

STYLE YOUR DREAM HOME WITH OUR UNIQUE INTERIORS

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ON A
HOUSEBOAT

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EASY GLAMOUR

Simple steps to
effortless allure

Love Mid-Century

A fan shares her home

Bathroom Bliss

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INTRICATE ART
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STYLING WITH STORY
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SIREN CALL

FORGET TWEE SEASIDE STYLE – WITH VINTAGE FINDS, CLEVER USE OF COLOUR AND SOME NIFTY SPACE-STRETCHING TRICKS, INTERIOR DESIGNER JESS CLARK HAS BREATHED NEW LIFE INTO THIS COSY, COASTAL COTTAGE

WORDS **ELLIE TENNANT**





P

erched high on the cliffs above the charming Cornish village of Coverack Cove is 'Siren Cottage', a cute, compact dwelling with stunning views of the cove below. At first glance, it appears to be a quintessential English coastal home, with a traditional thatched roof and a pretty, verdant garden. But behind the old-fashioned, stable-style

front door is an eclectic, vintage-inspired space that oozes style and sophistication.

Live the Dream

Interior designer Jess Clark created this chic interior for Unique Home Stays, who specialise in luxurious holidays, both in real 'lived-in' homes that are out-of-the-ordinary and stylish properties the firm buys in order to renovate and let, such as Siren Cottage. Having worked for the brand for 13 years in areas as diverse as marketing and bookings, Jess was asked by the firm's Director, Sarah Stanley, to makeover a cottage on Bodmin Moor. It was a success and Jess has since designed ten properties for the brand. 'It's my dream job,' she says, happily. 'I get to shop for a living. It's great.' Siren Cottage immediately appealed to Jess. 'It's a really warm, welcoming little house,' she says. 'You can look at photos and specs but you can't get a feel for a place until you visit it yourself. This has been one of my favourite projects to date – the basics were all there and as soon as I saw it I knew I was going to be able

to go a bit bonkers with the design!' The redecoration was a challenging task for a number of reasons. Firstly, the small proportions of the rooms meant that Jess needed to employ some clever space-saving tricks in order to fit everything in without compromising on her design. Secondly, there was a tight turnaround; Jess and her team began work in March 2016 and had just two months to overhaul the property before the first paying guests arrived.

Designing Reality

Never one to let a challenge faze her, Jess views time constraints as a positive: 'Having a tight schedule means I don't have time to procrastinate,' she explains. 'I have to make instinctive decisions and stick to them.' The way she works is unusual – rather than having a client whose home she is designing, she has to imagine who might live there. 'We want our holiday properties to feel like real homes, so I always have an imaginary owner in mind when I'm designing an interior,' she reveals. To create a holiday let that blends seamlessly with the 'lived-in' properties in the firm's portfolio, Jess includes individual pieces such as artworks, one-off vintage finds and handmade elements to give it an authentic 'homely' feel. 'I want to create interiors filled with interesting, stand-out pieces that trigger a "where did they get that from?" reaction from our guests,' she says. She's certainly achieved that in Siren Cottage, which neatly marries a '1960s bachelorette retreat' look with 'British seaside bolthole'. It sounds like an unlikely combination, but somehow, it just works. ➔

A beautiful colour palette of rich blue and dusky pink echoes Siren's dramatic coastal location without being twee.

(opposite page) A shapely wicker chair by the window creates an inspiring reading corner.



(this page) The sleek hostess trolley in the living room adds to the mid-century ambience. There's a similar one at 1stdibs.com.

Artistic Features

Art doesn't have to be pricey. Seek out vintage china plates that are decorated with ornate patterns and hang them on the wall using disc plate hangers (£3.20 for a dia. 14cm size, Hobbycraft). Alternatively, upcycle an unloved rattan headboard by spray-painting it a bold colour and fixing it to the wall as an arty focal point.



A rose bedspread, retro rattan rugs and touches of gold create luxurious glamour, all inspired by the Mid-century painting Jess found on eBay. Lace-trimmed curtains from Anthropologie have vintage appeal. Find a similar rug at OssibusCo on etsy.com

(below) Coral and pressed seaweed are displayed as art.

MID-CENTURY GLAMOUR

'The Mid-Century artwork in the bedroom was the starting point for the look of the whole cottage,' reveals Jess. 'It's a 1960s print of a glamorous, vixen-like lady, which I bought on eBay. It triggered all the rattan, gold and lace elements which combine to create a feminine feel with a vintage vibe.' The key colours in the painting are also evident throughout the property - blue and soft heather pink. Eagle-eyed Jess found the beautiful rattan headboard in a local charity shop. Downstairs, a kitsch gold cocktail trolley continues the Mid-century 'bachelorette' theme.





Wooden doors, rattan and white walls create a calm sanctuary.



The 'Woven Nest Pendant' light is from Graham & Green and handmade from organic bamboo. Its shape is reminiscent of a jellyfish - very appropriate given the cottage's coastal setting.

