

EXPLORE | HOSPITALITY



**DINING IN STYLE**  
Casa Xixim features a fully equipped gourmet kitchen, with professional chef service included.

TULUM, MEXICO

## ECO EXTRAVAGANCE

Designed by Austin-based Specht Architects, Casa Xixim offers eco-luxe vacation living in a private beachfront villa on the Riviera Maya.

By Becca Hensley  
Photography by Taggart Sorensen

Pronounced, its name sounds like the rustle of a briny sea breeze. When uttered aloud, *Xixim*, an old Mayan word, slides sibilantly from the mouth as “shee-sheem.” Written in ancient times as a conch glyph, *xixim* means “zero,” and the owners of Casa Xixim, a luxury villa 10 minutes from Tulum, Mexico, chose the name as a metaphor for their desire to be as eco-conscious and connected to the Riviera Maya’s coral-fronted beaches and verdant mangrove forests as possible.

Conceived first as a drawing in the sand, the home, poised on secluded Soliman Bay, about 1 ½ hours south of Cancún, soon became the project of Austin- and New York City-based Specht Architects. “We designed the house to be fully sustainable and self-sufficient while naturally fitting into its beautiful

surroundings,” says Scott Specht, founding principal of the firm.

With airy spaces and a white facade that contrasts with the adjacent turquoise sea, the terraced home flows through dense vegetation to offer an open living area flanked by large sliding glass doors. “This allows guests the ability to walk right through the house as if it is part of the landscape,” says Specht, who points out that the sense of amplexity also extends to the private spaces, with each of the four en suite, master-style bedrooms boasting large louvered windows with spectacular views.

Rough-hewn but modernistic, the eco-luxe structure utilizes locally sourced woods and local limestone, and incorporates a variety of other indigenous materials, such as pasta tiles and palapa thatching. With a solar grid that supplies all its power needs, the villa also collects and reuses rainwater, vaunts a planted green roof, and has a pool that is integrated with the architecture and windows designed to offer cross breezes to cool every room.

Owners Dave and Jenny Blizzard are also positive participants in the community, hiring locally, furnishing with local crafts and donating to a nearby turtle sanctuary—among other things. With space for eight adults and four children, Casa Xixim includes a groundskeeper, concierge and chef, as well as bedrooms kitted out with Tuft & Needle beds and Frette linens. Kayaking, snorkeling, visits to nearby ruins and finishing that novel go without saying. Rates from \$1,036 per night during the low season, from \$17,712 per week during holidays, [casaxixim.com](http://casaxixim.com); [spechtarchitects.com](http://spechtarchitects.com)

**VACATION DAYS**  
A second-floor terrace overlooks the villa’s private swimming pool.

