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BETTER BY DESIGN

A BONUS SECTION FOR DESIGN ENTHUSIASTS

HOME AWAY FROM HOME

Dreaming of a GETAWAY? Tour one family's vacation home and get some tips for PLANNING YOUR OWN. Plus, check out EXPERT PICKS for second-home markets.

BY SHARON L. NOVOTNE PHOTOS COLLEEN DUFFLEY

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Barefoot Elegance

Deluxe comfort meets **COASTAL TRADITION** in this Florida sand castle, where there's **SEA TO SEE** beyond the dunes.





Easy living Double French doors open the living room, *this photo*, to the screen porch, *inset*, where Michele Perloe and her daughter, Sydney, catch the Gulf breezes. Even the kitchen's breakfast area, *previous page*, is designed for comfort with a sofa that adds banquette-style seating.



Atlanta residents Ross and Michele Perloe chased their beach cottage dream up and down the East Coast until they found a gem of a vacation spot on the Emerald Coast of Florida's panhandle. Their "this is *it*" moment came when they toured the planned community of WaterSound Beach. "It's Martha's Vineyard meets Florida," Michele says. "I've never seen a beach more beautiful."

Nestled behind natural dunes, the property the Perloes chose for their shingle-style home is just a boardwalk stroll away from pristine beaches and the aquamarine waters of the Gulf of Mexico. Since the home is a gathering spot for family and friends, the couple wanted wide-open living spaces.



These main rooms are linked to the outdoors with French doors and expansive windows.

For Michele, who designed the home's interiors, going coastal meant going natural with beamed ceilings, antique heart pine floors, and whitewashed pine boards on the walls. The beach figures prominently into the time that the couple, along with their two children, Sydney, 12, and David, 22, spend at the house, so to put everyone at ease, Michele filled living spaces with distressed wood pieces and comfy seating in forgiving microfiber upholstery. She also used a sand-and-sea color palette in every room for mix-and-match simplicity. Her no-fuss approach really pays off when the home is being rented by vacationers.

The Perloes make the 5 ½-hour drive to their vacation home as frequently as possible, often making plans with friends from Atlanta who own or rent beach homes in the same area. Instead of eating out, the group will congregate in the kitchen, prepare dinner, and celebrate the fact that staying in can sometimes be the best part of getting away.

On the menu

An Atlanta artisan made the dining table, *above*, out of old distressed wood so it wears without worry. Michele also chose durable surfaces for the spacious kitchen, *right*, with marble on the cooktop island and soapstone for the other countertops.





Beach time

The mudroom, above, catches most of the sand and clutter with a clean-sweep floor of reclaimed brick, an apron-front sink, and storage for towels, shells, and beach bags. There's only one cottage rule, *right*.



A PLAN THAT WORKS

It took research and patience for Ross and Michele Perloe to get their dream home.

WHAT THEY WANTED

After years of vacationing in seaside rentals, the Perloes knew their ideal spot would have a classic cottage feel, easy access from their Atlanta home, stunning beaches protected from development, and options for family fun.

WHY THEY WAITED The couple didn't rush to build after buying the lot in 2003. "We were down here three or four or five times a year to look at other homes, to get ideas, and to interview builders," Ross explains.

WHO THEY HIRED Ross and Michele chose Historical Concepts, an Atlanta-based architectural firm, to design their home. Picking the hometown team made it convenient to view the firm's projects and meet with designers. The Perloes received weekly digital photo updates from their builder, Grand Floridian Builders, Inc., of Panama City Beach, Florida, during construction.

HOW THEY PLANNED FOR MAXIMUM USE Closets are oversized to accommodate longer stays. The home has broadband and wireless Internet service so Ross can work at the beach. The third floor is designed as a "kid zone," making the house rental-friendly and ready for future grandchildren.

HOW THEY DEFRAY EXPENSES Ross and Michele rent their retreat to vacationers when they're not using it. They feature their home online (see vrbo.com/132420) and save costs by personally handling inquiries and scheduling.



Guests welcome

Tucked beneath the sloping roofline of the third floor, the built-in bed, above, helps maximize sleep space, seating, and storage for the family's guests and renters. This part of the house also includes a sleeper sofa, kitchenette, table for games and dining, and flat-screen television. Beaded-board paneling and nautical accents in the bath, right, give the lofty retreat a ship's-cabin feel.



WANT A SECOND HOME?

A thoughtful, strategic approach will help ensure your satisfaction.

THINK LIKE A RENTER

Rent vacation homes in various locations to research each area's housing options and amenities, and determine what you like in a vacation home, says Christine Karpinski, director of the Owner Community for *homeaway.com* and author of *The Complete Guide to Buy, Manage, Furnish, Rent, Maintain and Advertise Your Vacation Rental Investment* (Kinney Pollack Press, 2007). Revisit your favorite to make sure it has long-term appeal.

PUT YOURSELF FIRST

Even if you want to rent your house, "buy some place you love, some place close enough for you to enjoy yourself," Karpinski says.

DO YOUR HOMEWORK

Check with local real estate pros to ensure you've identified a stable community. Is a super-highway slated for the area? Do zoning laws limit the height of new development to preserve views? What is the long-term status of "protected" natural areas? Are there any issues with the air quality, water quality, or environment that aren't readily apparent?

CONSIDER ALL FINANCIAL ASPECTS

Depending on your personal income level, a vacation home can have tax advantages. "Today you may be able to take a loss if you're renting it," Karpinski says. Consult a tax expert about the possibility of writing off income generated by the rental property as a business.



Outside interests With charming dormers, broad porches, classic cedar shakes, and crisp white trim, the Perloes' beach cottage, *top*, welcomes with seaside personality. The house connects to the development's system of boardwalks that meander around the rolling dunes and down to the water's edge. Ross and Sydney, *above*, like to cruise the boardwalk on their bicycles.

RESOURCES

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THE PRODUCTS IN THIS STORY, CONTACT THESE PROFESSIONALS AND MANUFACTURERS.

Pages Z1–Z12: architecture firm—Jeremy Sommer, Lindsay Weddle, and Mary Mullin, design team, Historical Concepts; 770/487-8041; historicalconcepts.com. Builder—Shane Adams, Grand Floridian Builders, Inc.; 850/230-1474; grandfloridian.com. Pine flooring—Emerald Coast Flooring; 850/682-4601. Tables—Nottingham Antiques, Inc.; nottinghamantiques.com. Sofa on porch—Jewels of Java; 607/754-1445; jewelsofjava.com (to the trade). All other sofas—Mitchell Gold + Bob Williams; 800/789-5401; mgandbw.com. Dining chairs—Wisteria; 800/767-5490; wisteria.com. Stools—Pizitz Home and Cottage; 850/231-2240. Chandeliers—Vinings Lighting; viningslighting.com. Lamps—Restoration Hardware; 800/910-9836; restorationhardware.com. Kitchen cabinetry—Woodlane Cabinet Co.; 850/562-0491. Double oven, cooktop—Thermador; 800/656-9226; thermador.com. Refrigerator—Sub-Zero Freezer Co., Inc.; 800/222-7820; subzero.com. Sinks, faucets—Waterworks; 800/998-2284; waterworks.com. Mudroom rug—Anthropologie; 800/309-2500; anthropologie.com. Bedding—Ralph Lauren Home; 888/475-7674; rhome.polo.com (product line varies). Bedroom rug—Kilim Collection; 404/351-1110. Bath rugs—IKEA; in the United States: 877/345-4532; in Canada: 888/932-4532; ikea.com. Cladding, shingles—Weyerhaeuser; 877/235-6873; weyerhaeuser.com.