



A Restful RETREAT

A fresh colour palette and a mix of well-loved vintage furniture gives Sarah Laming's seaside cottage a relaxed holiday feel, while remaining loyal to its Georgian roots

FEATURE JANE CRITTENDEN PHOTOGRAPHS JAMES FRENCH STYLING MARISHA TAYLOR



FACING PAGE The charming four-storey Georgian cottage is a short walk from the beach and the old town of Broadstairs in Kent. **THIS PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT** Sarah Laming, an interior designer, in the lower ground living area, which is furnished with a matching mid-century sofa and armchair; she describes the twisty staircase that rises up through the middle of the cottage as the heart and soul of the property; the front door retains the original door knocker.



THIS PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT The cupboard doors are made from pine floorboards used like tongue and groove, to Sarah's design, to emulate a traditional cottage kitchen. She kept the taps and butler sink from the previous kitchen as they were exactly what she wanted. The model ship made from a kit – a popular hobby in the early 1900s – is a nod to the seaside location and came from Petticoat Lane Emporium; old scaffolding boards were fashioned into a wooden worktop by a kitchen joiner; the vintage drawers were left by the previous owners and are now used as a larder. The 1907 floral oil painting caught Sarah's eye at Ardingly antiques fair, and has a touch of pink that echoes the detailing in the rest of the cottage. The original portrait is from Belvoir Fine Art on eBay and the bust came from Sunbury Antiques Market; the rustic table, from Fabulous Vintage Finds, captures Sarah's concept for lived-in decoration.



From the moment she saw the four-storey cottage that would become her holiday home, Sarah Laming knew she would use antiques and vintage finds to create the relaxed and lived-in atmosphere she was seeking.

'I imagined catching a glimpse of a worn and well-loved desk through the doorway of my daughter's room, with a painting and mirror propped up against the wall, and a low-hanging light,' she says. 'I liked the idea that someone, in the middle of something, had just popped out of the room. That feeling was important because we wanted to feel comfortable and at home the minute we arrived here on holiday.'

Sarah, an interior designer, and her husband, Guy Murphy, who works in advertising, knew Broadstairs well by the time they found their whitewashed cottage, as they have friends who live in the town and they had visited many

'I liked the idea that someone, in the middle of something, had just popped out of the room... we wanted to feel comfortable and at home the minute we arrived here'

ABOVE The lower ground floor is much brighter since the couple removed the wall that separated the kitchen, and has allowed space for a dining table and chairs. Once the building work had been done, the whole cottage needed furnishing, so Sarah went hunting for pleasingly worn vintage furniture with a story to tell at favourite antiques haunts such as Ardingly.

times for holidays. 'We were really keen to buy a fisherman's cottage, but there aren't many in Broadstairs compared to other seaside towns,' she explains. 'This one happens to be a captain's cottage, typically Georgian with one room at the front and one room at the back on each of the four floors. The bendy staircase that weaves through the middle is delightful – it's the heart and soul of the house.'

Sarah put her design skills to use to reconfigure the layout of the top two floors and the lower ground floor, which is now a pleasing open-plan kitchen-dining-living room. Walls have been decorated in Farrow & Ball's Shadow White to create a restful foundation for fabrics and soft furnishings in traditional Georgian decorating colours such as sage green, blue-grey and dusky pink.

'I wanted there to be a sense of history and calmness throughout the house,' Sarah says, explaining that ▶

'I love rustic, chipped and scuffed surfaces in furniture that would have been loved once upon a time. Pieces with soul, which have lived their own history'

The matching mid-century sofa and chair are from local shop Petticoat Lane Emporium and have slimline profiles that don't dominate the room. The 1970s rattan side table is from Fabulous Vintage Finds.

the colours are the 'continuity that threads through rooms and links them.' Textures were important too: stripped floorboards, wood panelling, wicker baskets and worn furniture. 'I love rustic, chipped and scuffed surfaces in furniture that would have been loved once upon a time. Pieces with soul, which have lived their own history, and that I'm unlikely to see in anyone else's house,' she says.

One of Sarah's first purchases was a pair of weathered French antique shutters that she decided would make an eye-catching headboard in their bedroom. Sourced from Fabulous Vintage Finds, she found herself returning again and again, buying similarly pre-loved pieces such as her daughter's desk, the sitting room's green console and the dining table with its distressed paintwork. Beautifully imperfect, these pieces set the tone for the laid-back, homely style she has created throughout the house.

