

The Life Aquatic

With tuna fleets in Mex and a mod surfer pad in Oz—we catch S.D.'s castaways at home

| By Lauren Buscemi | Photography by Ethan Pines |



SEA LEGS!

Ross Gordon and Gretchen Mercedes at the G Street Tuna Harbor.

They survived a hurricane while living in a bamboo hut in the Micronesian Islands (where rats nibbled through their mosquito nets) and chartered a 16-foot fishing boat 200 miles off the Sumatra coast for waves. So it's no shocker that wanderlust San Diego duo Ross Gordon and Gretchen Mercedes would tie the knot on a deserted Mexican island and celebrate in an Indonesian Buddhist temple. "The theme was tequila safari," says Mercedes. "The monks loved it." Since meeting Gordon on an Australian beach in '97—when he was living "on big waves, lobster, abalone and beer"—Mercedes hasn't shied away from danger. Today, she travels to Mexico and Japan alongside Ross, the director of aquaculture for Baja Aqua Farms, which specializes in high-end sashimi. Their global lifestyle yields more than premium toro and jungle tales. It's also the inspiration for Mercedes' art. Aboard massive tuna boats, choppers and low-flying planes, the wispy Aussie seizes the rare access, taking photos and creating hypnotic films, which will be featured this June in MCASD's ballyhooed "Here Not There" exhibit. "Gals don't go on these type of working boats. It's totally male-dominated," she says. "I'm totally in love with the power and adventure." The couple splits their time between Little Italy, Ensenada and the Australian South Coast, where they've tapped local architect Lloyd Russell for a "rustic-surfer-cool-luxury" vacation pad. "It's 10 hours from the nearest city and one hour from the nearest shop," says Gordon. "It's for people who require the utmost seclusion and privacy." ■

Ross & Gretchen's Hots:

Tsukiji market in Tokyo; surfing Indonesia; Ophelia Restaurant in Ensenada; boating and diving around Coronado Islands; Wade Tokoro surfboards; MCASD; San Diego Embarcadero; Station Tavern & Burgers in North Park; Sogno Di Vino in Little Italy; Quint Gallery in La Jolla

Ross & Gretchen's Nots:

Monster trucks; La Jolla seal politics