



Sea CHANGE

Seeing a 'plot for sale' sign by chance led to the building of this magnificent coastal home complete with deck on each level

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EXTERIOR

The contemporary design is carefully stepped into the sloping plot to maximise the spectacular ocean views. Builders, MV Developments. Project management, Pink Pebble



It was 35 years ago that Tom and Jane Gordon spent their honeymoon in St Ives and ever since they had felt the pull of this luminous stretch of coastline. ‘My grandmother used to say we came from a long line of smugglers from a nearby town,’ Tom smiles. ‘Whether it’s true or not, I’ve always felt at home here.’

It was the pause of the pandemic that prompted the couple, who live in Surrey with their three sons, to act on that long-held connection. ‘My job involves constant travel, and we wanted somewhere the whole family could properly switch off,’ says Tom, a designer. They had nearly settled on a Victorian conversion when chance intervened. ‘I was driving out of St Ives when I saw a sign for building plots and turned in. The setting was incredible – steep, yes, but with extraordinary views out to sea.’

The plot, part of the former grounds of a Methodist retreat, came with plans for a four-bedroom house by architectural studio Re-Format, but Tom worked collaboratively with the firm to reconfigure the layout. Crucially, he inverted the arrangement, moving the living spaces up to the entry level to fully capture the coastal panorama, while increasing the accommodation to six bedrooms – each angled towards the sea.

A passionate theatre-goer, Tom drew inspiration from the foyer of the London Coliseum theatre, designed by Frank Matcham, to create a striking circular light well that draws daylight deep into the square plan. Beneath it, a sculptural spiral staircase winds through the building, its form echoing Barbara Hepworth’s Pelagos sculpture – the iconic work that also lends the house its name.

‘She was inspired by this very coastline,’ says Tom. ‘It felt like a natural connection to make.’

There is a subtle interplay between drama and restraint throughout the interiors. Jane’s Danish heritage brings a calm, Scandinavian sensibility, from the kitchen by Kvik to mid-century pieces, including chairs by Hans J Wegner. ‘Hygge is often talked about, but for the Danes it’s simply a way of life,’ Tom reflects. ‘We wanted the communal areas to feel flexible – somewhere you can gather as a group, but also find quieter corners.’

To help realise that vision, the couple collaborated with local interior designer Nicola O’Mara, who introduced a palette drawn from the surrounding seascape. Soft aquas, deep teals and turquoise blues mirror the shifting tones of the Atlantic, lending the interiors a quiet continuity with the landscape beyond.

That connection to the outdoors defines the house. Each level opens onto its own terrace, allowing the occupants to immerse themselves in the view. ‘You can sit at the dining table with the doors open and it feels as though there’s nothing between you and the sea,’ says Tom. On the uppermost floor, one bedroom even features an outdoor bathtub, perfectly positioned for long soaks beneath the stars.

Now available to rent as well as enjoy privately, the house has become a place not just for family gatherings, but for others to experience the same sense of escape. ‘Every time we come back, it still feels special,’ Tom says. ‘You open the front door and all you can see is the horizon. It’s like standing at the edge of the world.’ 25

Pelagos is available to rent through boutique-retreats.co.uk

DINING DECK
Set beneath the pines, this sheltered deck
is ideal for relaxed alfresco meals.
 Outdoor dining set, Sklum

SITTING ROOM

Rounded forms, such as this circular coffee table, are echoed throughout the home, creating a convivial, harmonious feel.

Theodore armchairs; Barrel coffee table, Soho Home. Cushions in Corda in Cadet, Designers Guild



‘You can sit at the dining table with the doors open and it feels as though there’s nothing between you and the sea’



DINING AREA

A Danish oak table paired with classic chairs by Hans J Wegner nod to Jane's Scandinavian roots.
Oval dining table, Skovby. CH24 and CH23 dining chairs by Hans J Wegner, Carl Hansen & Søn. Here Comes the Sun pendant lights, Bertrand Balas

SITTING ROOM

In this social seating arrangement, swivel armchairs, in a textural bouclé, pivot to open up the space for larger gatherings. Garret bouclé swivel armchairs, Soho Home. Pendant light, Louis Poulsen

HOME TRUTHS

THE PROPERTY

Detached new build

ROOMS Kitchen-diner and living space, TV room, cloakroom, utility, study, six bedrooms (all en suite), shower room

LOCATION

Cornwall



‘On the best days, the ocean turns shades of teal, turquoise and aqua – so we echoed those colours indoors’



BEDROOM

Layered materials, including timber, cord and linen, bring depth and tactility.

Wall in Grey Stone, Little Greene. Patterned cushions, Madam Stoltz. Try Japandi solid wood chair with rope woven seat, Homary. Columbus sunbed, Skagerak by Fritz Hansen, has this look

TERRACE

Complete with an outdoor bath, this elevated spot is designed for indulgent soaks with a view.

The Camden bistro table and chairs set, John Lewis, is similar. Slipper bathtub, Victoria + Albert Baths

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