

COASTAL LIVING

THE
MAGAZINE
FOR PEOPLE
WHO LOVE
THE COAST

weekends

at the shore

decorate, relax, escape

peek inside
7 beach
homes

shop a
new england
haven



Indian cotton-covered rattan sofas and a Heywood-Wakefield table turn an upstairs corner into a game room. Lacquered-blue imitation Panton chairs add to the retro-modern feel. Below: "We call this room 'the orphanage,'" says Jennifer, "because of all the kids who wind up sleeping here." Right: A rooftop deck affords the Walshes bay and ocean views.



bargain style

A family-friendly Fire Island house displays just how chic budget design can be.

If Patrick and Jennifer Walsh and their family leave their Manhattan loft at 1 o'clock on a summer Friday afternoon, they can make the 2:55 p.m. ferry to Fire Island with minutes to spare. Landing amid chatting neighbors in the town of Saltaire, they load their luggage onto a red wagon, and by 3:45, they're at their weekend home.

This, says Patrick, co-owner of a New York City physical therapy practice, is the magic of this finger of land off the southern tip of Long Island: "It's so close, but it's a world away. You wake up Saturday and feel as though you've been gone for days." In fact, once people discover Fire Island, with its wooden boardwalks and whizzing bicycles instead of cars, they stay—sometimes for generations.

Patrick and Jennifer, an executive vice-president at the William Morris Agency, rented for six summers before finding their getaway in 2003. The shingled beach house, built in 1990, sits between the ocean and

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Matching sofas mix with vintage armchairs in the upstairs living area (above/inset). Four flea-market tables sport leather tops and coats of white lacquer. A cotton rug—16 IKEA runners stitched together—adds color. Light floods the dining area (below), with its vintage buffet and schoolhouse table.



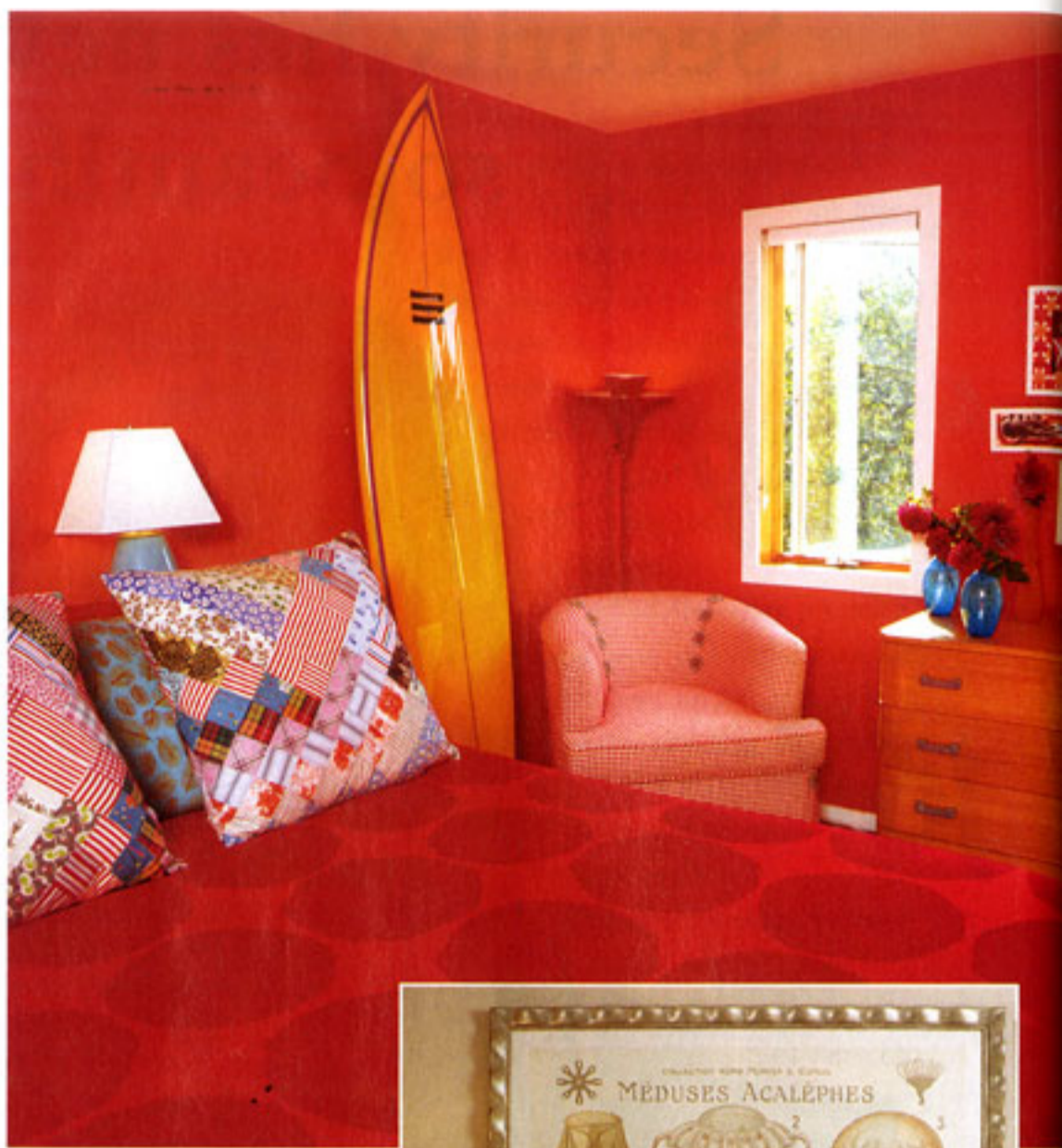
Great South Bay among cottages and homes from quaint to contemporary. It offered exactly what their family of five plus friends needed: 3,300 square feet of living space, four first-floor bedrooms, and a second-floor great room with sweeping ocean and bay views. Dunes roll out below its wraparound decks. There was even a guesthouse for Jennifer's mother, who brought her to Fire Island as a child.

