



A sprawling six-bedroom estate on 2 acres in Kapalua, Maui

Philip Mekelburg and Adam Capes, founders of Equity Estates



# Homes Away from Home

Atlanta-based Equity Estates shows you how to invest, while vacationing around the globe like a rock star (the kids can come, too).

| By Austin Holt |

You've been working hard all year long, and it's time for a vacation.

You should go somewhere new. Somewhere with some spice, somewhere luxurious. But you're a busy guy, and the last thing on your agenda is sorting through the double-talk involved with finding a decent rental.

We could go on, but you know the drill: putting a vacation together can sometimes cause more stress than it alleviates. But don't worry; we know a couple of guys who've got your back.

Back in 2006, Philip Mekelburg and Adam Capes launched a clever idea they had mulled over for years. It's called Equity Estates. They had been intrigued by the travel and vacation opportunities they saw offered by destination clubs, but wanted to throw a unique twist into the concept: start a company that acquires some of the nicest homes imaginable in some of the most prestigious locales in the world, from Hilton

Head to Anguilla, and from New York City to Maui. That entire portfolio of homes would then be owned by the company's affluent "owner-members" who would invest into the company.

Mekelburg says a standard investment in EE's portfolio is equal to about one-half of the 20 percent down payment on a single vacation home. The return on that investment? Ownership interest for each owner-member allowing 30 nights per year to be enjoyed toward a series of stress-free vacations in any one of EE's 36 (and growing) destinations, and in the long-term, appreciation and profit when the properties are ultimately liquidated. "A shared sell-off could result in owner-members being paid to travel," Capes muses. "Our books are open, and we strive to maintain little or no debt. We plan to sell the homes in 2021. We are legally bound to return 100 percent of each owner-member's capital contribution, plus 80 percent of the profits.

"We developed a model where, instead

of buying a home in a ski resort or a beach community, you can have access to a variety of homes for the equivalent of what the down payment would be on a home you would otherwise purchase," Mekelburg says, "without any of the hassles of home ownership, because we've handled all of that. All with concierge support and daily housekeeping like you would find at a resort."

So why not just stick with a top-rated resort on that next family vacation? For Capes and Mekelburg, it's all about the quality time. "There are some wonderful resorts out there," Capes says. "But what we've found is the type of experience you have when you gather your family, without any distractions from other resort-goers, in a home like one of these, where you can just hang out in your kitchen and chat in your boxer shorts, creates a remarkable bonding experience."

In the past five years, individuals and families from across the world have signed up with Equity Estates. Ted Wright

manages Fizz Marketing in Decatur, and was introduced to EE through a friend. Since joining the ranks of the owner-members, he's been thrilled. "One of the things I like most about this particular type of vacation," he says, "is that it allows us to be social in ways we would never be otherwise." In addition to family, Wright and his wife have friends around the world whom they invite to their stays. "We'll say, 'Come on, and join us in Hawai'i for a week.' They do, they bring their kids, they play in the pool, we have dinner, we wake up in the morning, and do it all over again—at a price point that's already paid for."

Charmingly, with the variety of homes available to the owner-members of Equity Estates, there seems to be no straight answer to the simplest question: Where's your favorite place to vacation? Philip Mekelburg puts it best. "I'm always asked that question," he says with a smirk. "My answer? Whichever home I happen to be in at the time." For more information, visit [equityestatesfund.com](http://equityestatesfund.com) ■



A view of the Atlantic from the kitchen of a Hilton Head mansion.



The lavish living room of an EE property in Florence, Italy.



Overlooking Grace Bay at Turks and Caicos.

PROFILE PHOTO BY AUSTIN HOLT