This house on Cotchpinicut Road in Chatham (by Polhemus Savery DaSilva Architects Builders) makes optimal use of its north-side light.

The Great New England Summer Room

BOSTONIANS SHOWCASE THEIR CHERISHED SUN-SOAKED SPACES ON LAND AND SEA.

BY KRISTINE KENNEDY

For some people, summer means lounging on a breezy porch or sailing on the great big blue. For others, it means reading a page-turner in a glassed-in sanctuary. It's all about a secret, personal space to relax, reflect, and fully relish these luscious sandy, salty, windswept days. *Boston Common* takes you inside three spectacular summer spaces, each one custom-designed to make the most of its setting and the season.

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PHOTOGRAPHY BY BRIAN VANDEN BRINK

NORTHERN EXPOSURE

This sunlit sanctuary is built for couples only.

When a sunroom is part of the building plan, access to abundant sunlight would seem to be a common-sense prerequisite. "The challenge, of course, with a sunroom on the north side of the house is that it's not necessarily much of a sunroom," says John DaSilva, design principal at Polhemus Savery DaSilva Architects Builders *(101 Depot Road, Chatham, 508-945-4500; psdab.com)*. DaSilva was faced with this problem when designing a Cape Cod home for a newly retired couple with eclectic, worldly tastes and an extensive art collection.

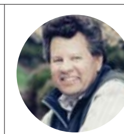
The house, nestled on a woodsy lot down a long dirt road, opens up to lovely layered views of nature: tall trees, salt marsh, pond, bay, and ocean—all on the north. To compensate, DaSilva says, "we had to use various devices." Most dramatically, he pulled the sunroom out and rotated it at a 45-degree angle to the house, so that all four sides of the room have glass. From the exterior, the cubelike space with a cupola looks like a separate, special object, although it shares the main house's red cedar siding and zinc-coated copper roof. Because it juts out, the sunroom is completely surrounded by nature and natural light. So many windows means very little wall, so the entire space has a hidden steel substructure to meet wind and snow-load codes. All the lower windows are casement, opening 100 percent for maximum air flow.

The owners wanted a more rustic style, although that's fairly unusual for Cape Cod. The home's design influences include mountain retreats of the western United States, old industrial mill buildings, and the Gothic Revival style found in New England's camp meeting grounds, such as Oak Bluffs on Martha's Vineyard. The Gothic style is most apparent in the sunroom's upper windows. Looking up, the vertical-grain fir ceiling opens to the cupola and a hanging Monrovian star. At its highest point, the ceiling is 21 feet up. "The hope is that it's uplifting," says DaSilva. "It draws your focus to the heavens."

Not wanting it to be a social space, the owners asked that the room be designed as a retreat for just the two of them. As such, it's just large enough for two carefully selected chairs and side tables, some houseplants—and that's it. And there is no exterior door in the room itself, but in the connector on the way in. "You don't want to pass through a space like that," DaSilva says. "You want it to be a destination unto itself."

"THE CHALLENGE, OF COURSE, WITH A SUNROOM ON THE NORTH SIDE OF THE HOUSE IS THAT IT'S NOT NECESSARILY MUCH OF A SUNROOM." —JOHN DASILVA

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: The Cotchpinicut Road house is suffused with natural light; the window details are continued outside on the porch; the two-story stone fireplace.



YOUR PERFECT SUNROOM

Creating the right sunny space requires a precise checklist.

Whether you're building new or renovating an existing sunroom, know thyself before breaking ground.

Is it a sunroom or a screened porch you really want? Do you want to be able to use it during the winter? If so, you'll need an interior sunroom, with proper heating and cooling. Casement windows on three sides can give you a significant cross-breeze but can be closed for winter use. If you only want to use the space during the summer, consider a screened porch. "In general," says designer John DaSilva (PICTURED), "it's not a sunroom if it doesn't have wraparound glass."

How will sunlight patterns mesh with how you utilize the space? If you're using the room primarily for dining in July and August, consider deep exterior overhangs that block light in the summer but allow lower-angled light during winter.

