



Nestled under attic eaves, by windows with water views, a prettily dressed bed beckons. The painted furniture is a mix of old and new in the sweet pastel colors that homeowner Diane Willard Kaufman favors.

# nesting *instincts*

A globe-trotting homeowner finds a blissful place to roost in her colorful vintage cottage on the Georgia shore.

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The home's original wood siding and an antique corbel add rustic elements to the half-walls in the kitchen. Diane layered bamboo shades and linen draperies for a light look with a tropical hint.

## *After traveling the world*

for a corporate career in hotel sales and marketing, Diane Willard Kaufman is finally at home. Not in the massive Atlanta house she once owned, but in a sweet little cottage that is the culmination of her hopes and dreams. “This house is so important to me,” she says. “It helped me figure out in my mid-50s where I am supposed to be and what I am supposed to do.” In the process of making a home on Tybee Island, Georgia, Diane fell into a new career managing beach house rentals. “I found my passion,” says the proprietor of Mermaid Cottages.

Diane’s own cottage, named “Mermaid Manor,” was built in the 1920s. The raised structure—one of about 100 such cottages on Tybee that have survived decades of storms and bulldozers—is elevated to catch the sea breezes and has high ceilings and big porches. Diane bought the cottage five years ago when the former owners moved it off their lot to build a larger home.

She then called her friend and interior designer Jane Coslick to help her renovate and decorate. They finished the attic and added a light-filled stairwell and dormer windows, creating a serene dormitory-style guest bedroom and spacious bath upstairs. A new double staircase, siding, and fresh paint spruced up the exterior.

The cottage is furnished with a charming blend of timeworn items that Diane found at estate sales, junk markets, and flea markets, mixed with family pieces and travel memorabilia. “Diane likes old, traditional things. Her house is filled with her treasures,” Coslick says. The designer helped Diane arrange those items and select fabrics and bedding that give a fresh look to garage-sale bed frames and secondhand sofas and chairs.

Diane leans toward a pretty pastel palette that looks dreamy against a clean backdrop of white-painted plank walls and hardwood floors. “My life is so busy, I want my home to be a nest—relaxing and filled with soft watercolors,” she says. She personalizes the spaces with collections of shells, antique bird prints, family china and silver, and original art from local artists.

As a result, every object in the house seems to have a story, from the rustic exterior siding used to fashion half-walls in the kitchen to the junk-store claw-foot bathtub that Diane hauled from Savannah. “I have surrounded myself with the things I love,” Diane says. “This house is part of who I am, a testament that you can live your dream and create the life you want.”



ABOVE LEFT: The relocated raised cottage has new front staircases entwined with fragrant jasmine. ABOVE RIGHT: Subway and mosaic tile give a new bathroom a vintage look enhanced by an old claw-foot bathtub and a pedestal sink, which were reglazed and fitted with vintage-style faucets. BELOW: An attic window seat and a chair slipcovered in a perky stripe welcome Diane's frequent visitors. RIGHT: The living is easy in the cottage's main gathering space, outfitted with comfy slipcovered furniture and a mantel full of treasures.

