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havens



a twist on tradition

In a Bermuda villa overlooking the sea, designer Meg Braff creates an island look that's classic and family-friendly—in six easy steps

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Every design project comes with challenges, and designer Meg Brall's assignment—to decorate a villa on Bermuda in a manner that suits the architecture and accommodates the everyday needs of a young family—was no exception. Meg let comfort guide her choices, outfitting each room with a classic palette and traditional English antiques while keeping the decor youthful, thanks to a mix of upholstered furniture, layers of natural texture, unexpected exotic pieces, and a few sleek accessories. Here are her six essentials for getting a timeless yet durable take on tradition.



1 Patterned rugs.

Meg paired polished antiques with geometric and striped flat-weave rugs made of cotton, jute, or sea grass to give each room a casual foundation. "I wanted the floors to feel good—and be forgiving under bare feet after a day on the beach," says Meg. Antique Persian rugs, which can't be hosed down or shaken out, would have shifted the style factor too far toward formal.

2 Batik pillows.

Sofas can feel incomplete without throw pillows, but instead of piling on classic stripes, checks, and florals, Meg chose multiples of a custom hand-printed batik pattern. Originally made in Indonesia, the print has a throw-caution-to-the-wind feel. "These pillows aren't stuffy or pretentious," says Meg, "and they make antique furniture feel more modern."

3 Chippendale chic.

For a modern variation on this iconic style, Meg updated Chippendale pieces with casual materials and bright, bold fabrics. In the living room (right), a console and coffee table are made of rattan, not mahogany—a more beach-appropriate interpretation of the motif. In the dining room (page 25), Meg covered the seats of Chippendale chairs with a large-scale green ikat print to infuse the space with youthful energy. >



ABOUT THE HOUSE

STYLE 1920s Italian villa-meets-Bermuda bungalow

SPACE 4,000 square feet with five bedrooms and five and a half baths

SETTING Bermuda, where it's warm enough to swim during the holidays

VIEW Palms bordering the Atlantic





4

4 Nautical artwork.

It wouldn't be a house on the coast without a few paintings of sailboats and ships braving the sea. But just because they're de rigueur doesn't mean they have to be predictable. The contemporary, monochromatic palette and simple frame on the piece above the sitting room mantel (left) is an unexpected choice. Offbeat nautical accessories can create a similar effect; comb through flea markets to find vintage marine instruments.

5 Plush upholstery.

Call it feminine or call it traditional—but nothing says, “come curl up” like super-comfy, cushy upholstered sofas, club chairs, and headboards. From the sofas' rolled arms to the club chairs' cushioned backs to the headboards' gracious curves, Meg chose pieces with English-inspired lines and generous proportions to suit the house's architectural style. A colorful slipcover with contrasting white piping gives a formal chaise a more relaxed feel.



5



6

6 Painted furniture.

Having too many dark furnishings can make a light, airy room feel dated, staid, and cramped. The solution? Incorporating a few painted pieces, such as the distressed cream nightstand (near left) and chest (top). “Mixing Swedish and French painted pieces with English furniture offers a nice contrast and keeps the mood light and bright,” says Meg. Look for furniture that won't be devalued by being painted and choose pieces that don't already have a naturally beautiful finish. The end result will be perfect for absorbing and reflecting beautiful seaside light. >

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GET THE LOOK

Meg's style: I like to keep it elegant but beach-appropriate, with stylish comforts in every room.

Can't live with: Heavy fabrics and furnishings. At the beach, it's important to keep it light.

Can't live without: Hits of color where needed—

I love blue and green. And comfortable places to sit!

What I love about the coast: The feeling that you can hop in a boat at any moment and go somewhere. There's also something about the light at the coast—it makes everything and everyone look good. And of course I always get a great night's sleep, thanks to the sea air! 🌊



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