

Karen Howes

# Vacation Homes

and Perfect Weekend Hideaways



MERRELL



## La Herrumbrossa

Tarifa · Costa del Luz

SPAIN

Arvid Bergvall spent his childhood holidays in Marbella, southern Spain, where his parents had a vacation home. As they grew up, Arvid and his friends would head to the coast in the heat of August to take advantage of the unbroken 10-kilometre (6-mile) stretch of white sandy beach at Tarifa, located between Cadiz and Algeciras on the Costa del Luz ('coast of light'), the closest point in Spain to North Africa. Some years later, Arvid spent his honeymoon there; he and his wife, Beth, later bought a building in the old fishing town.

Forty years ago, Tarifa was virtually unknown and unacknowledged by the swarms of surfers who now congregate there every summer to 'catch' the waves and hang out in the local bars and hotels. When my family took vacations there, the descent to the beach led us through lines of eucalyptus trees and gnarled olive groves before we reached the sand dunes that in those days

protected this part of the Spanish coast. All three children learned to swim in the surf, strapped to cork buoys 'borrowed' from fishermen's nets, to make sure that they were brought back to safety on the next big wave. The beach was always deserted. There was no one to disturb the tranquility and isolation except for the Guardia Civil, who patrolled the shoreline at midday looking for illegal boats and abandoned contraband from Africa. In more recent years Tarifa has become a national park, its beautiful coastline protected from property developers yet topographically changed by the army of wind turbines that now punctuates the skyline, taking advantage of the winds from Africa.

From their home in the old town, Arvid and his wife eventually gravitated to the coast, drawing on his growing interest in architecture and interior design to develop and build their own vacation home, barely 200 metres (650 feet) from the beach. Created from five existing ruined buildings,

*The collection of low roofs of traditional pe the most beautiful be simplicity is enhancec the ocean and is hur*



La Herrumbrossa is a substantial property that sympathetically combines traditional architecture with a modern, uncluttered interior. The couple set about making one home, retaining as many of the original architectural features as possible, such as roof shapes, thick walls and alcoves. To help finance their beach existence, they went on to build another villa and a guest house on the site, both of which they rent out on long-term contracts, and plans are in place to build more houses over the next three years.

Since they were living on a beach, the couple decided to create a simple, contemporary interior, where the sand brought in by their two little daughters would be easily swept from the pale limestone floors. To ensure that their house, unlike many vacation homes in Spain, could be enjoyed all year round, they installed fireplaces and wood-burning stoves to keep them warm in winter.

Opposite: The living area is furnished, and the photograph beside it shows the study, which is built-in. Above: The space is handcrafted by the architect, with a window overlooking the sea from the timeless, a



Above, top left: *The main bedroom has been kept deliberately simple. The photograph on the wall beyond the bed was a present.*

Above, bottom left and right: *These two contemporary bathrooms were designed by Arvid Bergvall.*

Opposite: *In the main bedroom, a standard lamp made from a sculptural piece of driftwood has been placed next to a photograph by Alexis de Vilar, purchased at an exhibition in Barcelona.*

The couple spend more than eight months every year in Spain, and intend their children to have a local education while they are young enough to adapt easily to Spanish culture and learn the language. The children are encouraged to appreciate the beautiful natural surroundings during the time they spend at Tarifa, and they would appear to enjoy a blissful existence.

While Arvid takes advantage of the onshore breezes to windsurf and try his luck at kitesurfing, Beth and the children build sandcastles and swim in the sea. All of them enjoy walking in the hills behind the house and exploring the shoreline, where cowrie shells were once ten a penny. Whales and dolphins are also drawn to this exceptional stretch of coast, and orcas have been sighted in spring. Once a week the local farmer brings his herd of goats down to La Herrumbrossa to graze. Childhood memories are made of this!

