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SEEDS

Coastal living

SEASIDE HOMES, GARDENS, BEACHES

Kent clapboard house



'The ever-changing sea is fabulous'

Katrina Brown first came to Kent to buy oysters. Instead she found a delightful beach house where she discovered inspirational coastal living all year round

FEATURE HEIDI BEST PHOTOGRAPHS MARK NICHOLSON





This house is a pebble's throw from the beach. (Left) Katrina relaxes on the veranda. The curving rail painted in eau de Nil pays homage to the waves. (Below left) In the summer all meals are served on the veranda. (Below right) Katrina and her partner James Drury work on the beach for inspiration.

About the owner

Katrina Brown, a creative consultant

What I love most about living here It's a completely inspirational environment. The constant sound of the sea is very grounding. I love the different moods that come from the extremes of climate, from 70mph winds straight in from Norway, through to balmy Sardinian-like evenings. I will never tire of watching the beautiful sunsets.

My biggest decorating disaster I accidentally damaged the wall of the telephone room, but I've covered it with a beautiful painting. ➤



It's not every day that you go out to buy oysters and come back with a beach house, but Katrina Brown's trip to the coast eight years ago turned into a life-changing experience. She spotted a tiny beach house for sale and decided to buy it. When, after six months, the purchase had failed to complete, a For Sale sign outside another house caught her eye, so she bought that instead.

'The house was in need of complete renovation and had been on the market for two years,' she recalls. 'Now it looks like the house on the Southern Comfort label – but then it looked rather sad and run down. However, its position on the beach, with views of the Isle of Sheppey and the North Sea, was captivating.'

With just the scrunchy shingle beach and a private road in front, the house enjoys a wonderful position – however, the lashing North Sea weather had taken its toll on the wooden structure. The oak Arts & Crafts-style sitting room occupying the central portion of the house was in a good state, needing no restoration. Katrina decided, however, to take down the dividing walls between a series of small rooms on one side of the house, turning the small kitchen, utility, dining room and ➤



Katrina chose New White by Farrow & Ball for the tongue and groove in the kitchen-diner and found the fisherman's lights in a local junk shop. (Left) Crockery from Seagulls and Flamingos and Emma Bridgewater is displayed on a traditional pine dresser.



At home in...

Location North Kent
Building Clapboard beach house built in 1875

Material Norwegian pine
Rooms Kitchen-diner, sitting room, study, computer room, telephone room, hall, three bedrooms, bathroom, downstairs cloakroom

Moved in 1998



'The tongue and groove sets the seaside mood, reflecting the clapboard exterior



shower room into one light, spacious kitchen-diner. Cutting through the wooden walls took no time at all. 'The original tongue and groove had only survived on the utility room wall, so we used it as a template for the whole room,' says Katrina. 'It sets the seaside mood, reflecting the clapboard exterior.'

The work did, however, present unusual challenges. 'The whole house slopes towards the sea,' says Katrina. 'So when the kitchen units, and the tongue-and-groove, were being made, it was mathematically

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complicated to work out the angles so that it hung together as a whole.'

Inspired by the pounding waves just yards from the door, Katrina has used shoreline colours in the kitchen-diner. Collections of pretty shells dotted around aren't, however, part of her decorative scheme. 'Everyone that comes here walks on the beach and comes back with a handful of shells,' she laughs. 'Some take them home, but others leave little piles around the place.'

Outside, the original decking was long gone, leaving a four-foot drop from the

front door down to cracked concrete. Even before Katrina's mother had a fall while carrying a tray from the house to the garden, it was obvious that the exterior ground level would have to be raised. As well as increasing the 'floor' area of the property by about one third, the new veranda adds authentic seaside character, with wood reclaimed from the old groynes on the beach integrated into areas of its construction.

'It's a perfect spot and great for summer parties,' says Katrina. 'We open the double doors to let the breeze flow through, >

1 The outgoing tide reveals a spit of land that stretches for half a mile or so out to sea at low tide.

2 Kitchen and beach paraphernalia hang on fork hooks made for Katrina by Delusions of Grandeur.

3 Katrina designed the kitchen, which is based on Smallbone's

Classical Kitchen. She chose the seaside-inspired paint colours from a print of *The Lighthouse* by Edward Hopper, which can be bought from World Gallery. The island units were painted in Farrow & Ball's Orangerie, the large cupboard in Dorset Cream and the rest New White.



'There is always a sea breeze and the views are fabulous. I could live here forever'

light the barbecue, invite our friends round and end the evening with a driftwood bonfire on the beach.'

Katrina's best buy, she says unhesitatingly, is the house itself, but she has also fallen in love with north Kent. 'This area has really taken off – it's a melting pot of creativity. When I'm on the train coming home from London and there's nothing in the larder, I telephone my local 'takeaway' and order half a dozen oysters, fishcakes, a bowl of salad, bread and butter, and bring it home to eat out on the veranda. It's my favourite part of the house. There's always a sea breeze and the ever-changing views are fabulous. I can see myself living here forever.'

To contact Katrina to use the house for photographic shoots, festivities and holidays, call _____ or email _____

On my doorstep

Katrina Brown's insider's guide to what to see and do this month in Kent

■ **Visit...** 'Deal Castle (01304 372762, english-heritage.org.uk) and Deal, which is quirky and quiet, great for bracing seaside strolls, with excellent delis and shops. Deal Castle was built in the Tudor period and makes a great outing'

■ **Go for a meal at...** 'The Goods Shed, Canterbury (01227 459153) a glorious market, restaurant and bar. The old railway building has been sensitively restored and has huge windows in the raised restaurant so you can look out over the trains as you eat. On one occasion a steam train in all its glory chugged into the station, to the accompaniment of "oohs" and "aahs" and the clicking of cameras'

■ **Shop at...** 'Mosaic in Whitstable, right, (01227 276779). The shop is chock full of delights. The owner has most of her clothes supplied from India and also supports local artists, photographers and jewellery makers. It's a great haven for a chat on a stormy day...'



4 A beautiful darkwood Arts & Crafts-style staircase in the hall contrasts well with the muted seaside tones used elsewhere in the house.

5 For the bedroom Katrina chose brightly coloured bedlinen from Habitat and a cushion from Seagulls and Flamingos to match the lobster print above her bed.