CEANA The Perfect Holiday Homes

LANNOO



What does an architect do with a location that has a view of the Pacific Ocean and the jungle? Build as many terraces as possible in order to enjoy the exceptional surroundings as much as possible. The Costa Rican hideout Ocean Eye is an eye-catching, exotic terrace house immersed in the ultimate holiday atmosphere.

Inside or outside? In the Costa Rican holiday home Ocean Villa, the boundary between the two is not so clear. Why would you erect so many walls in such breath-taking surroundings? Benjamin Garcia Saxe of the architectural firm Studio Axe aimed for a harmonious flow between inside and outside by constructing the house with poles, terraces, and walls that can be completely opened. Saxe: 'The Holdener family bought a beautiful property with two breath-taking views: the ocean and the jungle. We decided to rest the house against the steep hill of the site in order to stabilize the soil and protect the house from falling debris. The house then transitions from a more solid and intimate construction at the back—where the bedrooms and bathrooms are located—to a light-weight and ephemeral structure that faces the ocean and jungle views. The result is a series of interwoven terraces that relate to each other in all dimensions creating not only an internal interaction between levels, but also varied and sometimes unexpected relationships between the inhabitants and the natural landscape. In these interstitial terrace spaces, which are never truly inside or outside, architecture fosters the inhabitants' relationship, enjoyment, and appreciation of the natural world.'

Ocean Eye is a fantastic construction of about 300 square metres with four bedrooms and three bathrooms. The entire house is a tribute to sustainability and ecology. Saxe: 'In this project we carefully analysed local wind patterns to create a comfortable cross ventilation that would cool the spaces without the use of air conditioning. We used photovoltaic panels to create the energy needed for the home as well as solar thermal technology to heat water. Every single item in the house is energy efficient and the entire lighting system has been developed with high-efficiency LEDs. The house collects rainwater from the roof structures, which is stored and used throughout the house. For the most part, the house is built from locally resourced, reforested, and certified Melina wood. Most of the sinks were hand-crafted and created on-site, as well as the doors, the kitchen cabinets, and the bathroom furniture. Even though it might seem very modern, this house was actually carefully handcrafted with local materials by local workers under extreme and remote tropical conditions with limited resources and equipment.'

Ocean Eye is located just above Playa Hermosa, one of the most beautiful Costa Rican surf beaches in the Nicoya Peninsula. The heavenly beaches, rough waves, charming bathing spots, and high quality of life make this peninsula one of the most popular destinations in Costa Rica.









