

Designs on Dalaman

Buying a piece of land in the Turkish mountains gave Kathryn Higgins and Gerry Stewart the chance to create their dream home just the way they wanted

Words and pictures by Dominic Whiting





began to seriously consider Turkey.”

The couple’s aim was to find a place where they could holiday with family and friends. Making a short-term profit was not a concern, although they did want a sound investment and were attracted by the value for money of Turkish property. They made contact with a number of developers and estate agents, and decided to book a viewing trip with one that had particularly impressed them.

“Kathryn had been on holiday to Marmaris many years before, but I knew relatively little about the country and didn’t know what to expect,” says Gerry.

Their trip didn’t get off to a good start though – they hit a heavy snowstorm travelling across the mountains from Antalya airport. The taxi they were in skidded on a patch of ice and veered off the road into a bank of snow.

“I could see it coming, as the road was really icy,” remembers Gerry. “We were all pretty shaken up but, thanks to the efforts of a local farmer with his tractor, we were soon on our way again.”

Having finally reached Dalaman, they were taken to see a development of villas in Akkaya, an unspoilt valley 20 minutes’ drive away from the town.

“The position was stunning and we liked the development, but then we saw some plots of land nearby,” says Kathryn.

The developer was selling the plots of land – which would allow the couple to build a villa to their own specifications. Kathryn and Gerry were amazed.

“We had no idea that building our own home would be a possibility, but it seemed that it was within our budget,” says Gerry.

The couple jumped at the chance of creating their own dream home, and decided on a 1,230 square metre plot with fantastic views of the mountains and nearby lake. Local planning regulations allowed them to build on up to 250 square metres of the land, with terraces and a swimming pool not included within this limit. Having made up their minds to buy the land, they completed the necessary paperwork and transferred a deposit before returning to the UK.

Over the following months, Gerry and Kathryn trawled design magazines and the Internet for ideas, e-mailing pictures to their architect in Dalaman. They also made a list of features they wanted in the house.

The couple wanted the living area and all the bedrooms to benefit from the wonderful views. They envisaged a second



Fact File

THE OWNERS

Gerry is an economics lecturer at Leeds Metropolitan University. Kathryn’s a manager at NHS Blood & Transplant; they live in Leeds.

THE LOCATION

They bought a villa in the mountains 20 minutes’ drive from Dalaman, on the Turkish Mediterranean coast.

THE BUILDING

A three-bedroom, three-bathroom villa with swimming pool, which was purpose-built to their specifications.

THE COST

The couple paid £27,000 for the land and £130,000 for the building work.

FAVOURITE FEATURE OF THE PROPERTY

The stunning location, with wonderful views across the valley from all the main rooms. They love relaxing on the terrace at sunset.

CURRENT VALUE

Around £200,000.

The narrow ribbon of rough tarmac snakes up a steep mountainside, climbing away from the fertile fields and orchards that surround the Turkish town of Dalaman. When the tarmac runs out you are left to bump along a dusty track, wondering if you are about to get hopelessly lost.

But then you crest a rocky ridge, to be greeted by a sweeping view of pine-forested mountains and, far below, a pair of dazzling emerald green lakes. Any idea of being lost is forgotten as you drive down into a stunning valley of pine trees and olives, finally coming to a stop beside a group of widely spaced villas.

“It was hard to believe that we could actually have a tiny part of somewhere as beautiful as this,” says Kathryn Higgins, a manager at NHS Blood & Transplant, as she gazes out at the view from the terrace of her villa. “Even when we saw it for the first time – on a cold, rainy winter’s day – the place looked absolutely amazing.”

Kathryn and her partner Gerry Stewart, a lecturer in economics at Leeds Metropolitan University, arrived in Turkey in January 2005, having spent months researching possible countries in which to buy a holiday home.

“We wanted a place with pretty scenery, good food and an interesting culture,” explains Gerry. “Initially, we were considering Florida or Italy, but then we

Above The house is perfectly positioned for Gerry and Kathryn to enjoy spectacular sunsets, from the terraces, the balcony or the pool

Opposite, left The main rooms were built to make the most of the mountain views

Opposite, right The local architect suggested a number of additions, such as the pillars in the living room



“We’d both rush home to see the progress reports. It was really exciting to see the building taking shape, knowing that it was going to be ours”

living room on the first floor, which would enjoy a completely unobstructed view. A galleried hall with spiral staircase would create a dramatic entranceway, while open fires would make the living rooms cosy in winter. Each of the three bedrooms would have its own en-suite bathroom.

