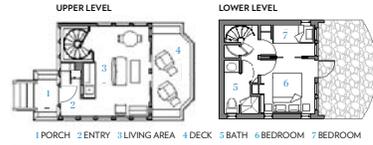


# CAPE ESCAPE

A cleverly designed Chatham guest house proves that bigger isn't always better. BY JACI CONRY



Few places feel more serene than this tree-shrouded abode, perched on the edge of a marsh overlooking the Cape's majestic Pleasant Bay. Of course, it took some very inspired design choices to get it that way. Built on an ailing building's modest footprint, the 512-square-foot guest cottage—dubbed the "Hen House" by the homeowners for the original structure's subtle resemblance to a chicken coop—was the brainchild of the team at **POLHEMUS SAVERY DASILVA ARCHITECTS BUILDERS**, who tricked out the space with a kitchenette, sleeping quarters for four, and plenty of room to enjoy the views. Here, principal architect John DaSilva offers his insights on maximizing a compact floor plan.



### GO SPIRAL

The home's double-helix spiral staircase is beautiful, but it also serves an important purpose: With no landing required, it has a much smaller footprint. "Wedge-shaped treads with no risers take up considerably less floor space than a traditional staircase," DaSilva says.

### THINK NAUTICALLY

To create two bedrooms in the walkout basement, DaSilva took cues from the way spaces are arranged on boats: Since standard closets wouldn't fit, the architect added open shelving and space for hanging clothing on one wall, and installed small inset light fixtures on the wall above the bed.

### WARM WITH WOOD

To enhance the home's cozy ambiance, DaSilva clad the walls and ceiling in unfinished vertical-grain fir, a common flooring material in 19th-century coastal New England homes. "The experience is something like being inside a grand cocoon, or in the cabin of a boat," he says.



### ISOLATE THE ENTRANCE

It may seem counterintuitive, but creating a separate foyer is an absolute must, even in a tiny space. "It makes the living space feel more private and comfortable and allows you to let the entry be messy," DaSilva says. Just inside the guest house's main door, a small bench sits next to an open closet designed for shoes and coats, with upper compartments providing concealed storage.

### PAIR FORM AND FUNCTION

Layouts that cleverly divide the living quarters can create the illusion of space. The kitchenette in this home, for example, stands like a piece of furniture between thin fir walls, offering a view to the front door through a window-like interior opening in front of the sink. "Since the kitchenette doesn't touch an exterior wall, it's self-contained and feels like its own entity," DaSilva says.

### FURNISH MODESTLY

Rather than obstruct the coastal view with a typical media stand, DaSilva designed a narrow fir cabinet with a door at the top, out of which the television rises via a motorized lift. With the initials HH (Hen House) inscribed on the front doors, the piece complements the spare, clean-lined furniture and blends effortlessly into the petite living area.