What are your landscaping needs? If you plan to use the sunroom year-round, deciduous trees filter light in the summer and lose their leaves to allow light through in the winter. A sunroom with constant exposure may need more evergreen trees or screening.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY BRIAN VANDEN BRINK (ROOM, PORCH, FIREPLACE); DOROTHY GRECO/POLHEMUS SAVERY DASILVA ARCHITECTS BUILDERS (DASILVA); OPPOSITE PAGE: PHOTOGRAPHY BY SAM GRAY PHOTOGRAPHY (PORCH)

Designed by John MacDonald, this 1,300-square-foot radius porch features two flying staircases to the pool below, creating a layered view.

"NO MATTER WHERE YOU SIT, YOU GET A BETTER VIEW OF THE BEACH AND THE OCEAN." —DAVID NEWTON

SOUTHERN VIEWS

A custom-built radius porch offers a bright world for entertaining and relaxation.

Architect John MacDonald *(Morehouse MacDonald and Associates, 3 Bow St., Lexington, 781-861-9500; morehousemacdonald.com)* initially thought he was designing a classic captain's house. His clients had purchased a Cape Cod site with expansive southern vistas and a slope leading down to the ocean. Their new 10,000-square-foot summer home would accommodate a large extended family, and a house-width back porch would maximize warm-weather entertaining. A traditional design would do the job, MacDonald thought. "But it morphed into something more dynamic and more open-air," he says.

While you do get the sense of a classic captain's house in the front, the back is much more distilled, emphasizing the views and modern indoor/outdoor living. The centerpiece of the rear is the 1,300-square-foot outdoor radius porch, which recedes back toward the house at the ends. A radius porch has some big advantages, says David Newton of C.H. Newton Builders *(549 W. Falmouth Hwy., West Falmouth, 508-548-1353; chnewton.com)*. "No matter where you sit on a radius porch, you get a better view of the beach and the ocean," says Newton. The curve also helps soften the visual impact of the porch on the surrounding landscape, executed by Horiuchi & Solien Landscape Architects *(200 Main St. No. 202, Falmouth, 508-540-5320)*.

A few steps down from the porch, you see more of MacDonald's design ingenuity. Typically, when standing on a porch, you have to walk to the railing to look down at the pool. But this pool platform is raised up a half level and pulled out from the house. Two flying staircases connect the platform to the porch. The result is that the view to the ocean is more layered, it's easier to bring food and drinks to the pool and have conversations, and a promenade is created beneath the porch.

The porch is designed to accommodate multiple activities at one time. MacDonald achieved that by having the first-floor walls push and pull onto the porch, creating natural carve-aways for seating groups. The fireplace end of the porch is suited for lounging, while the other side has outdoor cooking facilities and dining space. The porch roofline, vaulted at the edges and flat in the middle, along with the Douglas fir beams atop painted beadboard, also help to break up the space. The clients even enjoy the porch from inside the house, thanks to sets of stacking sliding glass doors that completely open up the back of the house to the ocean. "The beauty of this porch," MacDonald says, "is it gives you options."

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MATERIALS MATTER

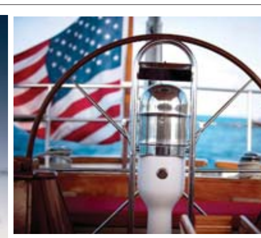
The right gear for New England porches.

Exterior spaces take a beating, especially in coastal locations subject to hurricanes and heavy snow, not to mention red wine, wet dogs, and feet on the furniture. Look to these clever building and furnishing materials to make summer living easy.

Thermal bluestone. Indigenous to New York and Pennsylvania, this bluestone is widely employed for exterior flooring all over New England. The stone's surface is heated to give it a uniform look and color, and it holds up to saltwater and doesn't get slippery when wet. *S + H Construction, 26 New St., Cambridge, 617-876-8286; shconstruction.com*

Switch glass skylights. On a shady porch, you sometimes miss the sun. Switch glass offers the best of both worlds. It's completely clear, but the flip of a switch triggers an electric current that turns the glass opaque, meaning you still get the light but not the heat. *LTI Group, 14 Federico Dr., Pittsfield, 413-637-5001; ltisg.com*

Outdoor fabrics. "Performance" fabrics, as in Robert Allen and Sunbrella's Open Air cushions (PICTURED), offer sun resistance, color retention, and water repellency—making them indispensable for porch and patio use. *Robert Allen, Boston Design Center, 1 Design Center Place #200; donghia.com*



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: The *Northern Star* sets anchor for the night; the yacht's wheel; the interiors were inspired by the white and red of Italy's Villa Feltrinelli.

