessly into the outdoor living space – a massive oceanside patio complete with its own free-form custom pool, spa, open-air shower, outdoor kitchen and wet bar. Each villa has at least two bedrooms on the ocean with expansive French doors that further blur the line between indoors and out. Finally, The Villas at Blue Mountain boasts a singularly precious commodity – its own private beach.

All this privacy and luxury – available only in gated estates such as these – can be enjoyed carefree thanks to the professional management that comes with ownership at The Villas at Blue Mountain. Landscape and pool maintenance, security, satellite television signal, and trash removal are all provided. Housekeeping and concierge services are available and the management team can even arrange short term holiday rentals when the owner is not in residence.

Come see why The Villas at Blue Mountain was named "Best Caribbean Development" and "Best Caribbean Property" at the Bentley/CNBC/Daily Mail International Property Awards in the United Kingdom. Model home open daily.
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