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R AND R

A COUPLE'S BEACH GETAWAY EXUDES A COASTAL
FEEL WITHOUT FEELING OVERDONE.

Interior Design by **Kate Hutchison** | Text by **Jill Waldbieser** | Photography by **Anna Routh**





LEFT: The family room features textural elements like seagrass, used for the Capa rug, Society Social chairs, and Napa Home & Garden accent stools add a beach-y feel. A pair of upholstered Wesley Hall swivel chairs and built-in window seats accommodate a crowd. Custom pillows by Jane Churchill, Peter Fasano, Arabel, Schumacher, and Fabricut complete the look.

Everyone can relate to the feeling of not wanting a beach vacation to end. For Grace and A.B. Henley, the solution was clear: extend their beach stay indefinitely with a family home in Ocean Isle, North Carolina.

Grace grew up in the coastal town and beach living was a family tradition, one she wanted to extend to her college-aged children and, hopefully, future grandchildren. Because she and A.B. envisioned a place where family would visit for years to come, they knew they had to make it as accessible as it was elegant. Raleigh-based interior designer Kate Hutchison, principal of Kate.H.Design, helped them do just that.

“They didn’t want the house to feel too serious,” Hutchison says. “Being able to live in it practically was important to them. They wanted a place that was like them—warm, inviting, relaxed, and fuss-free.”

Hutchison delivered a design that suits the name the family ultimately gave the house: Charis—the Greek word for grace. It was a name that not only honored the woman of the house, but also the boat her father had when she was growing up. And it’s appropriate because as Grace says, “We feel really blessed.”

The Henleys brought Hutchison on board early in the process after falling in love with her online portfolio. She worked with them to nail down a style even as the walls were being raised and drywall hung, selecting tile and paint colors in tandem, a process that helped with the flow and overall cohesive feeling of the design.

The goal was to design a space that was “future friendly” in both form and function. They wanted to be able to entertain family and friends who would visit, all with a design that had a timeless feel. “I didn’t want to be able to look back and say, ‘Oh yeah, that style was popular in 2019,’” Grace says.

The home’s just-under-3,000 square-feet are spread out over three floors, in what Hutchison calls “a reverse floor plan.” The living and dining areas are on the top floors to maximize the water



TOP: Practicality was at the forefront of the dining room’s design. The Made Goods table is an indoor/outdoor model in a gray-washed teal finish, and the Four Hands chair fronts were reupholstered in a white vinyl Romo fabric that looks like leather but is wipeable so there’s no fussing over spills. To pull in some color and pattern, Hutchison reupholstered the end chair backs in Scalamandré blue and white ikat, which tied in to the family room perfectly. The rope orb chandeliers are by Regina Andrew.

BOTTOM: “Because we did not have to accommodate a dining area on this porch, we really wanted to maximize seating,” says Hutchison. Hutchison chose teal for the Kingsley Bate rockers, sofas, and chairs, as well as a coffee table by Modway Furniture because the material “weathers beautifully.” The fabrics are all durable indoor-outdoor selections from Thibaut and Kravet. The accent tables are periwinkle kiln-glazed garden stools from the Van Cleve Collection.

views, with the bedrooms on the lower levels. A large sliding door opens to the main porch, tying the indoor and outdoor spaces together seamlessly and expanding the entertaining area. “We’ll do yoga stretches on that porch, or congregate with friends and have cocktails while we enjoy beautiful sunsets,” Grace says.

Inside, they wanted a clean, uncluttered look that reflected the coastal surroundings without seeming cliché. Hutchison opted for a color palette of clean white and nautical blues to set the tone. “The way she uses color is fabulous,” says Grace. “It’s rich, it’s youthful, yet she uses it very appropriately in different situations. Our primary home is Georgian and she translated that very well here at the beach.”

Hutchison’s palette also acts as a backdrop for the vibrant art that hangs everywhere. “The Henleys’ appreciation of art is amazing,” says the designer. “They were very intentional about how they went about purchasing it over the three-year period when this house was being built.”

“Once we knew we were going to do this project, we just started looking [for art]. I don’t have any special training, I just know what I love and I love discovering new artists,” Grace says. “Plus,” she adds, “art is personal, and something you can leave for your children and grandchildren to enjoy for years – unlike furniture, which can get outdated.”

