

# House & garden



PHOTOGRAPH BY KATIE CHARLOTTE

## CALMING RETREAT

/// A KIAWAH ISLAND COTTAGE gets a redesign and fresh new look—including this inviting primary suite—thanks to an enterprising interior designer’s desire for a Southern getaway. Tour the renovated Governor’s Drive house. [See page 83](#)

THE CHARLESTON HOME



# Island Respite

*A busy interior designer finds work-life balance in a charming Kiawah cottage*

—written by JENNIFER PATTISON TUOHY // photographs by KATIE CHARLOTTE

There are few better ways to celebrate buying a new home than with a bottle of Champagne, but David Smith took it up a notch. He placed a cast-iron bathtub at the front door of his new cottage on Kiawah and filled it with bottles of Veuve Clicquot. “Kristin loves Veuve,” he explains, “so, I painted the tub orange and stuck a giant decal of the label on the side.” A tub full of her favorite bubbles and white balloons was a surprise, but the real shocker awaited inside.

When Kristin Peake, a sought-after interior designer and David’s partner of eight years, opened the door to their new home, she found it was picture perfect inside. “For the first time in Kristin’s career, she got to be the client and walk into a finished home,” he notes. “I had thought I would have to spend the next week installing everything. But David and my team had done everything ahead of time. It was so amazing,” says Kristin.

The couple purchased the two-story,



**LIVE, WORK, PLAY:** Kristin Peake and David Smith bought this Kiawah Island cottage in 2019 as both a retreat from their busy lives in Maryland and a Southern office for her interior design business. The project involved a complete renovation inside and out, including a new roof and front door; the addition of shutters and columns; and a gray, white, and charcoal exterior paint palette. Inside, the entryway (left) was reconfigured, adding a wall specifically designed to hang photographer Ben Ham’s marsh scene on one side and a TV on the other.



three-bedroom cottage-style house on Governor’s Drive in 2019 as a second home and a Southern office for her company, Kristin Peake Interiors. Based year-round in Chevy Chase, Maryland, where they are both from, they envisioned spending one week of every

*“My design aesthetic is very much coastal living, and Kiawah resonates with me. We were extremely fortunate because it couldn’t have been more ideal timing.”*

—Kristin Peake, homeowner



**SHARED SPACE:** The open plan on the first floor uses the “rooms within a room” concept, sectioning the spacious area into three separate spaces through a combination of furniture and rugs. In the living room, the fireplace and television are the focal point, surrounded by custom furniture pieces sourced by Kristin. The couple refinished the existing custom cabinets and painted them in Benjamin Moore’s “Kendall Charcoal” to add a touch of drama. A bar cart (left) from Serena & Lily connects the living room with the adjoining dining area.

month on Kiawah and eventually moving there permanently. “Originally, we looked downtown for a studio/house option, but I just love the beach,” says Kristin, who lived in Charleston for two years as a child. Her family spent weekends boating out to Kiawah, which was then undeveloped, where they played on the beach and hunted for sand dollars.

The couple had searched unsuccessfully throughout the area’s many beach towns when their realtor secured them a day pass to Kiawah’s Beach Club. “We were hooked from the moment we arrived,” she says. “My design aesthetic is very much coastal living, and Kiawah resonates with me. We were extremely fortunate because it couldn’t have been more ideal timing. It was just before COVID, and the house had been on the market for two years.”

GUIDE TO

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SPECIES OF SALTWATER FISH  
OBSERVED IN THE PONDS

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>mullet</li> <li>redfish</li> <li>spotted seatrout</li> <li>sheepshead</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>large croaker</li> <li>flounder</li> <li>black drum</li> <li>bluegill</li> </ul>
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*Bottlenose dolphin are common in the creeks—watch for them feeding along the mudflats at low tide. And in the freshwater ponds, Kiawah River is stocking fishing favorites, including bass, bluegill, and catfish.*

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**ON THE BRIGHT SIDE:** Originally hidden behind a central structural wall, the light, bright sitting room welcomes visitors into the home and provides a clear contrast from the den (left). There, the couple added a wall to create a cozy space for watching television and enhanced it with a dramatic Phillip Jeffries silk raffia wallpaper in "Obsidian," custom leather coffee table, and another large photograph by artist Ben Ham.



