

The COLLECTOR'S instinct

The problem with owning too many homes is finding the time to stay in them all. The Solstice Collection's Graham Kos tells Susan Kime how he has solved the problem with a touch of artistic flair.

Spend all you have for loveliness,
Buy it, and never count the cost;
For one white singing hour of peace
Count many a year of strife well lost.
- Sara Teasdale

There is a certain immediate, almost visceral awareness that I have heard about from fine art collectors about what it feels like to find *the* painting that speaks to them, the one that they could not live without,' says Graham Kos, founder of and visionary behind the Solstice Collection.

'Soon after I started looking at homes for the Solstice Collection, I realised that my criteria for buying architecturally significant homes were much the same as an art collector's when considering purchasing a significant piece of art,' he adds.

'When I see a home that will fit into our collection, I sense a kind of internal lightness, where I can see into the heart of the architect's vision and know how wonderful the members' experiences and memories will be in that home,' he continues.

Ultra-luxury vacation home

Solstice is an ultra-luxury Residence Collection where members enjoy virtually unlimited vacation experience in \$6–10 million homes, as well as a 90ft yacht, throughout the US and Europe. The membership tiers range from \$535,000 to \$1.65 million, depending on the individual member's advance access planning requirements.

The Solstice Collection, founded in 2004, is the only seasoned ultra-luxury club in the world. The few others at this level have been founded quite recently and have yet to prove themselves to the upper tier. The excellence of The Solstice Collection has not been ignored: the Collection won the *Robb Report's* Best of The Best 2005 and *Business Britain's* Best Internationally Award 2006. Andrew Harper, author of the *Hideaway Report*, has also praised Solstice highly.

A major reason for such accolades is Kos's collector's instinct when it comes to acquiring the most significant high-end homes. He is no stranger to this level, as his father is a well-known architect and, due to

Kos's early financial success as an options trader at the Chicago Board of Trade, he was able to use his keen, architecturally-aware eye to purchase his first second home in Cabo San Lucas, Mexico.

Sharing the luxury

However, as he and his interior designer wife, Shay, were unable to use it as much as they intended, he decided to create The Solstice Collection. Kos explains: 'We began thinking that others like us could just not spend the time they wanted in their second, third and fourth homes, so it might be a good idea to purchase some high-end, architecturally significant homes, gather members in such ultra-luxury environments, and allow them to choose when they wanted to spend time in these homes, thereby creating a singular, enlightened second-home alternative for those most comfortable in the ultra-luxury tier.'

The destinations and the residences that create this tier underscore Solstice's elite exclusivity: in Paris, a pied-à-terre built in the 17th century on the Ile St Louis near Notre Dame; in Florence, a villa on the Piazza della Signoria with a facade created by Michelangelo; in London, a terrace suite in London's West End; in the mountains outside Telluride, Colorado, a Basque-inspired residence at Aldasoro Ranch; on St Barth's in the French West Indies, a beach house; in the vineyards of Napa Valley, a villa residence; in Cabo San Lucas, a 6,500 square foot hillside home in the private-gated Pedregal Estates; in Aspen, two residences – one a contemporary mountain design, the other a mountain lodge pattern, both on Aspen's desirable West End. And a 90ft Dover yacht, the *Solstice I*, cruises the Caribbean in winter, the Bahamas in spring and autumn, and New England's coast in summer.

Each Solstice home transmits an extremely distinctive, high-end character while reflecting the sense of place where the home is built.

'Each home seems to me like a distinct work of art, each with their own personalities, each with a separate voice and story,' adds Kos, 'and if the home speaks to me, I listen.'

The Solstice Collection now stands at the pinnacle of the ultra-luxury category of the \$2.5 billion shared-residence industry. Kos is also poised to add more architectural gems to the Solstice Collection, as he and his partners expand his original vision, adding a fine art collector's instinct to it. ■

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For further information, call +1 480 240 2383 or visit www.solsticecollection.com.