

The perfect getaway

An interview with Luis D. Ortiz of Netflix's 'The World's Most Amazing Vacations Rentals'

BY BRIGITTE SURETTE

We live in an area where beauty surrounds us. Living in a place that's been named "the best city in the world," as well as several other top 10 list favorites among national and international publications, we take for granted our beautiful beaches, idyllic islands and magnificent marshes. Others come here to experience them for a week, a month or a season.

The Lowcountry has been the backdrop for several television shows and movies. Add "The World's Most Amazing Vacation Rentals" to that list of appearances.

If you're a fan of home shows or if you love to explore beautiful properties in beautiful places via a weekend binge watch, you'll want to tune in to Netflix's latest aforementioned show. Three industry experts, Luis D. Ortiz (real estate), Joanna Franco (world traveler) and Megan Batoon (designer) travel the globe to show viewers some of the most luxurious, unique and budget-friendly places for getting away from it all.

Viewers get an idea of how much it costs to rent each property and each host weighs in at the end about which one is their favorite and why.

I watched all eight episodes on Netflix last weekend, and the Charleston region showed up in two of them. Premiering on June 18, the hosts give viewers an up close and personal view of some of the globe's most amazing properties that anyone (given the budget) can rent. Some properties rent for thousands a night and others, for a few hundred. It all depends on how luxurious one wants to get or how much off the beaten path one is willing to go.

An estate in Japan with a Michelin Star chef. A sustainable "snake home" near Mexico City. A large cave home in the Ozarks. An igloo in Finland. A butterfly bamboo house in Bali. A houseboat in San Francisco and a lighthouse in



PHOTOGRAPHS/NETFLIX

In the first episode, "Best of Bali," a butterfly bamboo home in the rural area of Selat in Bali is featured. The unique home is known as the Camaya Bali Butterfly." It rents for \$375/night.



Luis D. Ortiz is one of the show's hosts. Ortiz has been involved in luxury real estate for over a decade.

Alaska. An entire island in the Bahamas is available to rent, and you get there via boat if you want to pay \$15,000 a night to do so. If renting a yacht with an entire staff at your disposal is more your ideal



Old House Cay is located on a collection of three islands off of Hilton Head. The hosts stay at the home, which starts at \$500/night, featured on the "Private Islands" episode.

dream vacay, there's an entire episode geared toward "boats and floats" stays.

In the Lowcountry, a home on its own private island off of Hilton Head is featured on the "Private Islands" episode. A

boat brings the trio to the island, known as Old House Cay. A collection of three islands, an 1,800 square foot, off-the-charts charming home and an observation tower — it's private with a capital P. It sleeps

six and begins at \$500/night. Daufuskie Island is a five-minute boat ride, and celebrity chef Sallie Ann Robinson makes an appearance to cook with them.

A treehouse episode features Charleston-inspired “treehouses” on Wadmalaw Island. They drive through downtown Charleston to Wadmalaw to what is known as the Bolt Farm Treehouse Retreat. There are four different treehouses with “amenity decks” for each of them. Rental prices begin at \$500/night. The “fairy-tale” like property was built and born out of romance by a couple, Seth and Tori Bolt.

According to the show’s hosts, there are over three million rental properties around the world for any kind of traveler and any budget.

Luis D. Ortiz, a former power broker in Manhattan who sold multimillion-dollar properties for over a decade was once a regular cast member of Bravo’s “Million Dollar Listing New York.”

He now explores the world in this latest venture. Ortiz took time out of his schedule to answer a few questions about how he got into the real estate industry and what the show is all about.

Q: Tell me about you, where you’re from and why you chose real estate as a profession.

I don’t consider real estate or luxury real estate to be a profession. To me it is something I found interesting. As I continue to explore, not just the luxury real estate market, but the real estate market in general and how it is changing the way we live and experience life, that’s something that I continue to be interested and inspired by. I’m from Puerto Rico, the most beautiful island in the Caribbean, and all of my life I have been a very present or in the moment person, so being present took me here.

Q: What is the most expensive luxury property you’ve ever sold and where was it? What about luxury rental properties?

