Make the most of living on the coast

Plenty of us like to be beside the seaside, but there are a few things to consider first before making a permanent move there

The UK boasts thousands of miles of coastline, a great deal of which is designated as heritage coast and includes Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and National Parks. However, despite the aesthetic benefits of living on the coast, it can bring its own set of challenges, including sea views and beach walks being spoiled by invading tourists and the problems with the resulting lack of parking. Property prices are inevitably higher the closer to the sea you live, and maintenance bills may also be more expensive due to the action of the corrosive salt air on properties' exteriors.

CHOOSE AN AREA Despite the downturn in property prices, coastal homes still fetch a premium – with between 25% and 50% added for the location. However, although you might pay more for a seaside home, they are always in demand and will almost certainly hold their value. Some areas, such as Sandbanks in Dorset and Rock in north Cornwall, are renowned for being expensive and highly sought-after, while other coastal locations like Portsmouth and Margate are more affordable. If you're keen to live beside the sea, then some estate agents deal solely in waterside properties, including thecoastalhouse.co.uk and seaproperty.com. Compare property prices in an area you are interested in at nestoria.co.uk and check out planning applications and development plans with the council to make sure your new sea view isn't going to be destroyed.

CHECK OUT FLOOD STATUS Insurance premiums may be more expensive for a seaside home, particularly for those at risk of flooding. Type in a property's postcode at environment-agency.gov.uk to check its flood status and also its risk of coastal erosion, which generally affects soft cliffs on the east and south coasts.

CONSIDER THE MAINTENANCE All seaside homes suffer from common problems, but older properties will prove more expensive to maintain than newly built homes beside the water. External redecoration times are cut from the average seven years to around four years, unless you choose paint that offers a high level of protection, such as Dulux Trade Weathershield Maximum Exposure Smooth Masonry paint, £48.90 for 5ltr. Metal railings and guttering will also corrode more quickly in the sea air, while roof slates and chimneys are vulnerable in high coastal winds. Heating costs will also be higher if the house is exposed, for example on a cliff. Consider offsetting costs by cashing in on the location and offering your home for occasional holiday lets, or renting out a room during the summer season.

GET THE LOOK INSTEAD You don't have to live beside the sea to give your home a beach-house feel. Use pale ice-cream paint colours, blue and white furnishings, and nautical accessories to lend a maritime flavour to your home, wherever it is. Try Trinity Marine (01647 253400; trinitymarine.co.uk) for sea-related antiques, collectibles and original nautical items, and Buy The Sea (01460 258970; buythesea-bymail.co.uk) for coastal gifts and accessories.

'Work has started on a new national trail called the England Coast Path, which will mean that, for the first time, people will have the right of access around all of England's coast'

BERNIE HERLIHY, DEPUTY EDITOR

Enjoy the view

Frede and David Scott's home is about as close to the sea as you can get without being in it. Situated on a cliff edge between the Atlantic Ocean and the foot of the Mourne Mountains in Ireland, the house has plenty of glazing from Glazing Design Systems, most of which has been positioned towards the sea to maximise views and light, as well as ensuring privacy from the roadside Glazing Design Systems (glazingdesign.co.uk)

Add cladding

This waterfront beach house on the Hampshire coast is owned by Pippa Blake, the widow of yachtsman Sir Peter Blake. The site is within the Chichester Harbour Conservancy area and the house is located in an Area of Outstanding Beauty. Inspired by local fishermen's cottages and harbour buildings, Pippa added cladding to her plain Forties seaside bungalow. Fibre cement profiled sheeting was used for the cladding and the new roof. This industrial-style material doesn't rust or rot, making it a hard-wearing, practical alternative to weatherboarding Profile 3 cladding, from a selection, Marley Eternit (01283 722588; marleyeternit.co.uk)

Try before you buy

Perched on a granite rock looking out on the Atlantic, The House in the Sea on The Island in Newquay is one of the most photographed houses in the UK. Reached only via a 70ft-high footbridge, and with direct access to the beach below, the Edwardian three-bedroom house is surrounded by sea at high tide. If you fancy trying extreme coastal living, the house is actually a b&b (uniquehomestays.co.uk). If you really like it, then you can put in an offer, as the quirky house is currently for sale for £995,000 through Lillicrap Chilcott Lillicrap Chilcott (01872 273473; lillicrapchilcott.com)

Steve renovated the beach hut himself and it now contains a kitchen and living room

BEFORE

The hut is thought to be the last remaining original one in the area

'We restored a derelict beach hut'

When Becca and Steve Peck first stumbled on their derelict beach hut, they had to battle their way through brambles and ivy to reach it. 'We'd been told it was coming onto the market and so we had gone to have a look,' says Becca, who is secretary for their local beach's surf club.

Built on a secluded piece of land near the Pecks' home in Holywell Bay on the Cornwall coast, the building dates back to 1932. 'We got goose bumps when we found it and we just knew we had to rescue it,' says Becca.

The hut, which is called The Limit, was in a terrible state when the pair bought it in 2007, but it did have mains water and electricity. 'It stands on greenbelt land adjacent to an area of Special Scientific Interest, so the project has been an uphill battle at times,' says Becca. 'The other restriction we faced was that the property could only ever be used as a holiday home.' As a result, The Limit is available for holiday rental from Unique Home Stays (01637 881942; thelimit.uniquehomestays.com).

The couple, who have two sons, Tom, 11, and Harvey, nine, decided to repair the hut themselves as Steve co-owns building firm North Coast Build (01637 830402) with his brother David. First they created more space by building a similar structure next to the beach hut to contain the bathroom and bedroom, while the kitchen and living room are located in the original clapboard building.

The couple also swapped the corrugated iron roof for slates reclaimed from a nearby house and had windows made to replicate the originals. Steve worked in the evenings and at weekends for four years to complete the work, while Becca helped landscape the garden and sourced nautical-inspired furniture and accessories. 'It's been a real labour of love,' she says.

The restored beach hut has a luxurious bedroom

PHOTOGRAPHS DAVID SCOTT TILES, MARLEY ETERNIT, LILLICRAP CHILCOTT, UNIQUE HOME STAYS