

CONTRIBUTORS



MARIOLA FOUCHÉ,

HL's new copy editor, is a devoted word nerd and self-appointed life member of SCUTA (Society for the Correct Use of The Apostrophe).

How do you like to set a festive table? The traditional Polish way, on Christmas Eve – with straw under the tablecloth. **Best gifts you've ever received?** My daughters,

Anina and Mila. **Dream holiday?** A hike to Machu Picchu in Peru...

How do you relax? With a glass of bubbly and a good book in a hammock, under a tree. **Favourite summer cocktail?** Margaritas and mojitos. **Best holiday you've had?** Backpacking around Europe as a graduate student. **I can't leave home without...** my giant handbag of tricks and a MacGyver knife. **Best part of what you do?** I get paid to be a pedant and read all day long!

GREGORY MELLOR,

accomplished interior designer and avid collector of old portraits, styled the house featured in *The Simple Life* on page 78.

I know it's holiday time when...

I can have a glass of wine at lunch and a lazy afternoon nap. **Favourite local travel destinations?** Paternoster on the

West Coast and the Klein Karoo are two of them. **Essentials for a good party?** A good tequila to start, drinks for all, the right music, diptyque Feu de Bois candles and a good sense of humour. **How do you like to set a festive table?** White linen tablecloths, red and white linen napkins, flowers from the garden, vintage silverware and green glassware. **Best childhood memory?** Dancing to Bryan Ferry with my mother at our beach cottage, at Chaka's Rock in KZN.



KATE LOGGIE,

our intrepid decor intern, grew up mostly in East Africa. She helped conjure up one of our festive trees in *Dream Ticket* (page 21).

Best holidays you've had? Trips to Zanzibar and surrounding islands while living in Tanzania. **How do you like to set a festive table?** I like to keep it simple with fresh flowers,

a beautiful table cloth and platters of delicious food. **City, country or beach?** All three. **Hidden talent?** Painting. **What makes you feel energised?** Early morning runs in the summer. **Your ideal braai?** No potato salad or pre-made coleslaw. **Favourite summer cocktail?** Gin and tonic with lots of mint. **I can't leave home without...** agonising over what to wear! **Best part of what you do?** Working with such inspiring and generous people.

HOUSE AND LEISURE

STYLISH SA AT HOME AND PLAY

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ASSOCIATED MAGAZINES
 PUBLISHING WITH PASSION

THE SIMPLE LIFE

Full of character but deliciously down to earth,
this West Coast cottage is the ultimate escape

Text **Leigh Robertson** Styling **Greg Mellor** Production **Kathy Mellor** Photographs **Micky Hoyle**



HOLIDAY HOME

Simple but perfectly stylish for weekend retreats, Capetonian Richard Butt's stone cottage, built in the typical West Coast vernacular, is one of just 10 set on a private nature reserve near the village of Paternoster, overlooking kilometres of unspoilt beach. Rather than gardens, the cottages are surrounded by indigenous veld.



HOLIDAY HOME



ABOVE Pathways carved into the bush enable access to the beach. BELOW Whitewashed interior walls are offset by touches of pale aqua on the woodwork and in the odd piece of furniture. As there is no electricity, the house is filled with lanterns and candles.



West Coast summers are not exactly tranquil affairs, as anyone who's travelled up this wild Western Cape stretch in the hopes of a balmy beach holiday will tell you. It's often windy and swimming in the Atlantic Ocean is reserved for the brave hearted. This desolately beautiful coastline might not be everyone's idea of fun – the little coastal fishing villages don't boast much of a nightlife, unless you count the odd locals-populated hotel bar, and there's a dearth of things to do if your restless urges aren't quelled by a walk along the water's edge or flipping through a book between bouts of gazing out to sea.

But for many people that's a big part of its allure. There are those for whom getting away from it all – in absolutely every sense – and immersing themselves in nature and the simple joys of life is as good as it gets. And no less so than for Richard Butt, the Cape Town-based owner of a modest stone cottage near Paternoster, which he'd fortuitously been shown during a visit to the area some eight years ago. Built in the typical West Coast vernacular, it's one of just 10 set on a private nature reserve overlooking several kilometres of undisturbed beach.

