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ULTIMATE GIFTS



The holidays are a time for coming together with family. And while you cannot choose your family, *Robb Report* believes you should at least be able to decide where to gather with them. To that end, our 2011 Ultimate Gift Guide presents several suitable options, from a six-bedroom beachfront castle in Mexico's most exclusive enclave to a private-island paradise in Fiji—which you and 69 of your closest relatives and friends will take over for a one-of-a-kind golf tournament. Our 28th annual guide also includes such stocking stuffers as a custom Boeing 787 “Dreamliner,” an unparalleled pair of Bentleys, a bespoke wardrobe from Kiton, and much more. Of course, those with particularly problematic family members might consider adding to their wish lists the backyard aquatic complex by Okeanos, which puts swimmers face-to-face with a 50,000-gallon saltwater aquarium filled with sharks. Dive in. ►





SWIMMING WITH THE SHARKS

the GIFT

A one-of-a-kind backyard aquatic complex featuring a 30-foot-by-60-foot freshwater swimming pool and adjoining 50,000-gallon saltwater aquarium to house the recipient's choice of marine life.

Starting at \$11 million

FOR MARTIN SCHAPIRA, watching a school of tropical blue tangs rhythmically scuttling through the ocean's currents is like listening to a perfectly executed concerto. "It has an overwhelming effect on the senses," he says. "It's like watching an orchestra perform, but with color and movement rather than sound. It transports you completely to another world."

Re-creating such otherworldly experiences is a specialty of Okeanos Aquascaping, a New York-based builder of custom ponds and aquariums. Since founding the company in 2002, Schapira and his business partner, Nathan Kamelhar, have developed some of the world's most imaginative underwater ecosystems. Earlier this year, for example, Okeanos created a series of misty, anemone-filled tanks representing emotions such as love or melancholy, for French artist Pierre Huyghe's exhibit at the Marian Goodman Gallery in Manhattan. "I love watching fish, whether it's while snorkeling and diving or going to an aquarium," Schapira says. "But sitting on a sofa at home watching a fish tank misses the point. It has to be an interactive experience."

To that end, the experts at Okeanos will create a magical underwater world in one *Robb Report* reader's backyard that will provide a face-to-face marine-life

experience like no other. This gift will comprise a 30-foot-by-60-foot freshwater swimming pool with a depth of up to 10 feet, which will share two walls, made from commercial-aquarium-grade acrylic, with a 50,000-gallon saltwater aquarium. With a depth of 25 feet, the L-shaped aquarium will run from the bottom of the swimming pool to 15 feet above its surface. Two of the aquarium's aboveground facades will merge with the interior of the home, resulting in both indoor and outdoor viewing areas. The aquarium will be Okeanos' largest, and the pool will be the first undertaking of its kind by the company's new division, Okeanos Swim.

Integral to the design—and a key component of Okeanos Swim's creations—is the chemical-free water used in the pool, which Okeanos achieves by combining proprietary handmade filtration and water-flow

systems. This innovative method results in water that is free from harmful bacteria and organic matter, such as algae, without the use of chlorine or other chemicals. "You won't get itchy eyes or irritated skin," Schapira says. "In fact, this water is so clean and clear, you could drink it." Best of all, the water's purity allows swimmers to view the aquarium's inhabitants without the use of goggles.

The Okeanos team will customize each component of the gift, which will require at least five months to complete, tailoring the layout and design of the pool, aquarium, and surrounding landscape and furnishings to the client's preferences.

The most engaging part of the process, though, will be the careful selection of the aquarium's marine life, something that Schapira likens to layering paint on a canvas. The sizable volume of the aquarium provides

countless options for marine life, ranging up to 5-foot black-tip reef sharks. "But you don't want everything just right there in plain sight," explains Schapira. "Along with the sharks and triggerfish and angelfish, you may want a few moray eels peeking out from time to time to create an ever-changing picture. You want to be surprised and inspired, and in an aquarium this large, the opportunities for that kind of dynamic experience are virtually endless." —JACKIE CARADONIO

Okeanos Aquascaping, 212.244.9555, www.okeanosgroup.com

THE AQUATIC COMPLEX IS AVAILABLE TO ONE *ROBB REPORT* READER, WHO MUST PROVIDE THE LAND ON WHICH IT WILL BE BUILT. ROUTINE MAINTENANCE FEES AND THE COST OF SUSTAINING MARINE LIFE ARE NOT INCLUDED IN THE PRICE OF THE GIFT.

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