Despite the seaside location, Sarah steered away from obvious nautical themes and concentrated on art that she feels she would have bought anyway. 'I want the cottage to feel like a home rather than a generic holiday house.' Not one for taking herself too



TOP RIGHT Sarah picked out muted greens and pale blues from a traditional Georgian colour palette. Farrow & Ball's Shadow White – a soft white with a hint of grey – is on the walls. The French sideboard is from Fabulous Vintage Finds, while the vintage white rattan mirror and Victorian green chair are from Petticoat Lane Emporium. The Welsh lambswool blanket is from F&P Interiors. **ABOVE RIGHT** New and old rub along together where the modern Söderhamn Ikea sofa was chosen for comfort, but the pale pink shade is in the traditional colour palette. Sanded floorboards impart a rustic feel along with a low-level scaffolding-board shelf and a 1970s wicker chair from Fabulous Vintage Finds. In the corner, the Egg of Columbus pendant by Seletti is recycled cardboard and from Made In Design. **ABOVE LEFT** The petite Victorian console, another flea-market find, is the perfect size.



THIS PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT Wall panelling, painted in Farrow & Ball's Drop Cloth, adds character and a place to display art. Sarah picked up these floral oil paintings from Ardingly antiques fair and Nut Hill car boot sale. Rockett St George's Moroccan natural straw lampshade has a Seventies look and gives the room a gentle glow; this is Sarah's favourite room in the house. The vignette of the desk, viewed through the open door, captures the spirit of the cottage. The mid-century desk, mirror and Victorian chair are all from Fabulous Vintage Finds; vintage French shutters were one of Sarah's starting points in the project, after she went looking for a quirky and rustic decorative piece for behind the bed. Anthropologie's bolster cushion continues the floral thread that runs throughout the house; the wicker chair pairs with the one in the sitting room.



seriously, Sarah admits to having a penchant for quirky antiques such as the elephant wicker side table, which caught her eye on eBay while she was looking for something else. 'I like random, one-off pieces that might start a conversation but aren't so garish they don't blend in with the room,' she says. 'I have a penguin dressed like a chef - he likely stood outside an American diner in the 1960s - and he fits in perfectly in the kitchen.'

Now fully decorated, the cottage continues to evolve, as Sarah is always on the lookout for new treasures, things that add to the joy of their holidays. 'I love that the cottage has been created by us, for us,' she says. 'Everything I've bought, I've chosen with care, and that's what's made it feel special. Every time we arrive and walk inside, we relax, switching straight into holiday mode.'

Sarah's Little Black Book of FAVOURITE PLACES



- 'I always head to the **Hayward Gallery** when I'm in London because you never quite know what to expect before you arrive - I like the element of surprise and intrigue.' @hayward.gallery

- 'When I walked into **Anthropologie** in New York in the early 2000s, I knew the mix of styles was absolutely me! A fab combination of boho with English country house, where beautiful prints combine with one-off vintage finds, creating soul and character.' @anthropologie

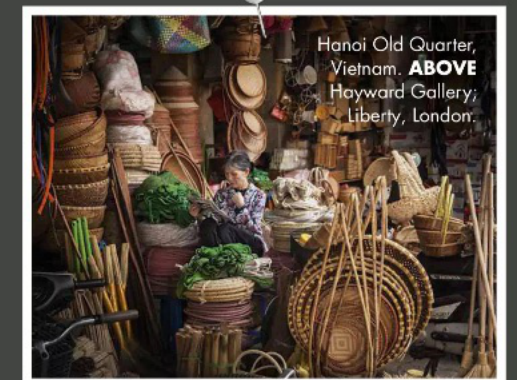


- 'We lived in Asia for four years and **Hanoi Old Quarter** in Vietnam is one of my favourite places for artisan goods and antiques, and where artists' studios sit alongside wonderful local restaurants.'

- 'I love everything about **Liberty**. It is great at blending traditional with cool contemporary design, like a Chesterfield sofa upholstered in a floral fabric, or

a vintage tea set displayed with modern lighting.' @libertylondon

- '**ABC Cocina** in New York is a restaurant I could go back to again and again. It's loud and buzzy, cool and relaxed and mixes styles - industrial with chandeliers, quirky finds with original brick walls. It serves amazing Mexican fusion food - it really is a feast for the eyes as well as the stomach.' @jgrestaurants



Hanoi Old Quarter, Vietnam. **ABOVE** Hayward Gallery; Liberty, London.

The snug bathroom has space for a Victoria Plum bath, where Fired Earth's Patisserie Sucre 1 floor tiles match the bathroom on the second floor. The green stool is from Ardingly antiques fair, while the oil painting came from Sunbury Antiques Market.

