

FLEA MARKET

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LITTLE  
PIECE  
OF

# paradise

At Mermaid Manor—a tiny 1920s Georgia beach cottage—sandy feet, ocean breezes, and flea market finds are welcome.

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**Room With a View** A glass-enclosed porch on this Tybee Island, Georgia, cottage serves as an office for homeowner Diane Willard Kaufman. An old white-painted chest wears new milk glass knobs from Restoration Hardware. **Let There Be Light** A year before she purchased this cottage, Diane bought a hand-blown Venetian chandelier, *opposite*, for 90 percent off at a New York store. The purples, blues, and greens of its glass fruit later inspired the cottage's color palette.

Twelve years ago, Diane Willard Kaufman arrived on Georgia's Tybee Island newly divorced and without a plan. Today—10 whole-house renovations later—she has won historic preservation awards, raises money for service dogs, and runs Mermaid Cottages, a company she founded to manage beach rentals for vacationers. "Women can empower themselves to accomplish whatever they want to in life," she says. "I'm not unique or special. I just worked toward my goals and believed in myself."



**MERMAID MANOR IS THE NAME** Diane gave this charming 1920s cottage, which has been her home for five years. "I love projects and I love to save old houses," she says. Unlike some of the other Tybee homes she has redone, this little two-bedroom was not considered historic. That meant there were no restrictions on colors or construction, leaving her design options wide open. "We could make it as fun as we wanted to," says Diane, who turned to designer Jane Coslick for help creating a bright and airy space. The dark pine walls were coated with cheery white paint. Walls in the new attic bedroom and bath were covered with white wood, laid horizontally for true vintage charm. Flea market chairs, chipped-paint tables, and collections of vintage suitcases, colorful Fiestaware, and faded old linens outfit the cozy rooms with a restful white palette with pops of greens and blues. "I created a nest here," Diane says. "I needed a restful place."

**Before & After**

The 800-square-foot 1920s cottage, above, was relocated to make way for new construction. A new tin roof, left, green HardiPlank siding, and second storey were added.

**Pale and Interesting** An old piano bench and vintage suitcases sit under the home's original fireplace mantel; the chimney had to be removed when the house was moved to its new location, so the fireplace was closed up. All of the art in Diane's home is by local Georgia artists. A line of whelks, the official Georgia state seashell, were found on a nearby island.





**What's Cookin'** The kitchen's bar is made from the cottage's old siding; Diane found the large corbels while junking. The two metal light fixtures are from IKEA. The island is an old enamel-top table that's been mounted on casters.



*"I'm 56, and I've only recently become a junker and picker. I found my passion in midlife."*

—HOMEOWNER DIANE KAUFMAN

**Shell Games** Natural coral and bleached shells, *top left*, are piled in a yellow, footed bowl. **Give Us a Smooch** A kissing-dog statue, *left middle*, reminds Diane of her two dogs, Danny, a black lab, and Sophie, a yellow lab. **Upstairs, Downstairs** An old pipe, *left bottom*, is called into service as a handrail in the stairway to the new second floor. **It's a Dog's Life** Because Diane is a dog lover who believes her four-legged friends belong on couches and chairs, she has a simple decorating rule: "Slipcovers, slipcovers, and more slipcovers." The living room's skirted slipcovers, *below*, are 100-percent cotton, so Diane can toss them in her washing machine each week. (No expensive dry cleaning bills, thank you very much!)



**Slip Ups**  
Bonus: Washable slipcovers are not only pretty, but also dog- and kid-friendly.

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**Perfectly Imperfect**  
An old blue dresser has one broken knob.



**Blue Sky Day** Original knobs adorn an old blue dresser, *above*, in Diane's master bedroom. Why hide pretty plates? She hung the ones she received from an aunt on the wall. The candle holder is made of oyster shells.  
**Sunny-side Up** Diane had milk glass knobs in two colors—blue and green—left over from other projects so she added them to an old yellow dresser, *right*, in the master bathroom.



*"I named this house mermaid manor. Some of my other houses were seabiscuit, Island Dog cottage, and screened inn."*

—HOMEOWNER DIANE KAUFMAN

**Precious Pearl** In the master bedroom, a simple backdrop of white furniture, white curtains, and white bedding lets the artwork and accessories shine. The dramatic oyster painting is by local artist Bellamy Murphy.

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**Chip Shot** A chippy flea market chair, *above*, and white wood desk create a little writing nook in a second-storey guest bedroom. The funky angles of the attic's roofline gives the new space old-fashioned character. **Soak It All In** A brand-new guest bathroom, *top left*, gets true vintage style from new white subway tile, wood-covered walls, and an old claw foot tub. "The tub's refurbishing cost more than the tub did," says Diane with a laugh. **Relax and Unwind** An old pale-green cupboard, *left*, adds a soft dash of color in a bath. **Be Our Guest** To create the dreamy canopy over a bed in a guest room, *opposite top*, Diane hung a towel ring from the ceiling, then draped it with organza fabric. **Come Sail Away** Sailboats made of driftwood, *opposite bottom*, bring a nautical touch inside.

**Hit the Beach**  
Visiting Tybee Island?  
Diane rents out cottages  
full of vintage charm.  
Get the details at  
[mermaidcottages.com](http://mermaidcottages.com)



*what gives this cottage*  
**FRESH, OCEAN-INSPIRED STYLE**

"The beach is about simple things," says designer Jane Coslick, who worked her magic on this cottage. Here are her tricks.

**Embrace White** Art and collections stand out best against a neutral wall, says Jane. Her pick for the walls in this cottage: Moonlight White by Benjamin Moore.

**Skip the Drywall** In the new second-storey addition, Jane covered the walls with butt-jointed spruce. It's pricey, but packs a punch. "Hang it horizontally," she says. "It's got the energy of an old house."

**Be Casual** "My style is uncomplicated," says Jane, who mixes found items with inexpensive remnants, flea market finds, antiques, and new reproductions.

