

# The Inc. Life

## My Place Thomas Ennis's glass beach house

VENICE, CALIFORNIA

Looks like  
he's home.

**IN THE CLEAR**  
*Thomas Ennis has an ocean view from nearly every room. Beachgoers can get a view of him, too.*



THOMAS ENNIS'S fondest childhood memories are of traveling with his parents to seaside spots like Atlantic City, New Jersey, and Daytona Beach, Florida, where he fell in love with the ocean. So when he built his dream house, 120 feet from the Pacific, he made sure the water would always be in sight. In 2003, Ennis, the founder of Inglewood, California-based NS Wash Systems, a \$25 million

supplier of car wash equipment, bought and razed a 1920s cottage on Venice Beach. Three years later, at a cost of \$1.6 million, he and architect David Hertz had built a 3,600-square-foot, four-bedroom house with, thanks to exterior and interior glass walls, unobstructed ocean views from almost every room.

Ennis, 65, a divorced father whose son Jack and daughter Savannah (both above, with Ennis) live with him half the time, filled his home with innovations befitting a holder of 29 patents. There's a large pane of glass that lowers like a car window, an open-air elevator that fits four, skylights that open and close depending on the weather, and a bed in Savannah's room that hangs from motorized cables so she can raise it to the ceiling when she needs more floor space. And, of course, there's an exterior washing system that Ennis put together himself: a hanging nine-nozzle spray bar that can be wheeled around the roof.



**THE DINING AREA**

*"The dining chairs are from Ralph Lauren. There's a window above the teakwood table, so you can look up at the stars while you eat your dinner."*

**THE KITCHEN**

*"My favorite appliances are the top-mounted dishwasher and sink combo from KitchenAid and the steam oven, which is used in commercial kitchens. I made a turkey in half the time. And I didn't have to baste."*



**THE AUTOMATIC WINDOW**

*"The living room window, which is 15 feet wide, rolls down like a car window. It uses a screw jack system I built in my factory. When the window's down, the sea breezes and the sound of the waves fill the room."*

“When I’m at home, I feel like I’m on vacation.  
The hardest thing to do  
is leave my house.”

**THE POWER**

“I have photovoltaic cells from Acme Environmental on the roof and a meter that measures how much solar power wattage I’m generating. That amount is credited to my electricity bill, which has been cut in half.”

**THE CHAIR**

“I bought this Eero Aarnio bubble chair because I wanted a chair that you could see through. It’s a relaxing spot. When I sit in it, it just puts me to sleep.”

**THE MATERIALS**

“I spent \$350,000 on glass—every window and pane was custom-made in California. For privacy, we use power remote sheer blinds.”