NATURAL ELEMENTS

One of the reasons that Siren Cottage feels so welcoming is because every room contains natural materials. There are simple, wooden floorboards, exposed beams and lots of accessories in rattan and bamboo. Sheepskin rugs, a wicker basket filled with logs and linen blinds bring extra warmth to the scheme, while 'found' objects such as coral are elevated to the status of art. 'I picked up some seaweed on the beach and pressed it, then framed it in glass picture frames,' says Jess. 'I like to reference the local area in the décor - the beach is just a two-minute walk from the cottage.' Guests who stay at the cottage obviously find the setting inspiring as they have started a collection of pebbles and shells in the upstairs study.



Blush velvet cushions add to the luxurious feel of the bedroom, and provide a contrast to the cane and wicker.

Back to Basics

Add warmth with natural materials. Seek out vintage rattan furniture (lapetitebrocante.net has a good selection, including a headboard) rustic woven baskets and antique linens for curtains and cushions (try theoldhaberdashery.com). Even if you don't have a fireplace, fill an alcove with a stack of real logs for a cosy corner. Start a collection of pebbles and shells and display them in a vintage glass Kilner jar (there are loads on ebay.co.uk and preloved.co.uk) labelled with the name of the location you gathered them.

Dip-dyed curtains, a painted ceiling and 'ombré' effect on the walls create a dramatic living room. The rug is from Anthropologie.



Colour Story
 Paint an on-trend 'ombré' wall as Jess has done by applying the paint with a sponge. Work from left to right and gradually move down the wall, using more paint at the top and less towards the bottom. Overlap your sponge prints for a soft, subtle, 'dip-dyed' effect.

MOODY BLUES

Jess has boldly chosen Farrow & Ball's dark 'Stiffkey Blue' as a 'theme' to unify separate spaces and give the cottage a seamless, cohesive feel. 'It's a deep, inky blue for a dynamic alternative to the traditional "cute coastal cottage" look,' says Jess. 'I wanted to give the impression that the blue colour had leaked through the floor upstairs to the ceiling below, and then gradually down the living room walls, which we decorated with an 'ombré' effect.' The space is small, so it was a risk to use such a dark shade, but Jess says the gamble paid off. 'Weirdly, it didn't make the rooms feel any smaller. We just committed to it and went for it - you have to be brave sometimes.' Pale, blush-pink hues accent the deep, stormy blue throughout the house. 'I've used a pretty, coral-pink on everything from bed linen to window frames,' says Jess.



In the bathroom, painted tongue-and-groove wall panelling contrasts with the antique style fixtures. See our feature (page 60) for vintage bathroom inspiration and suppliers.



Kitchen cupboards have been updated with Farrow & Ball's 'Stiffkey Blue'.