Once they agreed where a piece would live, Hutchison would draw on the colors in the painting for the rest of the décor. The console that separates the kitchen from the living area, for instance, was painted a deep blue to coordinate with a large painting Grace bought for the family room. And a grouping of oyster plates in her daughter’s bathroom, which had hung in Grace’s childhood beach house, coordinates beautifully with a painting she found for the adjacent bedroom. “We wanted the art to convey the full selection of colors and tones, and vice versa,” A.B. says.

Other standouts include a set of abstract portraits of Grace and A.B. that hang above one another outside the bar, and a beach scene commissioned from Anna Vaughns. The commissioned piece was done in two panels so that they could be placed over doors that conceal the flat screen television in the living area. “It was Kate’s idea to split it,” says Grace. “We watch TV, but when you’re at the beach sometimes you just want to turn off all your electronics and enjoy it.”



Because the kitchen opens to the colorful family room, Hutchison used a more muted palette in the kitchen: white custom cabinets and shiplap on the range hood by Fantasy Kitchens and Counters; honed Carrera marble counters; Ashley Norton chrome drawer pulls; and Element glass subway tile in Mist for the backsplash. The light fixtures are by Visual Comfort. The acrylic and nickel counter stools are by Gabby.





“Enjoying it” also meant designing for practical things, like kids running in and sitting on the furniture in wet bathing suits, or the family’s two dogs—a Cavalier King Charles spaniel-poodle mix and golden retriever. To that end, Hutchison says, all the upholstery is done in performance-grade Krypton indoor-outdoor fabric, which they chose in lieu of slipcovers because it’s a more tailored look. The dining room seating is done in what Hutchison calls “extremely wipeable” vinyl that looks and feels like leather and is pretty close to indestructible. Even the delicate-looking clear acrylic stools at the kitchen island are sturdy, comfortable, and easy to clean.

Hutchison chose materials that look better with wear, like teak patio furniture, which as it ages, creates a nice natural finish, and honed Carrera marble countertops. “Honed marble is more forgiving,” she says. “The Henleys are relaxed and casual and marble wears over time with a space so it speaks to how they live. It’s like leather. The first time a dog jumps up and scratches it you get worried, but after ten years you get this beautiful patina and weathered look.”

These materials also underpin the subtle nautical scheme. “We wanted a coastal vibe, but without putting a seahorse on everything,” Hutchison says. She executed this with lots of texture: rope and rattan; sea glass; a coco bead chandelier in a powder room; horizontal shiplap on the walls and vertically on the custom-designed range hood in the kitchen—the focal point between two windows. Even the laundry room doggie door, cleverly disguised as a cabinet, has a decorative metal insert.

“The overall, cohesive feeling of the whole house is what I really love about it,” says Hutchison. “We were able to blend this casual yet sophisticated feeling. It’s inviting and comfortable and beautiful.”

The owners agree. Grace recalls that just five days after moving in, the family left for a trip. While they were gone, Hutchison added the finishing touches and staged the house for their arrival. “It was so much fun to walk in and see pictures hung, plates out, books on shelves,” Grace says. “It was like Christmas. It was better than Christmas.”

Even better still, she goes on, is living in the space every day since. “When all the fanfare is over, it truly is such a livable space.” ♦



TOP: The master bedroom is a quiet escape, with warmer neutrals and natural finishes setting a serene scene. The Modern History lacquered bed has brass-inlay detailing echoed by the neutral trim on the white matelassé shams and coverlet by Legacy Linens. Schumacher custom euro shams in an ikat pattern complement the scheme, and a Fabricut light blue bolster pillow finishes it off. The bedside tables are by Woodbridge Furniture; the lamps are Fox Mill Co.; the rug is by Jaipur. The custom drapery panels, valance, and roman shades with blackout lining use fabric by Pindler and Fabricut.

BOTTOM: The double sink in the master bathroom has custom towel holders built into the cabinetry, which is by Fantasy Kitchen & Cabinets. The sconces are by Visual Comfort. The woven rope chandeliers are by Jeffan. Cabinet hardware is by Top Knobs.

OPPOSITE: The first-floor rec room is a cozy rainy day spot where comfort was a priority. The custom Wesley Hall sectional is as deep as a twin mattress, since everyone in the Henley family is tall with long legs. Nourison poufs can be used for extra seating, then slide away neatly under an acrylic coffee table by Ballard Designs when not in use. The framed map on the wall belonged to Grace's father, a memento of sailing trips they'd taken when she was a child. His navigational notes are still written on it.

