

Calgary couple found new home:

San Carlos relatively unknown
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Byline: Gerald Vander Pyl
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Back in the late 1990s, Calgarians Tom and Diane Barroll were looking for the perfect place to buy property for their eventual retirement. Although still in their early 40s, Diane says the couple wanted to "get ahead of the baby boomer crowd" that would soon be flooding the real estate market.

They travelled to places like Victoria, B.C., as well as Costa Rica and even Europe to look at real estate, but they couldn't find the ideal location, says Barroll. Then in 1999, with Diane busy completing a masters degree, Tom headed south on his motorcycle to check out some potential areas in Mexico. One day, tired and dusty from the long ride, he saw a highway sign pointing to San Carlos, a small coastal community along the the Sea of Cortez on the west mainland of Mexico.

Arriving at the scenic community, Tom realized he had found their new home.

Says Diane: "He called me from the marina and said 'I think I've found one of the most beautiful places on earth.'"

The Barrolls sold their property in Canada and by November 2000, they were residents of San Carlos.

Now owners of a property management company and co-owners of RE/MAX First Choice Realty, the Barrolls are helping make the dream of owning Mexican real estate come true for other Canadians.

San Carlos remains relatively unknown compared to many Mexican resort communities, and real estate prices continue to be affordable, says Diane.

Everything from basic one-bedroom condominiums on a golf course to \$1-million-plus homes on the beach are available, she says. At Algodones, an oceanfront residential development, lots start in price from about \$100,000 US, with construction costs about \$80 US per square foot.

An exclusive residential area called El Encanto offers waterfront lots for about \$500,000 US, says Barroll. Two- and three-bedroom condos in the San Carlos Bay Golf Towers include a golf membership and start in the low \$200,000s US. Besides having a stunningly beautiful location, San Carlos in a dream come true for people who love water sports, says Barroll. The Sea of Cortez, protected from the Pacific Ocean by the peninsula of Baja California, is famous for its deep sea fishing. San Carlos also has several marinas, sandy beaches, excellent areas for scuba diving, and an 18-hole golf course.

San Carlos is also easy to get to, says Barroll. The community is only a four-hour drive south of the U.S.

border, and there are daily flights to Phoenix from a nearby airport. Many of the people who have moved to San Carlos are actively involved in the local community, including fundraising to support a 24-hour ambulance service, says Barroll.

People keep busy fishing, playing golf, horseback riding, getting together for a game of bridge, she says. "There's so much to do here. If you're bored, then you're trying to be," says Barroll with a laugh.

For more information, visit www.sancarlosproperty.com

In Short: San Carlos, Mexico.

LOCATION: On the mainland of Mexico on the western edge across from the Baja peninsula on the beach fronting the Sea of Cortez. San Carlos is about a five-hour drive from Tucson, Ariz., about an hour and a half from the larger centre of Hermosillo, and 20 minutes from Guaymas.

DESCRIPTION: The resort community on the Sea of Cortez has a population nearing 5,000 people, mostly non-Mexicans. The community has at least five condo developments under construction in various stages, as well as homes to buy or rent. Hotels and rental accommodations are also available. Golf courses, aquatic sports and an active social network of Canadians and Americans are just some of the area's attractions.

WEATHER: In the high 20s C and above in summer, cooling to 21 to 23 C in December and January