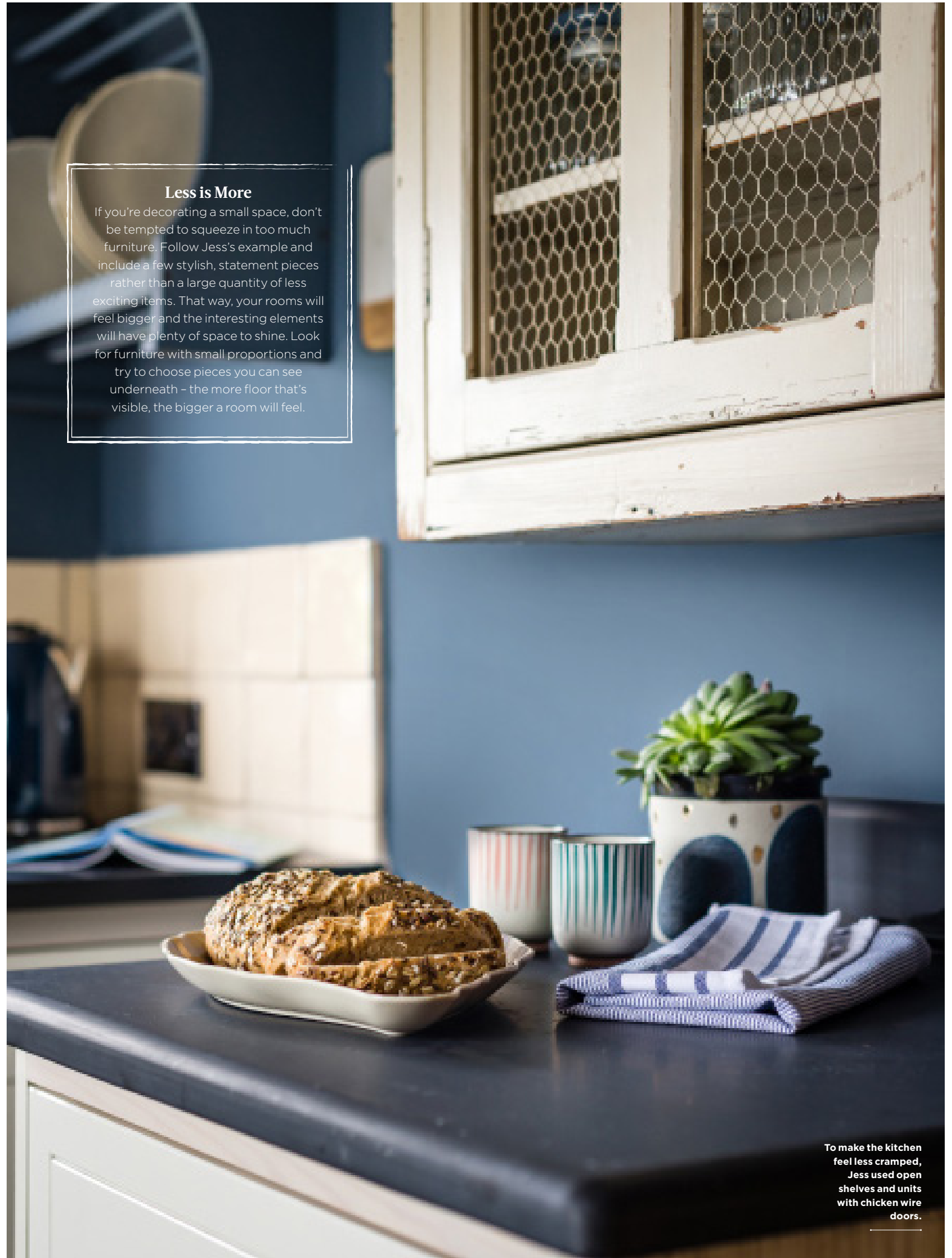


The lace-trimmed curtains highlight the old window whilst giving it a boudoir-style edge.

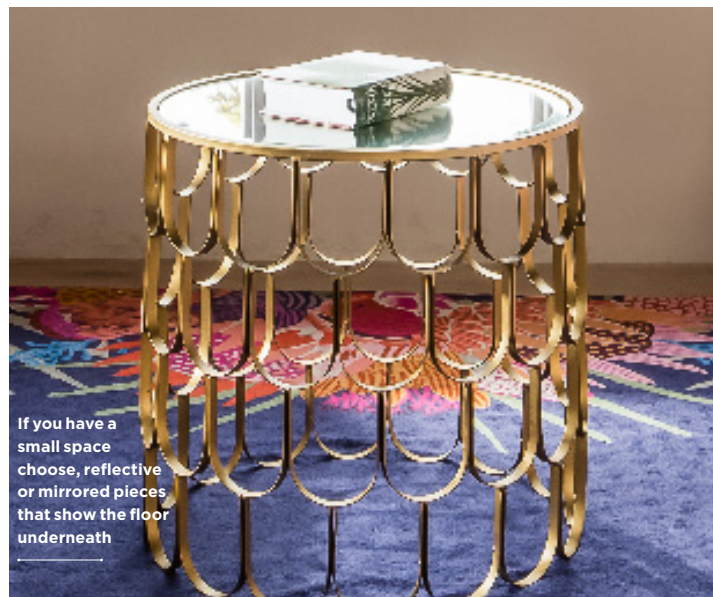


The study's cane, wicker and bamboo, cleverly used as a hanging rail and storage, give the room a sense of space making it both a dressing area and writer's retreat. The bureau was found by Jess for £3 at a charity shop.

Less is More
 If you're decorating a small space, don't be tempted to squeeze in too much furniture. Follow Jess's example and include a few stylish, statement pieces rather than a large quantity of less exciting items. That way, your rooms will feel bigger and the interesting elements will have plenty of space to shine. Look for furniture with small proportions and try to choose pieces you can see underneath - the more floor that's visible, the bigger a room will feel.



To make the kitchen feel less cramped, Jess used open shelves and units with chicken wire doors.



If you have a small space choose, reflective or mirrored pieces that show the floor underneath

SPACE-SAVING DESIGN

In such a compact cottage, it was crucial to make design decisions that would give the illusion of more space. 'Instead of built-in storage in the study, I fitted a hanging rail for clothes made of a bamboo pole, which keeps the room airy and light,' says Jess. 'In a small space you have to choose furniture carefully. The living room was a challenge because we needed to fit in a sitting area, a fire-side area and a dining area. I chose mirrored surfaces and glass items so the furniture doesn't look too bulky.'

The dramatic
Cornish coastline
that's home to
Siren Cottage.



About the House

Built in 1800, Siren Cottage is a small, partly-thatched property in Coverack Cove, on The Lizard, Cornwall. 'Photos can't convey how brilliant the location is,' says Jess. 'It's perched on the cliffs above a beautiful expanse of water and a beach - there are great views from the garden because you're so high up, but it feels private when you're sitting outside.' The garden is an idyllic sun-trap, with an apple tree and a pretty summer house.

It's just a short stroll away from the harbour. 'Coverack Cove is a proper Cornish village with a good mix of visitors and locals,' Jess adds. 'There are two or three little coffee shops and a lovely deli which sells homemade cakes and organic produce. It's a thriving, buzzy place to stay, even though it's small.'



Top of the Shops

Three of the chic stores, which sell a stylish collection of vintage and new, where Jess found unusual homewares for Siren Cottage.

Rockett St George, 01444 253391, rockettstgeorge.co.uk

Graham and Green, 01225 418200, grahamandgreen.co.uk

Anthropologie, 00800 0026 8476, anthropologie.eu

To book a holiday at Siren Cottage, call +44 (0)1637 881183 or visit uniquehomestays.com