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The floating house



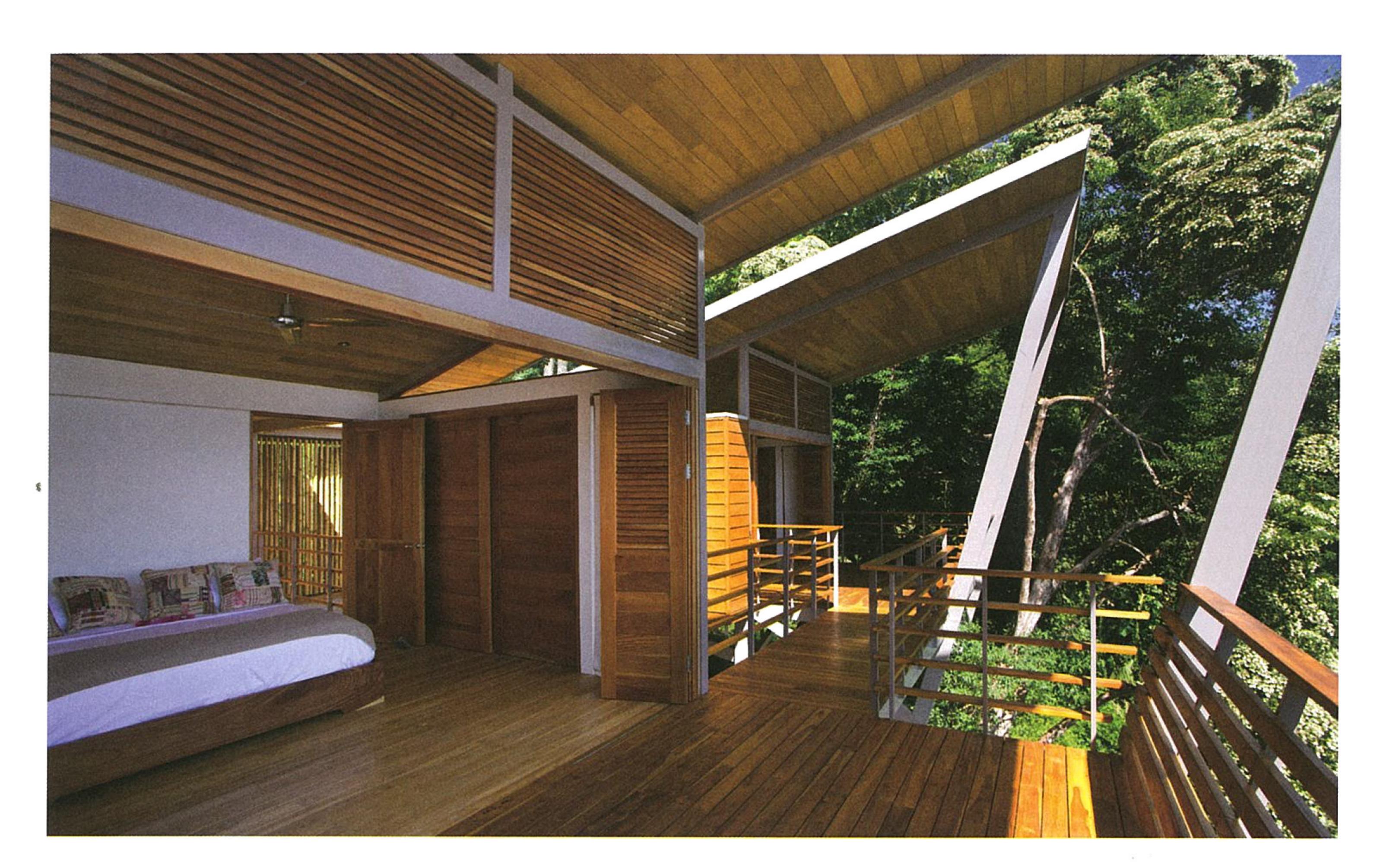


If you wanted to be facetious, you could call Casa Flotanta a tree hut or a dwelling on stilts, but to be precise you'd have to mention that it is 300 square metres, has an infinity pool, a view of the sea and the mountains, and offers all the luxuries you can imagine. It's an ecological gem in a tropical rainforest; what else could you want?

Upon his clients' request, architect Benjamin Garcia Saxe succeeded in erecting a stunning holiday home in a location that at first sight makes the project seem like an impossible feat. Between the trees and plants, against a steep slope that dives into the Pacific Ocean, Casa Flotanta seems like a mirage, a luxurious fata morgana that integrates flawlessly with the green Costa Rican landscape. Saxe: 'The Gooden-Nahome family found this incredible site overlooking the ocean. The biggest constraint we encountered was that the site was predominantly on a very steep slope and the view of the ocean was captured only at the mid-upper section of the site. We saw this not as an obstacle but rather as an opportunity to search for an architectural design that would work with these conditions. Together we explored the possibility of creating large retaining walls and cutting back the soil in order to place the house, a technique used for most of the houses in the area. Ultimately, we decided to do the exact opposite and actually allow the slope, the earth, the vegetation, water, and animals to flow underneath the house. We then floated the house up in the air and by doing so, managed to save on the immense cost of creating soil retention walls around the site. This logical and obvious decision created a very light-touch intervention that allows the terrain to breathe while providing a spectacular view of the ocean from the key location on the site.'

The floating house consists of three pods that are connected to each other by bridges and walkways. The pods were built with durable and natural materials. 'The house is created out of modules that are repetitive and linked by flying bridges that hover over the landscape. As the house had to be built on a steep slope, many of the pieces were prefabricated and craned up to position. We not only standardised a repetition of living modules which can continue to grow and be added in time, but also created a repetition of the primary structural elements in order to ease the time and effort of construction. The result is that of a home that floats above the earth, allows its natural environment to continue to grow and change, and captures an astounding ocean view.'

Casa Flotanta has a large open living area, a spacious kitchen, and three bedrooms (on two different floors). Huge glass windows in wooden frames offer an amazing view of the surroundings from every space in the house. The popular surfing beaches of Santa Teresa are a short distance away from the holiday home. Other popular activities in the region are snorkelling, mountain biking, kayaking, zip lining, and hiking in the Curu National Wildlife Refuge.









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