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LIFE'S A BEACH

EMPTY NESTERS BUILD A COMFORTABLE
CAPE COD-INSPIRED ISLAND RETREAT THAT MIXES
CLEAN LINES AND SPLASHES OF SEASIDE HUES.

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Full of movement and color and designed to endure the bay area's climate and conditions, a welcoming landscape greets the homeowners upon each return to their Galveston vacation home. Palm trees serve to block unappealing views while also framing vistas of and from the house.



For decades, a Houston couple spent weekends with their children at a small vacation home in Galveston, yet with their kids now grown, they desired a larger getaway on the island for entertaining friends and, eventually, grandchildren. So, amidst a nature preserve with breathtaking bay views, they found a lovely spot upon which to build. “There are birds, including spoonbills and cranes, and the scenery always changes as the tide rolls in and out,” says the wife. This tranquil setting provided the ideal backdrop for a new Cape Cod-inspired abode—a project well-suited for their longtime interior designer, Marjorie Slovack. “I have a home in Galveston,” Slovack says. “So I understand how living on the water can influence you.”

Residential designer John L. Sullivan Jr. carefully considered the property when drawing up the plans. “The clients wanted views across the wetlands over to the bay

waters,” he says. “But they didn’t want afternoon sun, which can be harsh, so we added overhangs, covered decks, balconies and pavilions.” Because the couple leans toward a more traditional style, but desired light and airy interiors, the interiors translated into “an open-concept living area with clean-lined architecture—not a lot of intricate ceiling treatments,” says Sullivan, who devised a spacious living area on the main level with floor-to-ceiling windows. The main priority was to capture the views and the feel of the land within a relaxed setting.

The location was an important factor from the start. For example, the home had to be structurally engineered to weather hurricanes, and construction materials needed to endure the elements over time. “We used composite products like Trex decking to withstand the weather and salty air,” says builder Jimmy Clore. Every fastener is also marine-grade stainless steel, while ground-level doors are

A Stark rug grounds the great room, where Kravet fabric covers custom sofas with two pillows featuring Robert Allen fabric, one from Krispen and one from Design House. Seating is accented by a side table from Alyson Jon Interiors, holding an Arteriors lamp, and a coffee table from Louis Shanks. A mirror from Three Doors complements a pair of Ballard Designs poufs under a console from Stetzel & Associates.



Spanish cedar to resist expansion from humidity. Likewise, landscape designer Janielle Guzinski, who also handled the installation, selected sturdy plants and worked “to create a welcoming landscape full of movement and color that would hold up to the changing seasonal conditions,” she explains.

Aesthetically, the locale also influenced the interiors. “We brought the watercolor palette—sand and water tones—in from outside,” says Slovack, who worked with the design team of Amy Lopez and Kathia De La Torre. “It’s a quiet reference to nature.” Slovack and the team covered pecky cypress ceiling beams, along with a few of the furnishings, in a light-wood finish for an airy feel. While paying homage to the seaside, however, they stopped short of being too literal. “Marjorie didn’t want to get theme-y with the expected seashells,” says the wife. Subtle references include the great room’s abstract of the Florida Keys from

Leftbank Art in La Mirada, California, as well as a clamshell holding succulents that was a gift from the wife’s father.

When alone, the homeowners utilize the main floor, which houses the living areas, kitchen and master bedroom. However, the main level is also a prime gathering spot for family and friends. “Everything’s been thought about for groups,” Slovack says. In the kitchen, for instance, an oversize island with dining counter, featuring a different countertop than the perimeter cabinetry to make it a focal point for entertaining, invites guests to gather around. “When you cook a lot, everybody gravitates toward the kitchen,” the wife says, “and I wanted people to have a barstool to pull up and be in the midst of the action.”

Further catering to large groups, all of the living spaces are casual and comfortable, and, instead of a lot of antiques—irreplaceable if damaged during a hurricane—practical

Above: Kitchen pendants from Lighting Inc. hang over barstools in vinyl; Walker Zanger subway tile flanks hand-painted tile from MCA Systems. The island’s Mesquite granite and the perimeter’s Bora Bora Beige, from the Samsung Radianz Coastal Collection, are from Arizona Tile; the hardware is from Hollywood Builders Hardware.

Opposite: A beaded chandelier from Spaces for Home is a focal point in the breakfast room, along with beautiful vistas through Andersen windows. Linen-and-burlap chairs from Design House surround a custom table from Three Doors. White-oak floors with a custom finish are from Houston Custom Floors.





A chair from Lam Bespoke—clad in a textile from Norbar Fabrics in Boca Raton, Florida—joins a Kravet fabric-covered custom sectional to provide game room seating alongside ottomans under the custom coffee table manufactured by Designer's Furniture Mfg. The Michael Poliza prints, Made Goods side table, Arteriors lamp, pillows from Design House and Stark rug all add coastal touches. The pool table is from Billiard Factory.



furnishings were key. “If you’re in your bathing suit, come on in,” says the wife. “No area is off-limits.” Adds Slovack: “We used a lot of indoor-outdoor fabrics, so you can wipe them and they won’t mold.” And because the homeowners are tall, Slovack and the design team took the height and depth of seating into account by customizing most of the upholstered pieces in their workroom. “People want to be comfortable and stretch out,” Slovack says. They also convinced the clients to incorporate recliners, converting the wife’s previous opinion of them with comfy yet tailored versions where everyone now clamors to sit.

Steps were also taken to ensure guests enjoyed the outdoors as much as they do the indoors. Every bedroom has a bathroom, so there’s no waiting for a shower after coming in from the pool. Furniture layouts correspond with bay views, and the game room has a pool table, shuffleboard

table, built-in bar, lounge seating and balconies. “The cupola over the game room is a great architectural element,” Sullivan says. “It brings all kinds of light into that area.” Also in the game room, a custom coffee table, designed with two ottomans for extra seating, adds another touch of convenience and comfort. “Your private space is one of the most significant influences on your life,” Slovack says. “It’s important to set up your environment to support you.”

Mission accomplished, say the homeowners, whose private getaway is perfectly primed with comfort, relaxation and the scenery in mind to not only entertain now, but also share their tradition of visiting Galveston with future generations. “I just love it,” says the wife. “Once I get out of the hustle and bustle of Houston and go over the bridge, my blood pressure drops. I am always anxious to get back to our beach house.” ■

In one of the guest rooms, a Pottery Barn coverlet and shams combine with a Serena & Lily printed duvet and sheet set to cover the RH twin beds, which top Dixie Home’s Nature’s Field carpeting from KB Floors. G&S Custom Draperies fabricated Roman shades using Kravet fabric; the benches are by Global Views.

Between the guest room’s twin beds hangs a Made Goods mirror over a Jayson Home nightstand accented by an Arteriors lamp. Vintage nautical charts of Galveston waterways serve as a pop of color above the bed, while Sherwin-Williams’ Sea Salt on the walls creates a calm, serene and inviting space.