Of significance was the emphasis placed by all the reserve's stakeholders on restoring and preserving this highly sensitive tract of coast, which had become 'a four-wheel drive playground', almost destroying the dunes. Now that the vehicles are no longer allowed, however, the rock pools and natural mussel and anemone banks have recovered and, says the owner, 'there are few signs of man's destruction, with the dunes now covered in natural vegetation'. Even the once dangerously dwindling oystercatcher population is now growing notably. 'The birdlife here is incredible,' he adds.

Built from local stone and designed specifically to blend into the surrounding indigenous countryside, you can hardly see the cottages when looking from a distance. What does pop out rather pleasingly is the pale aqua of the shutters and gates; the same colour the sea turns when wind and light conspire just so. (It's also echoed in subtle touches throughout the house, from an old wooden kist to piles of collected crockery on a floating shelf in the kitchen.)

With three bedrooms (one of which is in the attic) and two bathrooms, the cottage sleeps six comfortably. 'Six is an easy crowd,' he says, 'and everyone tends to do their own thing'. It could mean taking the footpath down to the beach and gathering mussels off the rocks for dinner, or finding a quiet corner to read. For him, it's 'a real barefoot cottage, where people can just completely relax'.

The cottage needed little work done and the owner was emphatic in keeping things as 'uncomplicated, basic and uncluttered' as possible. 'I wanted the interiors to reflect Greek simplicity,' he says. And indeed the whitewashed walls within instil a sense of calm, while the views are masterfully framed by small windows set at regular intervals. There's a soothing feeling of containment here. The only major change was converting the formerly unutilised backyard into a 'taverna', equipped with a discreet, stone-clad pizza oven where all the cooking now happens. The fire also lends generous warmth to the cheerful space, where everyone congregates for meals and which, come evening, is cosily illuminated by oil lamps and hurricane lanterns. In keeping with the desire for simplicity, there's no electricity – water is gas heated, while humble candles and lanterns lend 'a fabulous personality' to the cottage at night.

Borrowed from the Italians, 'the table is life' is a favourite expression of the owner's and which aptly describes holidays at the cottage. 'There's a lot of time spent eating and drinking and chatting and chilling,' he smiles. ◻



CLOCKWISE, FROM TOP LEFT The painting on the wall is from Mykonos, Greece, and the basket is from Madwa (madwa.com); interiors and furnishings are simple and uncomplicated. The ottoman is also from Madwa; an old barrel inherited from the family; the open-plan kitchen and dining area is a lively communal space.





THE OWNER'S HOME TRUTHS

Holidays here are all about kicking off your shoes and renewing your energy. It really is a place of escape as there's absolutely nothing that interferes: cellphone contact is difficult, and there aren't even any electrical points. **One of the things I love most** about living here is that, as a private nature reserve, this stretch of coastline can never be spoilt. The preservation of such pristine natural places for future generations is key. **The word that best describes time spent here** is simplicity, in keeping with the undisturbed surrounds and the ever-present sound of the sea. **We collect** our own crayfish in season and collect sufficient mussels off the rocks for the evening table. **The focus of all our eating here** is the pizza oven in the taverna: we use it for everything from baking bread to grilling crayfish or slow-roasting a leg of lamb. **The essence of pizza-oven cooking** is getting the temperature right. **My favourite local spot** is The Noisy Oyster (022-752-2196) for lunch. Closer to the beach, Gaaitjie (022-752-2242) also has good food, while Die Voorstrand (022-752-2038) has an amazing location. For the best pizza in Paternoster, we go to Blikkie's Pizzeria (blikkie.co.za) housed in a delightful old corrugated-iron fisherman's cottage towards Tietiesbaai.





In the taverna, simple garden furniture from Hope (hopegf.com) for casual alfresco dining. OPPOSITE, FROM TOP LEFT Friends prefer to use the outside shower, which is completely private and has incredible views... ; flotsam and jetsam add further character to the space; a bedroom with a view, perfectly framed by the window. The cushions and throw are from Madwa.