“We were fantasising a lot, and some of our ideas were technically impossible, or too expensive,” laughs Kathryn. “But when we returned to see the initial plans in May we were very impressed.”

The architect had managed to incorporate most of their ideas, while making some suggestions himself, such as adding pillars to the living room and a round feature window above the front door. They worked with the design team for several days, refining the plans and discussing materials and details. Before

returning to Leeds, they signed a contract so that the work could get underway.

“On the first day of every month, the builder e-mailed us a progress report and pictures,” says Kathryn. “We’d both rush home so that we could open the e-mails together. It was really exciting to see the building taking shape, knowing that it was going to be ours.”

Gerry and Kathryn returned to Dalaman in August, when the building had already reached first-floor level, to choose materials. Having recently bought a new-build home in the UK, they were pleasantly surprised by the choice of tiles, fittings and appliances available in Turkey.

“It was really hard work because of the huge selection,” explains Gerry. “The design team also had some great ideas, such as incorporating mosaic panels into



Above and right Details such as the fireplace and the mosaic tiles add to the appeal of the house

Left Gerry and Kathryn are delighted they took the plunge

Opposite The couple relax on the terrace



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DALAMAN PROPERTY

WHAT HAS IT GOT GOING FOR IT?

Dalaman is in a beautiful part of Turkey, which the government has designated as a tourism development area. Investment is currently being channelled into the local infrastructure and there are plans to build a golf course, a marina and new hotels. At the moment, however, facilities and services in the area are fairly limited.

WHAT'S AVAILABLE?

There is a good selection of off-plan and new-build villas and apartment projects in the area. Resale properties are also available, although they do generally require some renovation.

WHAT ARE LOCAL PRICES LIKE?

Prices in Dalaman are lower than in neighbouring resorts like Fethiye or Marmaris, although they are rising quickly. Three-bedroom villas are available for between £75,000 and £175,000-plus, depending on location and build quality. Two-bedroom off-plan apartments are £40,000-£55,000.



ON THE MARKET



What Two-bed apartments
Where Dalaman
Price From £51,600

Surrounded by beautiful scenery just a few minutes from the busy centre of Dalaman, Botanic Gardens will house two-bedroom apartments and three-bedroom penthouses/ duplexes. On-site facilities include a café, sauna, supermarket, children's playground, restaurant, tennis courts, fitness centre and, in addition to the large communal pool, a heated indoor pool. A local golf course is also in the pipeline.

The development is ideally placed for easy access to the sandy beach of Sarigerme, the activities of Dalyan, and the quaint port of Gocek.

Buy Abroad: 01234 401 557; www.buyabroad.com.

What Three-bedroom apartments
Where Dalaman
Price From £49,500

The Mosaic Apartments development is situated on the north side of Dalaman, close to the town centre and beach. These spacious properties offer three bedrooms, a large lounge leading onto the terrace, communal swimming pool, private parking and mountain views. They are finished to a very high standard with luxury fittings throughout, including air conditioning, washing machine, refrigerator and cooker.

There are also attractive communal gardens with a cafeteria area to relax. Residents will be just 15 minutes from the beautiful sandy beach at Sarigerme.

