

MAKING A CHANGE

When you first meet Chris Snell with his blond hair and blue eyes, your first impression is “Southern California Surfer”, however, nothing could be further from the truth. He does not surf, he is a native Texan born in San Antonio, he speaks fluent Spanish since his mother was born and raised in Mexico City, and to top it all off, he is a Mexican Citizen.

Chris Snell began his career in Los Cabos in 1991 working with Koll International as the Director of Real Estate for Cabo Del Sol and Palmilla Resorts. In 1997, he started his own real estate company armed with the experience he learned with Koll coupled with the tenacity and drive that can only be inherited. (As I discovered later, his great grandfather moved to Mexico in 1874 and founded some of the largest companies in Mexico like Cementos De Mexico, Vitro, Banco de Mexico — just to name a few.)

Over the last eleven years, Chris has not only learned how the real estate business works in Mexico, he has actually re-created the entire closing process. “Snell has created a better way to close real estate in Mexico,” states Federal Notary Javier Mazoy. “Sooner or later everyone here will have to go to it, but for now, Snell is leading the way”.

Buying real estate in Mexico has become a lucrative investment strategy and is rapidly gaining strength with US and other foreign buyers. “By combining the ownership laws of Mexico with the closing procedures used in the U.S., we have developed the safest and most secure way to purchase property in Mexico”, says Chris Snell, president and founder of Snell Real Estate. “Handshakes and promises are a thing of the past. Today, it’s third party escrow, title searches and title insurance”.

Snell Real Estate was formerly called Snell, Fair & Barnes Real Estate, however, Chris spent the last 12 months, in spite of 9/11, Enron, Worldcom, etc. — working to buy out his partners. When I asked him why and why now? Chris simply smiled and said “I started it. I know where I want to go with it. It was the right time”.

The key to Snell’s success is his commitment to representing only properties that can be protected with a U.S. Title Insurance policy, and his steadfastness about using third party escrow for every closing. “Don’t ever release your money to a seller until you have your title, or in Mexico’s case, your Trust. By holding the funds in escrow we transfer the burden of providing free and clear title to the seller, not the buyer”, says Snell. “If there are any unforeseen problems, your money is still safe and sound in an interest bearing escrow account”.

Snell explained that many brokers use their own private escrow accounts, which are basically checking accounts called “escrow accounts”, to hold clients deposits and payments. “Talk about placing the fox in the henhouse.” laughs Snell, “If you are willing to give the seller your money before you have title — be willing to lose it. We are the only real estate firm in Los Cabos that exclusively uses third part escrow. Your safest and best bet is to simply let Snell Real Estate handle your purchase”. says Snell.

Is Snell serious about Title Insurance? The company is so committed to representing only quality properties that Snell Real Estate will actually pay for, and include, a US title policy with your purchase. “No other company in Mexico offers this to their clients”, states Snell. “This company was built on client referrals and the key our future is taking care of our customers”. In an industry of rumors and mistrust, you can tell by talking to Chris that he is serious in his commitment.

Snell Real Estate makes buying a home or vacation property in Mexico as safe and secure as purchasing in the United States. They are the leaders in pioneering the use of third party escrow, US title insurance and they even provide complete closing cost at the end of the transaction. They even have their own in-house closing officer that works with the Notary to close every transaction at no cost to their customers.

But the best thing I found out about is Snell’s concierge service for their clients. One call and they set up fishing, dining, golf, whale watching, you name it. They will even organize a party for you and have the whole thing ready to go when you arrive. What do they charge for this service? Nothing! “It is our way of helping our clients get comfortable with the area and immediately start enjoying what Los Cabos has to offer”, says Snell.

Snell Real Estate is now Baja’s largest brokerage representing more than 80% of the oceanfront available in Los Cabos, including two of the finest communities in Baja — the 174 acre Punta Ballena, home to Esperanza, a world-class spa/resort hotel by Auberge from Napa Valley, and the 1,800 acre Cabo Del Sol, home to the Nicklaus Ocean Course and the new Weiskopf Desert Course.

Snell Real Estate is truly changing the way real estate is purchased and the way business is done in Mexico. Their commitment is obvious and their slogan is simple. “It’s your money and your investment — it’s our job to protect it”.