Today, the gated community is the perfect fit for Kristin and David. "We love the lifestyle here, having all the amenities at your fingertips. You don't have to leave the island or even get in your car, except to drive to the grocery store," says David. Biking, playing pickleball, and relaxing by the pool or the ocean fill their days when they're not working. In the evenings, they grill on their deck or dine at The Beach Club's B-Liner restaurant for

date nights. "We both have led rather hectic, crazy lives," says David. "Now, we're at a point where we want to slow down and relax."

For the interior designer and her partner, a former commercial real estate developer, a project house was a given. When they purchased the 2000-era home, it was ripe for renovation. The aim was to have a space that did triple duty as a comfortable and relaxing home, a showpiece for Kristin's work, and an

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house & garden



**ROOMS TO GATHER:** While neither consider themselves chefs, Kristin and David love to entertain, and this spacious galley kitchen overlooking a casual dining area creates an ideal flow for enjoying food and wine with friends. Three Visual Comfort “Henry Industrial Hanging Lights” from Circa Lighting and a commissioned art piece by local artist Chelsea Goer overlook the island with its a custom marine-finished walnut countertop. Just beyond, the dining room (left) hosts a large Restoration Hardware table surrounded by Serena & Lily woven arm and side chairs.

office. “We basically stripped it down and completely reconfigured the layout,” says David. The result is a warm, welcoming home filled with custom art pieces that evoke the beauty of its unique maritime forest setting. An oft-used space is the cozy media room clad in a dark Phillip Jeffries silk raffia wall-paper. It’s segmented from the bright, open-plan living area by a new wall that allows for a television on one side and art on the other. Kristin designed an extra-long custom sofa where the couple can snuggle up. Above it hangs a stunning Ben Ham photograph titled *Live Oak at Sunrise*. A second piece by the artist graces the other side of the wall, welcoming visitors into the home.

That wall addition was just one part of a large reconfiguration, which saw several structural walls removed to open up the first floor and make the space a better fit for their lifestyle and design aesthetic. Downstairs, they created three zones: a sitting room, a more casual living room with a TV over the fireplace and a conveniently located bar cart, and a dining area with a large oak table. Each space performs, whether the couple is meeting with clients or enjoying family dinners with their combined children—two daughters (hers) and five sons (his)—when they visit. Additionally, the kitchen was entirely redone, swapping a small, granite island with a cooktop for a large, walnut-topped island, custom-crafted

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HIS & HERS: Two vanities in the newly created en-suite bath for the primary bedroom continue the home's black-and-white theme. Vendome sconces with white shades peek out from the black paneled walls and honed Carrara marble countertops on custom designed vanities are topped by nickel faucets from Water Street Brass.

TEXTURE, PRINTS, PATTERNS: Upstairs, Kristin played with fabrics and patterns in the two guest bedrooms. (Above) A Phillip Jeffries textured wallpaper reflects the beauty of the maritime forest just outside the windows, and a bold blue screen print by English artist Emma Lawrenson, commissioned by Kristin, adds another organic element. In the second guest room (left), the designer added panel modeling around a patterned wallpaper as a second headboard. The light gray of the paper is continued in the bedding and nightstand, which is topped by the Visual Comfort "Hudson Swing Arm" wall sconce in polished nickel from Circa Lighting.

in Utah, complete with stainless steel sink. "I know how we live and entertain," says Kristin. "We wanted a beautiful island and added the sink, which previously overlooked the house next door." Instead, they removed that window and filled the space with a full range surrounded by a leathered marble countertop and a white-tiled backsplash. Floor-to-ceiling custom cabinets provide ample storage.

