

Homes Overseas Awards

For his prize-winning triumph at Pezula, in South Africa, luxury-resort developer Keith Stewart owes much to his determination – and not six of the best: winners from around the world



Dubai, Le Reve Dubai

High-rise in Dubai is a relative term: the Emirates do not do bungalows. The 210-metre tall Le Reve on Dubai Marina stands out, with a "Super Penthouse" that has four private lifts – a bit OTT. That aside, there are two apartments in contrasting styles on each floor and a total of 82 flats with stunning interiors. (Best Luxury Development)



Portugal, Vale do Lobo

Despite its prosaic name, Villa 1107 is outstanding: a four-bedroom home at Vale do Lobo, on the Algarve, constructed to maximise the ocean views from anywhere in the property. The England football squad held a World Cup training session here, so, should our boys triumph, the Vale do Lobo PR machine will go into overdrive. (Best Portuguese Villa)



Spain, Cortijo de los Monteros

Set in the Marbella suburb of Los Monteros, this is the sort of location – complete with pillars, arches and a marble swimming pool – that adult-film makers would die for. The colonial-style, Andalusian mansion is cleverly designed to provide a cloistered courtyard and sea views through the gardens and trees. Tasteful opulence, rare on the Costa del Sol. (Best Spanish Villa)



Italy, Colletta di Castelbianco

When you hear of "one of the first high-speed e-villages in Europe", your heart downloads doom but Colletta, a medieval village on the Ligurian Riviera, gets it right. The village was uninhabited for 30 years: the restoration project has combined original materials and building techniques with 21st-century technology. (Best Renovation Development)



United States, The Asti

Most British buyers gravitate towards Orlando in search of a magical kingdom at Mickey Mouse prices. The Naples area in Florida attracts a maturer investor. This villa in the Lucarno development is inspired by Italian farmhouses, but avoids pastiche. A welcome antidote to the many "villas on steroids" developments. (Best Florida Villa)



France, Arc 1950 Le Village

A golden rule when investing in a ski property is "buy high", which usually means above 1,800 metres to ensure good snow. As its name suggests, Arc 1950 is a cut above the rest, at 1,950 metres, and despite being a freshly created resort, it has blended well with the traditional Savoie architecture. (Best Ski Development)

Legend has it that there is an elephant in the dense forest. Leopard tracks have been spotted and the bird species are still being counted. But it is a much humbler animal – the dog – that should take a bow for the remarkable South African resort of Pezula. Or, to be more precise, three dogs – the best friends of British-born businessman Keith Stewart.

Pezula lies at Knysna, on the Garden Route between Cape Town and Port Elizabeth. It is a stunning stretch of Indian Ocean coastline. The view from the air – it helps to fly into Pezula by helicopter – is to watch a natural, breathing habitat of African beauty plunging from the cliffs to the shore in a rainbow palette of colours. I didn't spot the fabled elephant but the pilot waxed lyrical about the whales that kiss the coastline and the bushbuck and other antelopes that graze the estate.

Pezula is essentially Keith's creation. It is a staggering achievement, brought into being in just five years. And last month it scooped five prizes, including the top one, Developer of the Year, at this year's *Telegraph*-sponsored Homes Overseas Magazine Awards.

Tempted out of retirement in Zimbabwe, in 2001 Keith was looking for a new home. "I knew Knysna from previous visits," he says. "When I decided to quit Zimbabwe because of the political and economic uncertainties there, I didn't want to leave Africa, so Knysna became the obvious choice. Having three Labradors meant that I couldn't just pick up and rent a place. So I ended up building a small home on the existing golf course. It was really a home for the dogs to live in while I travelled – there was no other plan. How it went from a 1,000-square metre lot to this 2,500-acre resort is still a mystery."

Today, those 2,500 acres are, or will be, home to 255 houses, a luxury hotel and spa, an 18-hole golf course and other sporting facilities, and a botanical centre. In short, the land has been transformed into one of the world's top luxury residential resorts. So how has it all come about?

Having bought his plot on the Sparrebosch golf course, Keith became enchanted by the surrounding forest. After a long battle for residential planning, in 2003 he finally won approval to develop 255 homes on 1,500 acres.

He then set about marketing them. The forest was so dense, but the potential views so staggering, that some buyers were climbing trees and daring to imagine what might be. Selling plots at Pezula was not hard, with first-phase investors predicting phenomenal capital growth. Today, just less than £200,000 secures a good-size plot and it costs the same again to build a three-bedroom home – with the most

Somewhere for the dogs...



expensive plots rising to £1.5 million. Of those projected 255 homes, 170 have already been sold.

