



LA CALETA
THE ROAD TO PARADISE

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This home does more than face the sea, it rises above it – on a wondrous promontory with an 180-degree view. Punta de Mita, Nayarit, just a few minutes from Puerto Vallarta, is La Caleta’s landscape, seascape and skyline. Respectfully inspired by its setting, the villa is one of this region’s most interesting estates, as it provides a whole survey of Mexican style: in its sturdy walls, boldly-captured and festive colors, lush vegetation, natural woods and textiles – all in compliance with its owners’ wishes for peace, symbiosis with the sea, and spiritual sustenance.

The surrounding beauty demands a response from the lofty structure to the mandate its owners gave architect Fernando de Haro and contractor Juan Pablo Stone: design a home that goes above and beyond, surpassing the usual attractions implied by coastal living. He designed a site with elegant wood at its very heart, a pergola serving as a conduit to the rooms, distinguishing and accessing them one by one. The microclimate is

rich in regional flora watered by La Caleta’s own pond, and the circular structure opens out like two arms, welcoming anyone who passes through; preparing them for what they’ll see farther along when they come upon the wide expanse of the ocean.

Starting at the entryway, one learns that the language invariably spoken here is that of water. The house begins the dialogue with a wall that sends water splashing onto the ground, where it becomes an unobtrusive current that later turns into a pond, then a fountain. After halting in the palapa area, it finally springs forth again from the pool; a friendly station on the way to the majestic sea. This linear language follows a thoroughly organic design, revealed and defined by its central axis.

A Mexican plaza

On its path to the sea La Caleta is a house that complements its surroundings by relying upon Mexican materials, mainly woods but also rounded





stone – pebbles fashioned into fine floor finishes, outlining rooms, forming mosaic carpets, framing walkways; all with the precision of a monumental embroidery. And for the walls, natural rock is treated with cement to give it the look of solid sand.

Lively colors – yellows, oranges, deep blues – enhance these massive walls to provide genuine Mexican style, while the house's layout is one more demonstration of its nationality. We could almost be in a village made up of various dwellings around a central plaza, with the microcosmic wooden palapa joining and apportioning the rooms; providing a perfect spot for contemplating the scenery, immersing oneself in the fluid music of the fountains. This is also the ideal place for leaving everything stressful and workaday behind, and far away; what matters here has nothing to do with the complications of urban life.

As for getting to know the sea, the rectangular palapa – reminiscent of thatched Mayan architecture – is the perfect place for a Mexican fiesta. Here one really begins to understand how the house melds with its environment; given all the modulated tones used here, you can almost feel the sand between your toes. And local plant life again plays a leading role; this time by marking the property line with greenery, not walls or fences. Nothing registers as being artificial or out of place, because it isn't; there's a precise rationale for each element, each corner of the house – a house that floats while being firmly connected to





the ground, in an ecosystem that seems to have been waiting forever to embrace it.

Popular arts, particularly those using natural-fiber textiles, are arranged throughout La Caleta, testifying once more to the owners' admiration for Mexico. With interior walls generally left bare, decorative objects are also functional: the house itself is a translation of *artesanía*, the convergence of hearts and hands we call fine craftsmanship.

Privacy, seclusion

For architect De Haro and his creative team, the most complex design challenge was to provide each room with a view of the sea. Wandering through the house now, it seems difficult to

conceive of this as a conundrum, because the ocean view is always the first thing you notice: offering communion with the sea via countless rituals, whether one is seated on a balcony or stretched out in bed with the huge picture windows thrown open.

But interaction with the sea has its ups and downs, ins and outs; most evident in the building's communal areas, which can become private hideaways according to the needs of the inhabitants. Two balconies literally suspended in air are the points closest to the briny deep, and witness its mysteries. One is attached to a romantic area whose grand dining table is again accentuated by filigreed stonework; there you might sit in a



double wooden swing, perfect for catching the sea breezes, the Pacific winds, the sun's last – or, why not? – *first* rays. This is a pleasant interlude even when you're all alone; maybe even more glorious in solitude. Another way of reveling in the space is to share it, intimately, with companions whose only purpose is to savor fine food while looking out over the blue of the sea.

Stairway to heaven

We've already mentioned La Caleta's wise color choices, celebrations of life and nature's grandeur. Color flows along the walls, the floors, and shines from foliage and rocks. But we mustn't forget the even more impressive effect it has on the spirit.

The sea is immense and imposing, and in spite of that it is accessible, touchable; inviting and daring us to submerge ourselves in its sensuality or sail over its endless waves, dwarfed only by the stupendous open sky. Here, having climbed the stairs to another sandy-hued spot, we find the sky captive in a kind of refuge; the dazzling blues it shares with the water enfold us as we take in the view. This is the perfect place for tanning – or just teasing the sun while rocking in a hammock, protected by the pergola. And when we capture the sea itself in a glance, we have all the proof we need that the house has thoroughly completed its mission: to offer up a small slice of earthly paradise.