A semi-open staircase at the center of the

home was enlarged to make it a focal point, highlighting an artful arrangement of antique prints depicting various birds ascending to the second floor. There, a large landing has been transformed into an open office space, achieved by removing a laundry room and part of a small second bedroom. The other half of that bedroom was given over to a new en-suite bath for the primary bedroom. "The original bedroom had a long hall with closets

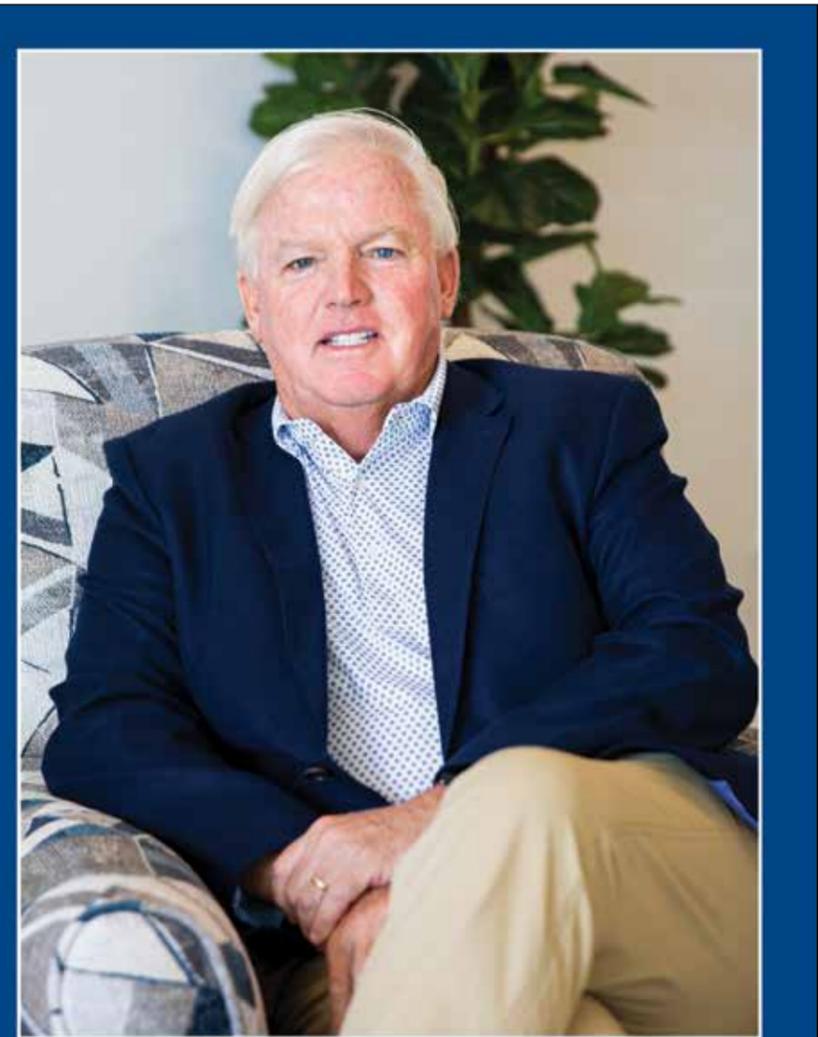
*"Anywhere in the South is a little less stressful, a little slower paced. We love it. It's like a switch turns on and off when we arrive. I'm excited for our next chapter."*

—Kristin Peake

leading to a large bathroom. We reconfigured it to turn that into the guest room and created a new master bath," explains Kristin.

Two guest rooms upstairs complete the upper floor, but they're largely unused. Originally, Kirstin had planned to turn one into a workroom for fabrics and other tools of her trade, but they scrapped that idea early on. When family visits, they generally put them up in one of the nearby rentals, as they decided they did not need a house that could accommodate their combined brood. "We're like The Brady Bunch, plus one!" says David.

For the couple, Kiawah is the salve they need to soothe their stressful lives. While the home doubles as a place of work, they make sure to carve out time for fun. "It's a different way of life down here," says Kristin. "Anywhere in the South is a little less stressful, a little slower paced. We love it. It's like a switch turns on and off when we arrive. I'm excited for our next chapter."



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