The much bigger challenge – and the real cost – was the vast rehabilitation programme needed for the environment. In time, more than a million alien pine and gum trees will be removed. But how, Keith wondered, could they bring back the native species of the forests and wetlands?

Over to nature. "The watercourses that the commercial trees had been sucking dry came back and the fynbos [indigenous heather] that had been lying dormant just sprouted back to life," he says.

Keith's view of sustainability is not just environmental – he sees



sustainable investment, too. Pezula does not just provide homes for a wealthy few; its luxury facilities will, he insists, bring year-round trade, creating jobs and stimulating the tourist economy.

Sport is another big draw, with Pezula's "Field of Dreams" already touted as a future international cricket venue and other plans in place to bring sport to disadvantaged local children. Eventually, it will also feature tennis courts, football pitches and sporting villas to rent. (Pezula wants the England football team to use the resort as its base for the 2010 World Cup in South Africa.)

All this has attracted a posse of global sporting superstars. World tennis

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a little to his three beloved Labradors. Rupert Bates reports



Best friends: (bottom left) Keith Stewart and two of his dogs. Right, left and below, his prize-winning development on the Garden Route between Cape Town and Port Elizabeth, and the extraordinary views it enjoys of the Indian Ocean



number one Roger Federer, South Africa cricket captain Graeme Smith and Zimbabwean golfer Nick Price have already bought homes here.

While living out of hotels, I dream of Pezula; turning off the cellphone and watching the African sunset over a *braai* [barbecue] says Graeme. "Now, I just need to speak to an architect and get my plot built on." Like everyone else, he will have to meet the strict architectural and environmental controls. But, as the brother of a game ranger, he is happy to comply.

Fears that the government will restrict foreign ownership remain

real, but Keith is convinced that any new curbs will apply only to large tracts of agricultural land and not to resorts such as Pezula. Crime, the other great British fear about South Africa, is not a problem here: guards discreetly patrol the estate on horseback, supported by surveillance cameras.

The resort's latest add-on is the Pezula Private Residence Club, where about £53,000 buys three weeks in perpetuity as one of 70 shareholders in five Pezula properties, and holiday access to other international residences. Keith himself lives in a fabulous cliff-top home at the resort – a far cry from that plot on a run-of-the-mill golf

course; and even further from his birthplace in Liverpool's Knotty Ash. At the heart of his new domain is a gourmet restaurant, Zachary's. In his globetrotting days, Keith often took one of his beloved dogs with him, the two of them dining in some of the finest restaurants in France and Italy. That dog was Zachary. He has since died but he lives on in Pezula. You couldn't ask for a finer legacy.

● Rupert Bates is editorial director of *Homes Overseas* magazine (www.homesoverseas.co.uk). The *Homes Overseas Awards* are sponsored by *The Daily Telegraph*, *British Airways* and *Moneycorp*.



Awards judges – professional architects, surveyors and journalists – travelled the world, assessing all the short-listed entries. In some cases, where entries did not reach high enough standards, awards, be they gold, silver or bronze, were not made. Here is a full list of all the winners:

DEVELOPER AWARDS

Developer of the Year

The Pezula Group (www.pezula.com)

Best Central and Eastern Europe Development

Joint Silver: Mt Sarnic Complex – The Turkish Property Centre (www.theturkishpropertycentre.com)
Rozadol – East-West Developments/Slovakia Investment Property (www.rozadol.sk)

Best Cypriot Apartment

Gold: The Ermitage – Lordos Properties (www.theermitage.com)
Bronze: Tala Gardens – Pafilia Property Developers (www.pafilia.com)

Best Cypriot House/Villa

Gold: Thalia Villa – Pafilia Property Developers (www.pafilia.com)
Joint Bronze: Kamáres Village – Leptos Estates (www.leptosstates.com)
Samia Villa – Cybarco (www.cybarco.com)

Best Floridian House

Gold: The Asti – London Bay Homes (www.londonbay.com)
Bronze: Orange Tree – Greater Homes (www.greaterhomes.com)

Best French Apartment

Gold: Le Hameau du Glacier (Arc 1950) – Intrawest (www.arc1950.com)

Best Portuguese Apartment

Silver: Vale do Lobo – Vale do Lobo (www.valedolobo.com)
Bronze: Praia D'El Rey – The Beltico Group (www.praia-del-rey.com)

Best Portuguese House/Villa

Gold: Vale do Lobo – Vale do Lobo (www.valedolobo.com)
Joint Silver: Martinhal Resort – Friel Gold Wines

