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SEPTEMBER 2010



# where life's a breeze

This family traded driving to the beach for wide open spaces and energy-efficient design on golf-cart-only Bald Head Island, North Carolina



**S**teve and Drew Ann Cook have always loved the water: He spent summers exploring the Chesapeake Bay by motorboat, while she grew up sailing those same waters. Once they had a family of their own, they built a vacation home near Ocean City, Maryland, but had to battle beach traffic to get to the surf. Then a boating-magazine article about Bald Head Island, North Carolina, where you get around on golf carts, enticed them to visit for a

weekend with son Halsey and daughter Stephanie. Smitten with the simplicity and surprised by the convenience of car-free life, they purchased a lot on a spit of land between the harbor and Cape Fear River, with access to the beach on one side and boat traffic on the other. They turned to Charlotte, North Carolina-based architect Ruard Veltman to design a house that not only maximized both views, but also sheltered them from the coastal elements. >

#### ECO-SAVVY IDEAS

- The Cooks chose nature-filled vacations on North Carolina's Bald Head Island, where cars (and beach traffic jams) are not permitted.
- The corrugated metal roof, which won't crack or peel in the face of harsh coastal forces such as sunlight and salty air, is an extra-durable roofing option at the beach.



BREEZES FILTER INTO A READING LOFT VIA THIS WINDOW



### their green dream

Relinquishing a car was just the Cooks' first step closer to nature. Once Steve saw the property's astonishing views of the unspoiled island, he imagined a cantilevered porch projecting out from the house. "We wanted to be as close to the water as possible to hear the waves and feel the breezes," says Steve, who runs a wholesale distribution company. The family also wanted an energy-efficient home that incorporated coastal fresh air and lots of sunlight into its design. Most importantly, Steve and Drew Ann wanted a house built from sustainable materials and designed to endure the elements so their children and, one day, grandchildren would be able to enjoy it.

### site specifics

The Cooks' lot straddles dunes between the Cape Fear River and the island's harbor on the Intracoastal Waterway, so Ruard oriented the 3,400-square-foot house due east and west to capture both views. The architect opted for a "reverse plan" with the public spaces on the second floor and all of the bedrooms but the master on the ground floor. That allows porches with water views to be connected to the daily living areas. >

### ECO-SAVVY IDEAS

- A high, truss-supported cathedral ceiling keeps the living room cooler by allowing ocean breezes, welcomed in by the room's French doors, to flush out hot air.
- Using reclaimed pasture fencing as floorboards is a low-impact (and lower-cost) way to add character to a new space.
- Open stair treads allow natural light to pass through, reducing the need for energy-guzzling artificial light.







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Concerns about the strong sunlight on the west porch led to the pitched-roof, Polynesian hut design. The roof's angled edges act just like a visor, deflecting rain from the house and blocking rays until just before sunset. Traditional Carolina beach bungalow elements—high ceilings, French doors topped with transom windows, long eaves—raise the house's energy efficiency by bringing in more natural light and keeping things cool with coastal breezes and shade.

**how they live now**

Since they found Bald Head Island, the Cooks have celebrated quieter days with wildlife walks to see turtles, alligators, and deer on the island trail. They also enjoy fishing trips and excursions to the mainland on a boat they dock in the harbor, visible from their bedroom. "Living without a car at the beach gives us a real sense of escape from our day-to-day lives," says Drew Ann. "As soon as I set foot on the ferry from the mainland, I know I'm leaving all my tension behind and getting closer to nature."

Sources: page 116 >

"WE WANTED TO BE AS CLOSE TO THE WATER AS POSSIBLE TO HEAR THE WAVES AND FEEL THE BREEZES"

—HOMEOWNER STEVE COOK





#### ECO-SAVVY IDEAS

- Like a cap's visor, the flipped-up roof edge provides extra shade and pushes the rain's drip line away from the house.
- A nautical-style steel ladder made from plumbing fittings leads to a small loft (far left, top) carved out of otherwise unused attic space.
- Ruard's compass-inspired bunk bed design in Halsey's room (far left, bottom) increases the house's sleeping capacity without enlarging its footprint.
- French doors in the master bedroom (below), the only bedroom on the second floor, increase cross-ventilation in the house's living spaces.



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**MEET THE ARCHITECT**

## Ruard Veltman

Born in Germany and raised in Holland and the United States, architect Ruard Veltman hung the shingle for Ruard Veltman Architecture in Charlotte, North Carolina, in 2005. A major touchstone of his work is *gezellig*, a Dutch concept describing a state of unique ease and pleasure in one's surroundings. Ruard's design process includes questions about how his clients spend a typical day, a driving tour of the area around the building site, and hours of drawing plans by hand.



A POLYNESIAN  
THATCHED-ROOF  
HUT THAT INSPIRED  
RUARD'S DESIGN



Top: The steeply pitched roof shields the porch from the hot sun and keeps the living spaces cool. Above: An early sketch of the river-facing facade



Santiago Calatrava:  
*The Complete Works*  
(Rizzoli, 2004) by  
Alexander Tzonis

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### the quick tour

- **Upside-down plan.**  
To maximize views from the second floor, Ruard placed the children's bedrooms, guest room, and media lounge on the ground floor.
- **Double the views.**  
The master suite and adjoining east-facing deck capture views of the harbor, while the open kitchen/living/dining area and west-facing balcony overlook the Cape Fear River.
- **Outdoor living.**  
Double-decker porches on the harbor and river sides add about 1,900 square feet of living space. 🌿

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