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Island Oasis

Inspired by the Bahamas, Steve and Jennifer Hemberger envisioned a breezy, beachfront style for their Marco vacation home.

BY ELIZABETH KELLAR

AN UNFORGETTABLE VACATION LED TO THE creation of an unforgettable vacation home for part-time Marco Island residents Steve and Jennifer Hemberger.

Inspired by the sights and sounds of the Bahamian island Exuma, the Hembergers wanted a home that was light and bright, but also included the kinds of unique wood finishes they had admired on their tropical trip. They wanted a place that was comfortable and sturdy, too: The couple has three sons, one who lives with them and two who visit often.

Now in their finished Madeira condominium for just over a year, the couple agrees the home has exceeded accomplishing all those aims. It's a lovely and livable beachfront showplace of cool ocean colors and brilliant whites, with custom finishes and transitional interior design elements that suit their tastes and their needs.

"Every time we come down, we're happy," Jenny says. "We like it more and more."

Design decisions

Marco Island homeowners for more than 12 years, the Hembergers became interested in the Madeira property during its pre-construction phase. Its central beachfront location was ideal, they agreed, close to restaurants and other island amenities. They closed on the residence in October 2006, but then briefly delayed their move-in process.

Seaside sophistication: The Hembergers' living room, with its ocean blues and bright whites, reminds the Marco Island couple of a vacation in the Bahamas.



Photography courtesy of Kira Krümm Interior Design | Photographer: Randall Perry



“We took the approach a little differently,” Steve says. “We kind of waited because there was a very big run on people trying to get in.”

When their wait was over, they went to work, beginning their search in summer 2007 for an interior designer who could share their vision. They reviewed photos from their Exuma vacation, which reminded them of their desire to use certain colors and plenty of woodwork. One of their concerns was that the home not feel cluttered, congested or small—a concern in any space, but especially one where the plan is to use a design element that is often perceived as heavy, such as wood.

“We wanted it to feel airy,” Steve says. “We didn’t want to walk in and it to feel stuffy.”

Jenny notes that certain parts of the home, such as the woodwork, became areas where they agreed to splurge.

“You get one chance to do floors, woodworking, the big things,” she says. “We can change this couch a million times, but I’m not going to take up this floor.”

The couple also knew they wanted to be in their new condo by Christmas, which demanded finding a designer who could complete the three-bedroom, 3,800-square foot space in six months. Kira Krümm, owner and principal designer of Kira Krümm Interior Design at the International Design Center in Estero, wanted that challenge.

“She promised us if we promised her,” Steve says.

For the Hembergers, that promise meant being available to make decisions regarding their home, even flying in from their Ohio home if necessary. Krümm, for her part, put her team to work delivering a home for the holidays that was all the couple wanted and more. Promises fulfilled, the Hembergers moved into the Madeira on Christmas Eve.

Elegant and functional

The home’s centerpiece is its grand salon and formal dining area, which greets visitors upon entering and offers sweeping views of the Gulf of Mexico and Marco Island.

The formal dining room provides

service for eight around a glass-topped table. Marble floors are found throughout the main living areas of the home, and below the dining room table is an additional inlay of marble, limestone and granite that the Hembergers note Krümm reproduced in a smaller, similar way in their foyer.

In the grand salon, cream, white and light blue combine to create a sophisticated and understated atmosphere. Seaside touches, such as shells and coral, give the room a subtle beach charm. There’s a

specially built ceiling with a blue Venetian plaster finish and much of the Hembergers’ much-desired custom wood millwork as well. Jennifer, in a nod to her Northern origins, decided to add a gas fireplace, which is crowned by a white wood mantle enhanced with gracious scrollwork.

“I really, really love the colors,” Jennifer says of the salon. “Every time I walk in, it’s just, gosh.”

Those colors, Krümm explains, are intended to be cohesive with and inspired by the area’s natural environment.

“When Steve and Jen visit Florida, I want them to walk into their home and feel like it’s a breath of fresh air,” Krümm says.

Above the scrollwork mantle is a framed, oversized mirror; closer inspection reveals the small red lights of a flat-screen television hiding behind the glass. That’s part of keeping the home family-friendly, as Jennifer imagines an additional television may be helpful during parties. But when it’s not in use, it disappears: The mirror is deliberately

Grand spaces: Steve and Jennifer Hemberger, opposite, chose an open floor plan that flows from the kitchen to grand salon that includes a formal dining room.

TIM STANIM (ABOVE)





Why so blue: The colors of the sea mimic those in the Hembergers' master bedroom, left. Below, the master bath.

not as opaque as other mirrors, which means that when the room is light, the television screen won't be seen.

Other technical tricks of the home include an audio system that accommodates the family's MP3 players; their middle son, Matt, an architect who lives in Chicago, helped to design the system.

Comfort and ease of living

The Hembergers describe themselves as living "kind of a running life" when they're in their vacation home, so it was important to have a family room that reflected that lifestyle.

The family room is the area where they gather, taking advantage of the room's lush leather couch to rest, custom built-in entertainment center to watch movies and bay window-front work area to handle computer projects. The kitchen's granite dining bar is located between the kitchen and family room, complete with five bar stools, one for each member of the family.



One of Steve's special requests to Krümm is in this family room: He always wanted a tin ceiling, and the room has it. Its copper color gives the room a warm and inviting allure that compliments the casual space.

Also comfortable is the home's master bedroom, with teak floors and a luxurious custom headboard upholstered with colors that suggest the glittering Gulf of Mexico, including sea-foam blue and marine green. The second and third bedrooms, designed to be a retreat

for the couple's sons, are masculine and feature darker palettes and strong finishes. As is best for a vacation hideaway, these rooms feature a shared patio where their sons can savor views of the island.

After a year in their vacation home, the Hembergers' vacation is still only just beginning.

"There's nothing I would have done differently," Jenny says. 🌿