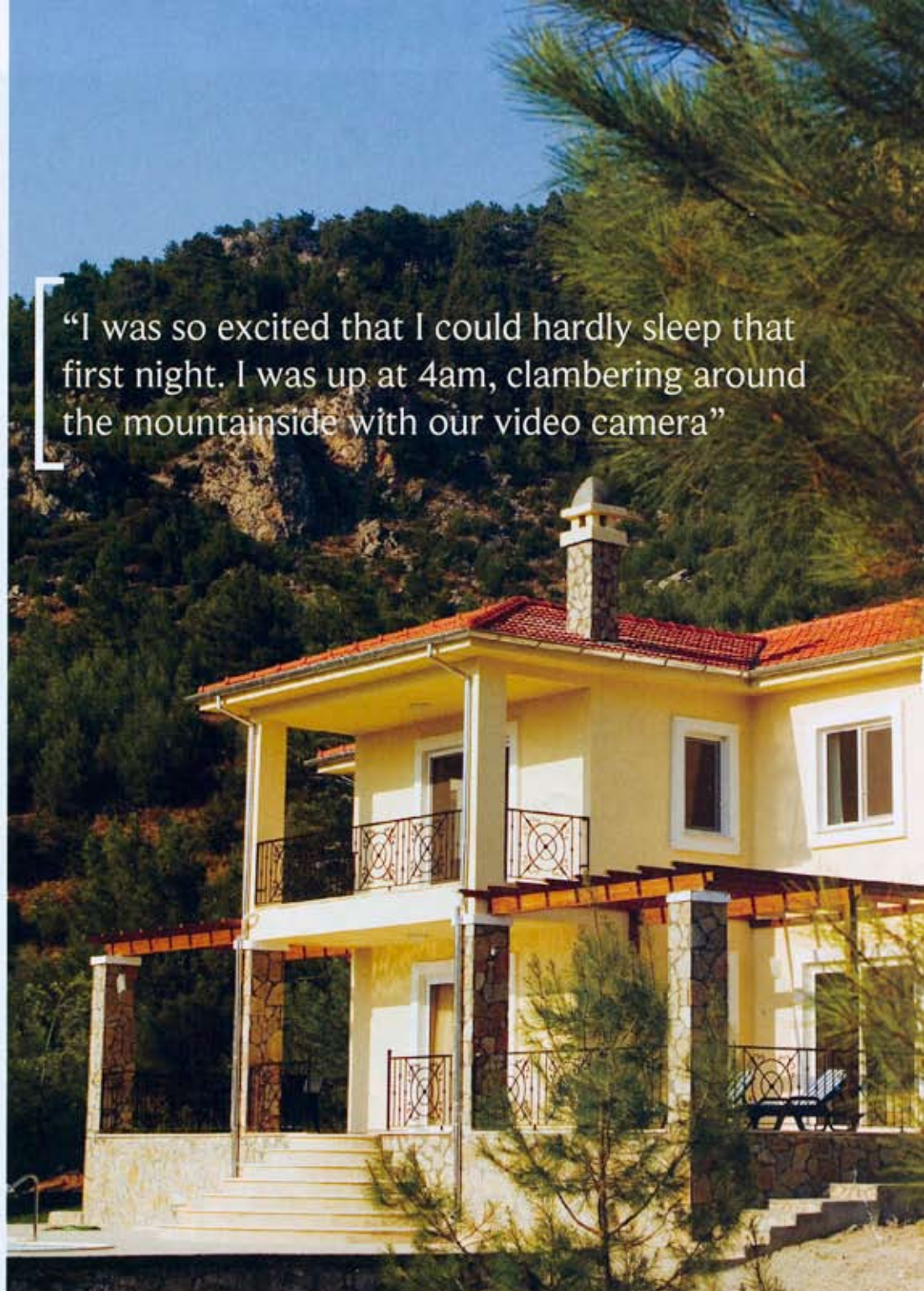
Aquavista Property Consultant Ltd:
01580 850 170; www.aquavistaproperty.com.





Above The wrought-iron spiral staircase adds an element of drama to the hall, which gets extra light from the round feature window

Right The villa is close enough to town not to feel isolated, but gives the couple plenty of privacy and seclusion



“I was so excited that I could hardly sleep that first night. I was up at 4am, clambering around the mountainside with our video camera”

the tiled floors and adding a false ceiling and spotlights in the living rooms.”

Walking around the building site gave them the opportunity to visualise the finished house better, and they decided on changes to the staircase and entrance hall.

Work continued and by spring of this year, Gerry and Kathryn’s dream house was nearing completion. They flew out in May to transfer the title deeds and take possession of the property.

“They hadn’t sent the final e-mail, so that we would have a surprise when we arrived, but we half expected the house not to be ready,” admits Kathryn. “It was a very emotional moment – I burst into

tears when I saw it for the first time.”

The couple stayed three nights in a hotel while they bought some furniture, and on the fourth day they moved in, celebrating with a picnic on their new terrace and a bottle of Champagne as the sun set.

“I was so excited that I could hardly sleep that first night. I was up at 4am, clambering around the mountainside with our video camera,” laughs Gerry.

Despite the excitement of being in their new holiday home, Gerry and Kathryn had work to do. They made a list of small alterations, which were completed by the time they returned for a two-week holiday in July. They are incredibly happy with

their villa, which offers privacy and seclusion, but is only a 20-minute drive from the town. Its proximity to Dalaman international airport is also a plus, as it means they don’t have far to travel after arriving on a late-night package flight.

“This kind of place isn’t for everyone, as it is quite isolated – but where else can you get this kind of view?” asks Gerry, a wide grin spreading over his face as he gazes across the valley towards the distant mountains, lit up by the setting sun. ☀

The couple’s villa was built by Curbanoglu: for details of their developments, call 0871 990 2055 or go to www.curbanoglu.com.