Though every room required paint and held remnants of junky furniture, the Walshes share a simple, modern aesthetic and could imagine the place spruced up as a family-style refuge from the city. But with their hectic careers and three children, ages 2 to 10, they both knew they needed some help.

Jennifer's business partner introduced her to Sasha Emerson, a California designer who specializes in cheap-chic decorating with a modern edge. Combining flea-market finds and budget-hip IKEA and Crate & Barrel items, she fills houses with personalities reflective of the homeowners and their locations. From

magazine photos of her own and clients' houses, Sasha's style struck the Walshes as "clean and homogeneous, but also charming and intimate," Patrick says. "We don't take ourselves too seriously," Jennifer adds. "We wanted the spirit here of what brings us to Fire Island—red wagons, outdoor showers, the thrill of summer, and endless fun."

After touring the Saltaire house with the Walshes in August 2003, Sasha agreed to buy furniture and accessories for every room, from sofas to napkin rings. She stored the items in Los Angeles, shipped them east, freighted them to the island, and trucked them to the family's front door. She also arranged to have the



house painted, and she returned with her assistant to set it all up. "I loved the challenge of a huge, crazy shopping spree," Sasha recalls. "No one usually hands you a check and says, 'See you next spring!'"

The Walshes did have requests. Upstairs, they wanted neutral colors in harmony with the nearby ocean, sand, and beach grass. They asked for rooms that didn't look "decorated." They needed multiples of everything—dishes, bedrolls, and chairs—to accommodate crowds of friends who drop in with their kids.

With the beachy setting as her theme, Sasha spent a solid month hitting flea markets, discount stores, and catalogs. For help choosing her color palette, she sent L.A. color



Crate & Barrel sheets inspired the bold red walls in this downstairs guest room (top). Sasha made the pillows from scraps of vintage quilts. She bought the vintage, linen-backed French jellyfish poster (above) from a dealer. A Walsh family favorite, it "embodies the elegance and whimsy of this house," Jennifer says.



Ten-year-old Hadley Walsh reads in the "green room," where the color scheme began with a vintage Italian lamp and Garnet Hill sheets.

consultant Philippa Radon to Fire Island, paying her with a plane ticket and some free nights in the Walshes' house. To control her budget, Sasha worked from large items to small, beginning with sofas and mattress-and-box-spring sets.

Sofas aside, most furnishings came from flea markets. Sasha "freshened" them with a coat of white lacquer or a honey stain. In the upstairs dining area, she chose 1950s Thonet chairs and upholstered them in easy-to-clean plasticized cotton. A 1930s trestle table once sat in a schoolroom; twenty-dollar vases converted to lamp bases.

For seaside ambience, Sasha arranged shells on tables, beach pebbles in ashtrays, and fish-patterned plates in a mid-century curio cabinet. Her biggest splurge? An ethereal, vintage poster of jellyfish (\$1,500, framed).

For the Walshes, who live here weekends from May to October, the best accessories are houseguests. "Every night," says Jennifer, "we've got 11 children sleeping here. Our dinners are for at least 16. This isn't a house that says, 'We're fancy.' It's a house that says, 'Come over!'" 🐚

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