



COASTAL
LIVING

We Have the Ultimate (Blue) Crush on This Surfer-Chic Beach House



When you're an interior designer, inspiration can spark from a sea of different sources—maybe it's an exotic textile, a local artist, an antique buffet or a dazzling tile that would look dynamite as a kitchen backsplash. When you're an interior designer with a backdrop as hypnotizing as the one from this Laguna Beach getaway's, inspiration—at least initially—inevitably seems to emanate from the sea.

“From all levels, and nearly every room and deck, this house offers sweeping panoramic ocean, coastline, and Catalina sunset views,” says La Cañada, California, designer Courtney Thomas, who was tasked with making over this Nantucket-style escape for a family with grown kids and a Cavalier King Charles Spaniel. “The immediacy of the ocean views drove almost all of the decisions, and really, how could it not?”

From maximizing vistas to channeling the beach vibes into the décor, Thomas created a relaxing escape that reflects its azure neighbor in both feel and palette. “Given that view, it makes sense that the color ‘blue’ was the mantra we followed throughout.” Here, Thomas dishes on how she took ubiquitous beach house blues and gave them an unexpected—and modern—twist.



All in the Details

When the homeowners, who'd been eyeing real estate in Laguna for 30 years, finally landed on their dream home, it was, for the most part, structurally in good shape. An open floor plan, clean lines, and plenty of view-facing windows were major pluses. Thomas's charge, then, was breathing a more contemporary coastal feel into the interiors, which included pairing white-washed walls with refinished dark-stained wood floors and peppering that backdrop with stylish "wow" moments throughout. In a downstairs hallway, stair risers clad in a trio of decorative porcelain tiles by Jeffrey Court steal the show, while in the welcoming entry, a Dutch door painted a glossy Dunn Edwards' Novelty Navy makes a bold, nautical introduction.



Feeling the Blues

In nearly every room inside and out, blue became a uniting factor—and not just for its beachy suitability. While the husband-and-wife owners had a shared opinion on the overall vibe of their vacation home, specific style preferences were slightly different. So, palette became a binding factor. “We tried to be mindful of weaving their common love of blue and white into all spaces so that there was harmony throughout the house,” Thomas says. On the outdoor deck, Frontgate furniture sports blue Sunbrella cushions, mirroring similar shades in the living room just steps away.



Tile Stars

In the kitchen and bar areas, both of which are blessed with uninterrupted ocean vistas, the home's shaker-style cabinetry and polished nickel hardware connect the spaces, while unique countertop finishes—white marble-like quartz and “rugged concrete” quartz—set each space apart. But the real eye-catchers are the tiled backsplashes (a sea-blue subway tile from Sonoma Tilemakers and hand-painted patterned find from Ken Mason). Paired with open shelving, the bar area's tile becomes a focal point from the neighboring living room as well.



A Fresh Approach

“A modern spin on the traditional coastal theme was the goal,” says Thomas of the blue-and-white palette woven throughout the house. To accomplish the task in the downstairs family room, the designer pared down heavy patterns and stocky furnishings in favor of a contemporary, low-slung sofa in a textured Brunschwig & Fils fabric. She also introduced varying shades of beachy blues through different styles of art. “By working in some bursts of blue through artwork, and keeping the art up-to-date by using simple, boxed frames or acrylic shadow boxes, we created a modern look and air,” says Thomas.



Point of View

Boasting perhaps the home's most breathtaking views, the master suite is a light-filled sanctuary—which inspired the design both aesthetically and practically.

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“As you can imagine, there were two things at odds in this room: unfettered access to the views and drapery that would protect them from the morning's blinding rays,” says Thomas. For the latter, the designer chose Roman shades in a light-blocking Duralee fabric. Wherever possible, Thomas also opted for fade-resistant fabrics designed to stand up to the sun in the heat of summer.



Spa Retreat

Of the few things Thomas took down to the studs were the home's bathrooms, which were completely made over to reflect the traditional elegance of the home's shingle-style exterior. In the master bath, a cast iron freestanding tub from Signature Hardware adds an industrial touch to the clean contemporary feel of the marble-topped vanity. As for the home's signature hue? Thomas found a home for it in the blue-gray Jeffrey Court shower tiles.



Nautical Nods

In one of two home offices, a collection of the husband's maritime memorabilia includes a flag donning the U.S. Navy cry, "Don't Give Up The Ship," found at a local antiques store. Thomas used that as the room's focal point, setting the stage for a nautically influenced mix of furnishings that includes a sofa clad in denimy Jane Churchill fabric, stripes, wood, and wicker accents.



Smart Space

With shiplap walls, beachy artwork, and built-in bunks, this 150-square-foot room takes on the feel of below-deck accommodations. “We didn’t want this room to be relegated as the kids only room since the homeowners wanted it to be potentially used by adults, too,” says Thomas. For sleeping arrangements, Thomas altered the bunk-style sleepers with double beds below and increased head space, making the bottom bunks much more grown-up friendly.



Ocean Escape

With outdoor spaces on each floor, those scene-stealing views and Pacific breezes are an arms-length from nearly anywhere in the house. And, according to Thomas, that's entirely the point. "When design can bring in beauty—through a vista, or by accessing the outdoors—it invites us to be a different kind of person ... more calm, maybe more inspired, and always more joy-filled."