



Residence

On the Rocks



Imagine you have been invited by a long-lost friend to visit his private villa perched among majestic granite rocks above an idyllic tropical island beach. When you arrive at the house, the butler informs you that your host has recently departed at the last minute on yet another of his great adventures. The villa, however, in all its sumptuous glory is yours to explore and revel in for the weekend.

Words: TANYA GOODMAN
Images: © KARL AMMANN



This is just the feeling we experienced when we had the great pleasure of spending two nights at Karl Ammann's extraordinary Creole Colonial style villa, called Residence on the Rocks, on Mahé in the Seychelles. This was truly an entrée into the essence of luxury. It was not just the imposing and original décor, such as the 16 reclaimed Indian Haveli palace doors that opened from the living spaces onto the poolside patio, or the intriguing pieces of memorabilia that revealed their owners' tastes and history, but also the fact that the villa was built with care and compassion for the environment. What contributed even more to our sense of awe was the feeling that this place radiated a depth of character, of both man and house.

Karl Ammann is a world famous wildlife photographer credited by many, including *Time* magazine, as being a critical player in exposing the devastating effects of the bushmeat trade in Central Africa through his reports and documentaries. Ammann was recently named "SAB Environmental Journalist of the Year" for his documentary *The Cairo Connection*, which was broadcast on SABC2's 50/50. His photographs, which have been featured in the *New York Times Magazine*, *Newsweek*, and *National Geographic* among others, populate the Residence on the Rocks, along with collections of art and artefacts from his global travels.

Ammann's early career was spent in the hospitality industry. His first stint was in Zaire at the Hotel Intercontinental, where he was instrumental in organising the historic "Rumble in the Jungle" bout between then World Heavyweight Champion George Foreman and former world champion and challenger Muhammad Ali. Ammann later worked in Cairo, the Maasai Mara in Kenya and the Virunga Mountains in Rwanda. He still maintains a base in Kenya and spends about half his time photographing and publicising environmental issues in the region.

It was while working in the hotel industry in Kenya that Ammann first visited the Seychelles in 1977, and like so many others, immediately fell in love with the islands. After a series of trials and tribulations, Ammann's vision of building a home here was finally realised last year when construction began on a house to be situated on a special access road connecting his domain to the prestigious Banyan Tree five-star resort located at Intendance Bay. Although Residence on the Rocks is entirely secluded, the proximity to, and relationship with, Banyan Tree allows guests to enjoy the privacy of an exclusive villa with access to all the luxury amenities of a top-class resort.



Green Building Features

The Seychelles has a reputation for its unspoilt nature. The residence was built trying to live up to the island's image and minimally impact the immediate environment. The overall design incorporates maximum energy efficiency measures without affecting the expected comfort level. Choices and features include:

- 50,000-litre rain water collection tank, purified with infrared light
- Solar panels for hot water heating
- Motion sensor driven air conditioning
- Granite rocks incorporated into the building
- No large trees were cut during construction
- All timber used is recycled material from India and Burma
- LED lights and other power-saving light fixtures are deployed throughout



Designed in a traditional Creole style, the villa reflects a blend of many cultures: French, Chinese, African, Indian and English. As such, we found ourselves lazing in colonial wooden armchairs and luxurious sunbeds on the wide overhanging verandas as the children, lulled to sleep by the rhythmic whir of ceiling fans, napped in the enormous beds. Karl and his partner, Kathy, searched several parts of Africa for interesting tribal art, looking for antique furniture in Northern India and scouting the handicraft markets of Chiang Mai and Myanmar for additional items.

Many of the furniture pieces are imported British colonial items. The floors are all of recycled old Burma teak while the colonial metal windows were imported from Kenya. Cast iron railings, which decorate the stairs leading up to the sleeping areas and embellish the gazebo overlooking the ocean, were acquired in Burma. All carpets were woven in and bought from traditional tribal village cooperatives in Northern India. One could spend hours examining the trove of treasures found in each and every room and wishing that your host were there to tell the story behind each object.

The house exudes an aura of nostalgia and nonchalance, yet it is infinitely liveable. It comprises a two-storey main building with a central courtyard overlooking an

infinity pool that seemingly plunges into the forest of coconut palms framing the ocean below. The en suite bedrooms are located on the second floor, all boasting French doors onto a veranda that flows along the entire length of the house, with the master bedroom also containing an elevated study or work area. Downstairs is a living room with raised entertainment or reading area and a dining room with fully equipped kitchen. There is a separate guesthouse situated to the side of the central pool, with service quarters for a butler or personal assistant located below.

Our stay at Residence on the Rocks came at the end of our 11-day journey to the Seychelles and, having already enjoyed some of the most beautiful beaches on the islands, we were satisfied to simply rest and relax at the house. Had we been more energetic, we could have requested to be collected by the Banyan Tree and taken by electromobile to any of their fine restaurants or bars, the hotel spa, gym, or tennis court. Had we been more stressed, we could have called for a three-hour Balinese massage in our gazebo or arranged for the services of a nanny or private chef. Instead, we delighted in the discoveries made by our kids and the attention of our personal butler, who not only catered to the whims and timetables of our spirited young family, but also surprised us with a poolside candlelit dinner

on our last evening.

Like a perfect sunset after a perfect day, our stay at Residence on the Rocks coloured our entire Seychelles experience with an exquisite golden hue. We are still basking in the warmth and wonder of the place and highly recommend that you experience it for yourself. Whether you are looking for a magical setting to celebrate a golden anniversary, the conclusion of a big deal with new partners, a special retreat for your Board of Directors, or a gift to a newlywed couple for their honeymoon, Residence on the Rocks is an excellent choice.

Enquiries, Bookings & Special Offer

Rates are based on seasonal demand fluctuations and the number of people occupying the residence. Contact Karl Ammann directly in Kenya on +254 62 32448, fax +254 62 32407, via his UK roaming number on +44 780173284 or by emailing kamman@form-net.com. You can view more information at www.residenceontherocks.com. To learn more about Karl's photography and his conservation work, visit his website, www.karlammann.com. ✨

