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# SEA CHANGE

AN ENCHANTING WOODEN BEACH HOUSE IN SIMON'S TOWN  
IS A COSY RETREAT WHATEVER THE WEATHER

TEXT **LEIGH ROBERTSON** STYLING **KATHERINE BOTES** PHOTOGRAPHS **JUSTIN PATRICK**





OPPOSITE Colleen Nugent's weekend retreat, Sorbet Cottage, is located just off Boulders beach in Simon's Town in the Western Cape, famous for its penguin sanctuary. THIS PAGE A sunny corner on the house's upper-level veranda, which is protected from the elements and boasts unspoilt sea views. The house was constructed by Rustic Homes ([rustichomes.co.za](http://rustichomes.co.za)). The Hinterveld mohair blanket on the chair is from Entrepo ([entrepo.co.za](http://entrepo.co.za)).







Part of the appeal of Simon's Town, the False Bay settlement widely known for its naval base and ubiquitous penguins, are its rows of heritage buildings, from broekie-lace fronted Victorians to simple structures dating back hundreds of years. History is all about, something proud locals like to flaunt. There is a community that's closely knit, brimming with delicious yarns, and it draws those who might have moved on back to its charming corners and mellow little coves time and again.

Colleen Nugent spent childhood holidays with her family in a tiny wooden bungalow close to Seaforth beach, and has happy memories of those times. When, many years later, a friend arranged a weekend away at the town's Boulders beach, renting characterful cottages that were formerly an old tuck shop and an ammunitions storage facility during the Anglo-Boer War respectively, Colleen's fondness for the area was reignited. Soon she'd be bringing her own family to these same quaint bolt holes for breaks from their city life in Cape Town.

They loved renting those cottages so much, she says, that they decided to look for a house of their own in Simon's Town.



Fortuitously, they came across an empty plot for sale, with direct access to the beach via a path to the boardwalk – a rare find for this area, even 11 years ago.

'We wanted to build in keeping with the surroundings,' Colleen says, describing rough plans sketched by her frequently travelling husband on an aeroplane sick bag – now framed, of course. They approached Pieter Silberbauer of Rustic Homes to bring the drawings to life: a double-storey wooden structure with wide, wraparound verandas, crowned with a loft. Within six months it was masterfully, almost effortlessly built. Just about the only thing Rustic Homes don't do is landscape your garden, says Colleen, whose preference anyway is for a 'wild' garden lush with greenery and shady nooks such as their own.

A new build it might be, but the Nugent's quite magical seaside house couldn't be more in its place among some 'very old, very cute' heritage properties, including what was once a whaling station. Painted a fresh icy pink and set in its tangle of garden against the sweeping backdrop of the ever-changing sea and sky, it's a picture of enchantment.





While the ocean views are one of its most captivating features, so too are the interiors. A beach house in every sense of the word, with jaunty nautical references such as portholes in the loos and carnivalesque bunting fluttering from veranda posts, it defies the traditional blue-and-white look of the coastal vernacular.

It is, rather, homely, colourful and multi-layered with interesting things at every turn, from a framed picture of a sailboat that Colleen found in the garden to the carnival cutout she received as a gift. There are time-worn pieces that were never meant to be for sale, but which Colleen singled out from obscure corners with her 'eagle eye': an ancient Union Jack casually draped over a sofa, a cherished piece of embroidered silk strung up on a wall. She has a weakness for Cath Kidston fabric, which has found its way onto a chaise longue and cupboard 'curtains' in the kitchen. 'I've only ever bought what I love,' she says. 'They are all things I want to see and enjoy.'

Sleeping seven, with two bedrooms on the ground floor, an ensuite gazing over the sea on the upper floor, and another bed in the attic, it is at once spacious and delectably cosy. With the doors

all open there's a breezy flow between outdoors and in, but as the chill sets in, the house comes into its own when the Queen Anne fireplace is lit. 'It's wonderful here in winter,' Colleen muses.

That's when board games are brought out from cupboards piled high with them, as well as books and magazines. In the dark of night you might even hear the haunting sound of whales just off the beach. Just another reason to fall head over heels for Sorbet Cottage. **Sorbet Cottage is available for holiday rentals through Perfect Hideaways, [perfecthideaways.co.za](http://perfecthideaways.co.za)**

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FROM FAR LEFT The house is painted in Plascon's Cherry Smoke and the finishes in Marshmallow ([plascon.co.za](http://plascon.co.za)); the entrance hall hints at a playful nautical theme in this eclectically styled beach house, where much of the furniture was bought second-hand. The Hunter boots are from Imagenius ([imagenius.co.za](http://imagenius.co.za)); the open-plan kitchen is full of charm, and opens onto the veranda; in the lounge, the Queen Anne fireplace, brought over from France by Peter Long (021-794-6454), is put to regular use in colder months. The Union Jack was a joyful find at an antique shop that has since closed its doors.





To the side of the main bedroom on the upper storey is a bathtub with endless sea views - Colleen's favourite place to catch the sunsets. The bath mat is from L'Orangerie ([lorangerie.co.za](http://lorangerie.co.za)). OPPOSITE Above the bed from Peter Osborn Company ([peterosbornathome.co.za](http://peterosbornathome.co.za)) is a motley collection of framed pictures she's collected over the years. The cushions are from Woolworths ([woolworths.co.za](http://woolworths.co.za)) and bbellamy & bbellamy (084-314-5741), and the bedding is from Country Road (021-405-4300).







'I ENJOY TAKING BRISK WALKS ON COLD DAYS, WHEN THE SEA IS DARK AND MYSTERIOUS.'





**COLLEEN'S HOME TRUTHS**

**The house has** a feeling of being on a ship out at sea. **In winter I enjoy** taking brisk walks on cold days, when the sea is dark and mysterious; or an occasional swim. I have a special place where I swim, a gully between massive rocks which the water flows into from the open sea. I love sitting in my friend Jean's hut on Boulders beach drinking coffee while watching the rain pelt down onto the sand and sea. And there's nothing like cosy fires to warm the house. **There are many things to love about Simon's Town** – the unique Boulders beach where you can swim alongside the penguins; listening to the whales in the dead of night; the old-world atmosphere and beautiful Victorian buildings in the town; the good community spirit... And it's not too commercialised yet! There's a feeling of escaping into another world yet it's only 40 minutes from Cape Town. **My favourite spots in the house are** the main bedroom/bathroom, and the hammock corner on the top floor veranda. All have the most spectacular views – like a painting with the scene constantly changing, whether it's the weather or the sea life (penguins, dolphins, whales), boats of every description and the sound of people enjoying the beach below. **I'm inspired by** my children, Phoebe and Gabriel, and nature in every form. Oh, and my two Airedale hounds, Paddington and Ted!

FROM FAR LEFT Curtains bought at a school bazaar create a sumptuous entrance to the sunroom on the upper level. The table was another lucky find, given further paint effects by local artist Tess Berlein; the trestle table in a protected nook on the lower veranda was constructed from planks left over from building; the couch in the living room is from Block & Chisel (blockandchisel.co.za) with scatters from bbellamy & bbellamy and L'Orangerie; Colleen takes in the view from a rock at Boulders beach.

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