

high marks

A TRURO RETREAT SETS A
NEW DESIGN STANDARD.

by jennifer sperry
photography by eric roth



The interiors of this Truro getaway house are inviting and cozy. Walls of windows offer views into the National Park.



THE WIND WHISTLES ALONG TRURO'S NARROW WAIST, CLEANSING AND THEN BESTOWING each roll of land with sea spray. Scrubby trees cover gentle hills, which reach up and then down into shallow valleys, beyond reach of the elements. Myriad roads twist into unexplored territories—any one of them has the potential to access hidden, unassuming secrets.

Off the beaten path but not necessarily a secret, there is no greater nature-based source of solitude than Truro's stretch of Cape Cod National Seashore. The park—comprised of more than 43,000 acres and created via a bill signed by President Kennedy in 1961—stretches along the Outer Cape, and 70 percent lies within Truro. While new development has ceased, a handful of “grandfathered” residential lots remain.

Rick Lavin and his wife, Rena Lipman, owners of Goodheart Properties, a real estate development company, have vacationed on Truro's Balston Beach with their nine-year-old daughter, Olivia, for over a decade. Their knowledge of the town's ins and outs led them to discover a lot for sale within the park.

“It was an extremely pleasant surprise to find a site that was so expansive and had such a feeling of privacy and seclusion with water views of Cape Cod Bay all at the same time,” explains Lavin of the family's find. “When I first saw it, I felt like it was what I imagined Truro to be like 50 or 100 years ago, when you could look out and see nothing but woods and bay. Our idea was to create an environment in which the interior felt like an expansion of the exterior,” continues Lavin, describing his initial thoughts on the site's potential.





“Having spent a lot of time on the Cape, we know how important outdoor areas are, especially in the summer. We also wanted a compound, a place where a family would feel comfortable, with a cottage available for extended family and friends,” stated Lavin.

Lavin and Lipman hired Hutker Architects, based in Falmouth and on Martha’s Vineyard, to realize their evolving visions. The design team, consisting of principal architect Charles Orr, associate architect Matthew Schiffer, and director of interiors John Day, transformed an existing cottage on the property into a guest cottage (using the same footprint), and then they designed a new main home. Combined, the modest structures total approximately 2,800 square feet of living space.

Deciding to orient certain structures toward certain views, the team masterminded a slightly curved procession of spaces: the master bedroom suite leads to a screen porch, then to the main living area, and finally to the free-standing guesthouse. The structures bend in an S-shaped fashion along with the curving landscape, and the effect is highlighted by a ribbon of limestone running outdoors from the main home’s patio past the divider of lawn to the guest cottage’s private patio. “The limestone is an organizing device that connects the separate buildings so that they read as one complex,” notes Schiffer.

The screen porch is a radial fan wedged between the master bedroom suite and the main living area, which consists of a living room, dining area, and kitchen, with two bedrooms above. With a curved front face, the porch “acts as a buffer between the two spaces,” explains Orr. “We wanted it to be used from both the master and living suites.” Its unique positioning within the



Above and Right: The guest cottage on the property is light and airy. It has a clean, modern interior—think the “new Cape Cod.”

fold of the main home allowed enough room for a view-catching roof deck directly above.

Overall, the compound hints at modernism without abandoning the more traditional aspects of New England’s vernacular. Says Orr, “Truro has a unique history of modern architecture. Although the homeowners were not interested in a strict modern mood, we tried to relate traditional materials to the vocabulary of modernism.” Nods to a more contemporary aesthetic include cable railings on the roof deck and inside the main home’s stairwell; clean,

crisp roof lines; and spare stone patios, simple in form and uncluttered by stone walls or terraced steps.

“Truro has a really interesting terrain of knolls and glades, hardened over the years and carved out by wind. The property is within this terrain and is surrounded by really beautiful woods and indigenous ground cover,” describes Schiffer, explaining that Hutker Architects oversaw the landscape design, which exhibits a clear delineation between natural terrain and lawn—a purposeful juxtaposition of wild and groomed.



A screen porch is located just off the hall that leads to the master bedroom.

Creatively situated between the main and guest homes is a stone patio populated by Adirondack chairs. “It’s like a piece of carpet, which happens to be stone, placed on the beautiful lawn that connects the two buildings,” says Orr. Pergolas protect stone terraces off both structures; the unique cedar creations extend out from the rafters “almost like the frame is being extruded from the house,” describes Schiffer. Not to be overshadowed, an outdoor shower, also constructed of cedar, offers bay views thanks to an open design. Privacy results from horizontal cedar strips, whose spacing decreases as their placement rises.

The exterior simultaneously pushes the boundaries of tradition while appearing rooted in the landscape, and the interior similarly reveals its own playful tendencies. “The property is an unexpected place to find; we wanted the experience of entering the house to feel a bit unexpected as well,” points out Day, who was responsible for the interior architecture and design, including the bathroom layouts and millwork.

“This house is less of your anticipated Cape retreat and more of a camp with a destination feel,” he continues. “We used paint to tie the interior together and to give the wind-beaten rustic place more of a refined and slightly modern quality.”



The master bedroom and bath (shown opposite) are accessed through a walkway. This sets the space apart from the rest of the house for privacy—not to mention peace and quiet.

Initially debating whether or not to leave the millwork with its natural color exposed, the homeowners and designer decided on paint. Earth tones—sandy beiges, sea blues, and moss greens—lend individuality to rooms while staying true to the interior’s ultimate inspiration: the outdoor landscape. “We like to think back to the site and to use contextual colors that are timeless,” explains Orr.

The dining area, living room, and kitchen in the main home are essentially one volume underneath a cathedral ceiling, although varying ceiling details lend differentiation. “The high ceiling gives the modest footprint more volume,” notes Day.

A sliding window between the kitchen and porch connects the two spaces visually while also providing a practical pass-through for entertaining. On both sides of the window, Burlington stone counters atop custom cabinetry are positioned to accept dishes and drinks.

The highlight of the master suite is the bathroom, where serene limestone, laser cut to specific sizes, predominates. Stacked wall tiles denote the shower area, which is ingeniously tied to the Jacuzzi tub by a stretch of limestone that curves. As it bends, its status as tub deck morphs into the role of shower seat. “We wanted as little obstruction as possible, and using one deck between the two areas helped it feel like one larger space,” says Day.

In the guesthouse, which contains a kitchen, a living room, and two bedrooms, whites and light blues achieve a “classic beach cottage feel,” state the homeowners. One element of the existing cottage that remains is the cathedral ceiling: “The living room had a very low roof, and when we exposed it, we found the beautiful cathedral and decided to leave it open and paint the boards,” Lavin reveals.

Referencing both structures’ reliance on detailed design, Lavin credits Hutker Architects for achieving “a work of art.”

“The homes appear reasonably simple, but their architecture is extraordinarily elegant. The home blends so well with the surroundings that it looks like it has been here forever,” he continues. “My wife is a poet, and she came up with the name Arcadia, which means ‘a place of simple pleasure and solitude.’ We thought the name captured the feeling of this house perfectly.” **h**

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FOR INFORMATION, SEE RESOURCES PAGE 106.