VIEW TO THE SEA

A yacht's living quarters can be as sunny as the deck above.

When interior designer Elizabeth Georgantas, principal at PEG Properties & Design *(pegproperties.com)*, got a request from Jim Apteker to redesign the interior of his new yacht, she jumped at the chance. After all, it wasn't just any sailing vessel. It was the *Northern Star*. And a Hinckley.

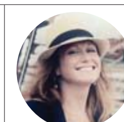
"When I saw the boat, I immediately thought of the Villa Feltrinelli," says Georgantas, referring to the stately Italian hotel on the banks of Lake Garda, which once served as Mussolini's summer palace. The challenge was taking inspiration from a property on land and applying it to one on sea while making the most of the yacht's sun-drenched decks. First, Georgantas created a convertible dining area on the upper deck "so the social space would be both inside and outside." She also designed a private sunbathing nook on top of the cabin house. Sleeping quarters were decorated with sheer white linen curtains to allow in sunlight, and oversize throw pillows were made to go from the bedrooms to the decks.

She lightened the yacht's main living space with bright white and accents of true red, with the seating piped in camel-colored leather for added texture. "I wanted that Italian, classic, old-world look, but still updated and very today," she says. High-performance fabrics with a 10-year warranty allowed her to use white on the seating even though this is a busy charter vessel. The decorative pillows are not the same in every space, but they are interchangeable with others anywhere on the boat, keeping the look tidy. "As things get shifted around, it all works together as one cohesive unit," Georgantas explains.

In the yachting world, the *Northern Star* is something of a legend. Produced by the renowned, Maine-based Hinckley Company, the 76-foot sailing vessel was custom-built—slowly, over the course of two years in the early '90s—by 175 men for a Norwegian aristocrat. The interiors are all solid, raised-panel mahogany, with thoughtfully detailed spaces for living and storage. It's heavy, sleek, and takes to the ocean with the smoothest, easiest glide. "It's a classic beauty," says Barry Hinckley, whose father was involved in the yacht's construction. "There's something about the design lines of a Hinckley. She stands out from the crowd."

It's this one-of-a-kind quality that led Apteker to buy the yacht for his event business last fall, even though he was looking for no such thing. Longwood Venues & Destinations added the *Northern Star* to its Longwood Fleet of offshore charters. "It was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity," Apteker says.

The amenities are sumptuous, but Barry Hinckley thinks the real allure of a yacht is the new perspective it offers. For example, of the thousands of islands off Maine's coast, more than 90 percent can be reached only by boat. Most people never see them. Most people never approach Nantucket other than by ferry. "It's quite an enlightening experience," Hinckley says. "You get to see the world in a very fresh and untouched sense." **BC**



THE CHARTER EXPERIENCE

Charter a yacht for a day or a weekend and get the royal treatment.

Leah Collins, owner of Nantucket Mermaids Nautical Concierge *(508-472-4771; nantucketmermaids.com)*, which charters the *Northern Star* and other yachts, likens chartering a yacht to staying in a five-star hotel—but one where the view changes every day. "What sets us apart is the option to take luxury yachts that would normally charter out for a week or more for shorter-term, weekend, or even day charters," Collins says. "That allows access to a whole other world of yachting." Here are three options:

Northern Star. The *Northern Star*, which sleeps eight in four staterooms, comes with a captain and a chef (a mate and stewardess are also available). All food and wine is included and tailored to your tastes.

Slow and Steady. This Australian-built Duchess of Longwood cruiser yacht allows you to intimately explore the coastline of New England. Featuring two cabins and a separate entertainment area, the yacht is built for exploring shallow waters.

Adventure Island. This 110-foot luxury motor yacht offers the versatility of a day on the open waves or a platform from which to scuba dive, kayak, and jet ski.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY STEVE EDSON (YACHT, WHEEL, INTERIOR); CAILTYN BRANSFIELD (COLLINS)