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At a Caribbean-inspired compound on Florida's Atlantic coast, the water's fine—and right outside the door.

WRITTEN BY SIOBHÁN MCGOWAN PHOTOS BY JESSIE PREZA



The placid, 76-foot-long pool is never more than one step beyond the new-build home and guest cottage, *above*, allowing the owner to indulge in some laps whenever he pleases—morning, afternoon or by the light of the moon. “He swims almost every day,” says interior designer Ashley Shaw.

In the cottage's family room, *right*, the strong lines of the Hickory White cocktail table and Bungalow 5 side tables in lacquered papyrus contrast with the soft curves of the Lee Industries sofa. Cubist Totem vases from West Elm topped with vivid green leaves from the garden bring the tropics indoors.



"We wanted to evoke the feel of a welcoming West Indies home," Shaw says. To that end, walls throughout the main house were hand-plastered for a textural effect, while floorboards, cabinetry and ceiling beams were crafted from African mahogany, right. "Wood grain against white walls creates warmth." The Lee sectional sofa in deep blue velvet pulls from the color palette of the classic Oushak rug, while the hand-painted glass tops of the Notre Monde nesting tables mirror the surface of water.

Interior designer Ashley Shaw was all set for the "finish-out" of her client's new-build beachfront home and guest cottage near Jacksonville, Florida—that's the phase when, after the hard work of construction, all the fresh new furnishings are brought in and beautifully staged. But there was just one problem. No, make that two.

"Hurricane Michael hit the coast," Shaw recalls of the storm that wreaked havoc in the region in Fall 2018, "though thankfully the house didn't sustain too much damage. And then we had to wait out the sea turtles." Indeed, the dunes are a protected habitat for the endangered reptiles, who lay their eggs in the dry sand in late spring and whose hatchlings emerge from the nests months later to scuttle into the sea. "Beach properties come with their own unique circumstances," Shaw says with a laugh, "including turtle babies!" Once the creatures were safely splashing in their new ocean home, Shaw could complete her client's.

A well-traveled bachelor with four grown children and several grandchildren, he knew what he didn't want: "For it to scream 'Florida!'" says Shaw. "This is his primary residence. It couldn't be cliché." Instead, he requested an elegant, modern interpretation of the classic Colonial homes he'd seen on his trips throughout the British West Indies. To achieve that vision, Shaw began with two primary elements: white walls and dark wood. Walls in the main building are pleasingly hand-plastered, while millwork is rendered in rich, red African mahogany. "The contrast is striking, masculine, but the effect is warm," she says.

Whether from the exquisite swimming pool, which runs moatlike along almost the entire length of the property before opening up into a wider lounge area by the guest cottage, or the Atlantic Ocean itself, opposite the facade of the main house, water is always in sight—and literally just a step

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Leather-upholstered dual-seat bar benches from Lee surround the Taj Mahal quartzite island in the main building, *above*. Durable, comfy and easy to clean, they're the perfect spot for the grandkids to gather for a snack between dips in the pool. "It's his very favorite part of the design!" Shaw says of the homeowner. "He loves how these double benches encourage family and friends to sit close together and talk."

Balmy ocean breezes are one of the irresistible charms of a beach house, and the open floor plan, *right*, takes full advantage of them. Patterned pillows, ceramic vases and woven throws sprinkle the space with seafaring blues. Past the kitchen island, custom cabinets in the walk-in pantry cleverly conceal a microwave, blender and other practical gadgets.



Amid the general serenity and soothing blues of the overall decor, the dining area's midcentury, multitiered, mirrored-glass-and-Lucite chandelier delivers a jaw-dropping moment of glam. "Even the most masculine interiors can benefit from a bit of sparkle," says Shaw. The Baker Liquid table with its whitened walnut top and polished metal base is not too shabby either.



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away. “You can slide open the doors straight from the dining room and dive right in,” Shaw says of the pool, which abuts much of the main building. She took her color cues from the surroundings, sticking to natural, undyed fibers like cotton, linen and raffia and bringing the seascape inside with plush sofa upholstery and pale chair slipcovers in a spectrum of blues. One exception to the subdued sophistication, however, is the dazzling midcentury chandelier over the dining table, sourced by Shaw via an antiques dealer in New York City. But to best frame the brilliant water views and allow the maximum amount of sunlight to flood the space, she left most of the windows unadorned. “The owner begins every morning by meditating, often in the master bedroom,” she explains. “What better image for introspection than the ocean?” And what better way to embrace the rest of another glorious Florida day than with an invigorating swim?



creating an aura of calm

To bring a chill yet contemporary island vibe to your home, North Carolina-based designer Ashley Shaw offers these tips:

- **WHITE WALLS** help open up and unify a space. Depending on the tone, white can read cool or warm—as is the case in this Florida beach home, which features hand-applied plaster in the main house and Farrow & Ball Slipper Satin paint in the cottage.
- **DURABLE, DARK WOOD MILLWORK**, as opposed to a more lightweight material like beadboard, for example, provides a strong, substantive contrast to anchor the white walls.
- **MODERN ART**, such as *Sand Storm*, the pair of black-and-white

prints by photographer Grégoire Moulin that hangs in the cottage’s family room, presents a more sophisticated aesthetic than would the stereotypical starfish and seashell motifs that might be found in a standard seaside home.

- **NATURAL FABRICS** in neutral colors, like linen curtains, cotton quilts, leather upholstery and sisal rugs, bring the elements indoors “without being too in-your-face beachy,” Shaw explains.
- **TRANSLUCENT LIGHTING** keeps the ambience airy and can add an eclectic, even feminine, flair, as seen in the vintage Lucite chandelier or the crystal table lamps in the master bedroom.

With ocean views like these, who needs (or wants) curtains? The master bedroom in the main house, *above*, keeps things simple with a channel-stitched cotton quilt atop the sleek faux shagreen bed frame by Mr. and Mrs. Howard for Sherrill Furniture. The beige-and-blue border of Dea’s Carrara linens recalls sand and sea.

A guest bedroom facing the pool, *right*, uses blue as a neutral, from the whisper-pale teal of the Highland House upholstered Milly headboard to the misty sky-gray of the bed skirt. The coverlet and European pillow shams are from Peacock Alley. “The first time the owner walked into the room, he said the colors and curtains made it feel as tranquil as a spa,” recalls Shaw.