In Tribeca, New York for \$60 million. A luxury rental went for \$150,000 a month for two years.

Q: Many know you from Bravo’s Million Dollar Listing New York — what did you learn from that experience that you are applying to your new venture, “The World’s Most Amazing Vacation Rentals?”

For me, being in television goes beyond being on television. It’s something to put you in a position where you have to continue to look inside yourself — in a bowl — as a person to continue to be valuable and relevant in anything you do. I came from a film background, but never in front of the camera, and after



PHOTOGRAPHS/NETFLIX

Joanna Franco (from left), Megan Batoon and Luis D. Ortiz. The hosts arrive at Bolt Farm Retreat for a stay at two of four “fairy tale” like retreats on Wadmalaw Island.



“Seasons Niseko” in Niseko, Japan is a 7,750 square foot luxury home, with an indoor heated pool, a 1,000 bottle wine cellar and the rental comes with a Michelin star chef to cook for you. Rentals begin at \$5,500/night.



In Episode 3 “Boats & Floats,” an ultra modern 4,300+ square foot “floating mansion,” The Arkup is in Miami. It floats 20 feet off the water and stands on hydraulic legs. If you want to cruise over the water, you can for an extra fee. The unique rental starts at \$2,000/night.

Million Dollar Listing, that changed. I learned how to look at myself and evolve at all times.

Q: Did you always want a real estate career?

I don’t think I knew what real estate was when I was 18 years old. It was a



A 430-acre island, “Cuvee’s Royal Island” comes with a 15-person staff to serve you while you stay. There are five bungalows and the island located in Eluethera, Bahamas can only be rented to one group at a time. Rental prices start at \$15,000/night.

career that came along the way. A friend of mine once convinced me that I could be good at selling real estate at a time where I was very frustrated with a film I had just shot that I didn’t like. And so, I gave real estate a try.

Q: Are you finding that people are wanting these types of luxury vacay rentals — even more so — post pandemic?

I think what people are coming to realize is that there is more to explore in this world, while you are able to continue to work remotely. People, more than just travelers, are starting to explore different types of houses outside of the realm because it’s safe, because it’s exciting, and because why not.

Q: What’s the most popular getaway property? Here in the US? Abroad? Beach or mountains?

It depends. There is a popular getaway for every type of traveler. And, depending on seasons and trends, popular get-

aways keep on changing. The interesting part here is that this access to millions of properties around the world — it’s slowly changing the definition of popular getaways. What is it now? I’m finding that out.

Q: What authentic experiences did you have out of some of the properties showcased on the show?

One example was living inside the body of work of the extravagant/organic architect, Javier Senosiain, near Mexico City that includes a serpent where you can stay inside — inside a snake! In fact, it has 10 bedrooms inside. It’s an experience I would not have seen anywhere else.

Q: Though your role is geared more toward luxury vacays, part of the program’s premise is about “not spending an exorbitant amount.” How so, can you give a couple of examples?

Not spending an exorbitant amount is referred to traveling and properties in general. Most people think that in order to travel and have this type of great experience (on the show) you have to have a lot of money, but that’s not true. Platforms today are giving access to different parts of the world that are equally or even more beautiful than where we come from at much less expensive prices. At the same time, many luxury retreats or homes have ways for travelers to stay for free in exchange of work. For example, you can go and work at a vineyard in a Tuscan villa with your friends and you get to be in Italy for free. That sounds like an adventure to me.

Q: If you were to recommend to someone seeking a once-in-a-lifetime vacation, what are five things you’d recommend they do before finalizing the vacation of their dreams?

When people think of a once-in-a-lifetime vacation, many believe it’s a luxury full service type, but a once-in-a-lifetime vacation should be one that changes or inspires something positive in you. It’s a journey that will help shape the person you become after. With that said, something out of your comfort zone. Something that challenges you or all of the people traveling. Consider traveling alone, you will find out things about yourself and the life around you wouldn’t have if accompanied. Last, but not least, be available. The world will show you what you’re available to.

Season 1 of “The World’s Most Amazing Vacation Rentals” is available on Netflix now.

Contact **Brigitte Surette** at bsurette@postandcourier.com.