(www.martinhal.com)

Villa Saroj – Obrana (www.obrana.pt)
Joint Bronze: CampoReal – Premier Resorts (www.premierresorts.co.uk)
Monte da Quinta – Monte da Quinta (www.mqclub.com)

Best South African Development

Gold: Pezula – The Pezula Group (www.pezula.com)

Best Spanish Apartment

Gold: Alanda Tee 5 – Alanda Homes (www.alandahomes.com)
Silver: Lar Sol – Lar Sol (www.larsol.com)
Bronze: Bonavista de Bonmont – Pierre et Vacances (www.pierre-etvacances-immobilier.com)

Best Spanish House/Villa

Gold: Los Monteros – The Superior Group (www.superiorworldwide.com)
Silver: Ramiro el Monje – Amiri Developments (www.amiriworld.com)



Stroke of genius: the Mission Hills golf development, in China

Best Golf Development

Gold: Mission Hills, China – Mission Hills Group (www.missionhills.com)
Joint Silver: Humber Valley, Newfoundland, Canada – Newfound Property International (www.newfoundproperty.com)
Pezula, Krivysna, South Africa – The Pezula Group (www.pezula.com)
Bronze: Parque da Floresta, Algarve, Portugal – The Vigia Group (www.parquedafloresta.com)

Best Marina Development

Gold: Marina Port Valais, Valais, Switzerland – Pure International (www.pureintl.com)
Silver: Puertomar, Murcia, Spain – TM Real Estate Group (www.tmtorreblanca.com)
Bronze: Tamarindo Beach, Costa Blanca, Spain – Blauverd (www.blauverdhabitat.com)

Best Ski Development

Gold: Arc 1950, Savoie, France – Intrawest (www.arc1950.com)
Silver: L'Orée des Cimes, Vallandry, French Alps – MGM French Properties (www.mgm-french-properties.com)
Bronze: Humber Valley, Newfoundland, Canada – Newfound Property International (www.newfoundproperty.com)

Best Interior Design

Gold: Le Réve – Dubai Luxury Homes / Arabtec Construction (www.dubailuxuryhomes.com)
Silver: Marco Island, Florida – Holland Salley / Slocum Christian Builders (www.hollandsalley.com)

Best Landscape Design

Gold: Vale do Lobo, Algarve, Portugal – Vale do Lobo (www.valedolobo.com)

Best Use of Technology

Gold: El Magraner, Spain – Ultra Villas/Eurocenter

Canada – Newfound Property International (www.newfoundproperty.com)

Best Luxury Development

Joint Gold: Pezula, South Africa – The Pezula Group (www.pezula.com)
Le Réve, Dubai Marina – Dubai Luxury Homes / Arabtec Construction (www.dubailuxuryhomes.com)
Silver: La Zagaleta, Spain – La Zagaleta (www.lazagaleta.com)
Bronze: Vale do Lobo, Portugal – Vale do Lobo (www.valedolobo.com)

Best Retirement Development

Gold: Sol Andalusi, Spain – Sol Andalusi (www.solandalusi.com)
Joint Highly Commended: Arenal Golf, Spain – Arenal 2000 (www.arenal2000.com)
Clube de Repouso Casa dos Leões, Portugal – Espirito Santo Saude (www.casadosleoes.pt)

Best Use of Marketing

Gold: Borgo di Colleoli, Italy – Craggenmore (www.viewtuscany.com)
Silver: Tigné Point, Malta – Tigné Point Marketing (www.tignepoint.com)
Bronze: Vale do Lobo, Portugal – Vale do Lobo (as above)

ESTATE AGENCY MARKETING AWARDS

Best Estate Agency Marketing Overall (sponsored by AIPP)

Gold: Pure International (www.pureintl.com)
Silver: Zimbali (www.zimbali.co.za)
Bronze: Newfound Property International (www.newfoundproperty.com)

Best Estate Agency Marketing Online (sponsored by www.homesoverseas.co.uk)

Gold: Dubai Select (www.dubaiselect.com)
Silver: Newfound Property International (www.newfoundproperty.com)
Bronze: Ultra Villas (www.ultravillas.com)

Best Estate Agency Marketing Newspaper & Magazine Advertising (sponsored by OPP)

Gold: Newfound Property International (www.newfoundproperty.com)

Best Estate Agency Marketing PR

Gold: Newfound Property International (www.newfoundproperty.com)
Silver: Premier Resorts (www.premierresorts.co.uk)

● For further details on the Awards: