

# isle of play



Cedar shingles and stucco convey a low-key sense of luxury.

Designer Andrew Howard sets his sights on the jewel-toned Atlantic for outfitting one family's vibrant, anything-goes vacation home in the Bahamas

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## Go all in with blue.

"There was no thought to using any other color on the terrace," says designer Andrew Howard of the bright turquoise fabrics on the deck, which offers an elevated view of the jewel-toned ocean. Vintage, Chippendale-inspired ironwork mixes with new pencil-reed sofas. The tile flooring is coral stone.



“OWNING A HOUSE IN BAKER’S BAY was never part of our plan,” says Susan Grattan, four years after her first visit to the Bahamian resort on Great Guana Cay, a wisp of an island separating the Sea of Abaco and the Atlantic Ocean. In fact, she and her husband, Tad, didn’t have an island house in their sights at all. “We live along the coast in north Florida, so it seemed a little redundant,” she adds.

But a rainy day in Hopetown changed all that. “We were visiting friends in the Abacos, and the weather, which is normally flawless, had been bad for days,” Susan recalls. “One day, when it eased up, we decided to visit Baker’s Bay. On the boat ride over, the clouds cleared and the sun peeked out. The Sea of Abaco was calm, and everything about that trip was suddenly perfect.” They liked it so much, they returned 10 days later to make sure the feeling wasn’t a fluke. But the more they discovered about the family-centric island community (Baker’s Bay Golf & Ocean Club), the more they connected with it. “We’re always drawn to outdoor activities, and this seemed a lot like summer camp,” says Susan, whose two sons—Will, 18, and Henry, 16—quickly took to morning snorkeling jaunts to catch lobsters or hitting golf balls in board shorts and bare feet. “It’s so casual, we really loved it immediately,” she says.

A house of their own followed, designed in the spirit of this laid-back ethos. “Second homes, especially here in the islands, should be worry-proof,” says Jacksonville-based designer Andrew Howard, who had worked with the couple on their house in Florida. “You should be able to put a drink down anywhere, and sit down in a wet bathing suit—the house needs to be as relaxed as the island itself.” With that in mind, here’s a look at how he ensured the stucco and cedar-shingle home lives up to its beautiful, barefoot setting.

### Give the ocean the stage.

“Blue and green are everywhere you look outside, so I tried to keep at least one of those colors—sometimes both—in each of the rooms,” says Howard. The sofa in the living room is upholstered in outdoor fabric—“You could pull this bad boy right outside to pool for a party,” he notes—and the coffee table is wrapped in raffia. Along with positioning only low-profile furniture in front of the windows, the designer kept the room’s pattern mix minimal. “There’s a time to really shake things up with lots of prints, but not when you want to keep the attention on the view,” he says.



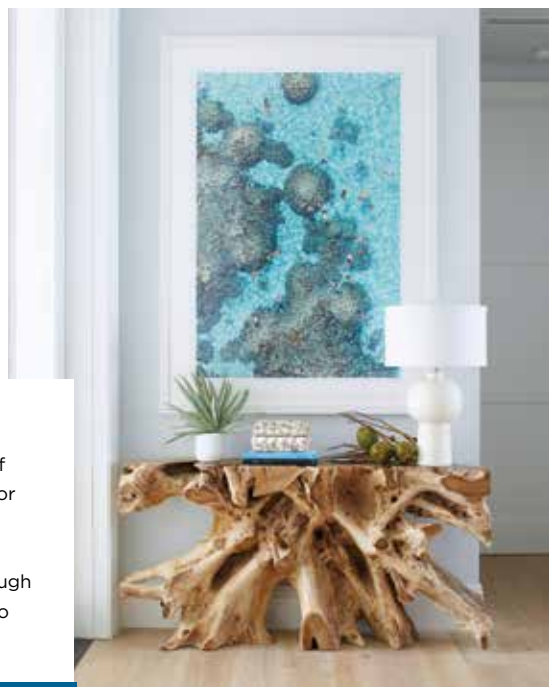


### DESIGNER SECRET

Choose white oak flooring (in 6- or 8-inch planks) in homes that have to withstand beach traffic and moisture. "It's one of the hardest woods out there, whereas softer woods, like pine, tend to damage and dent."

### Tone down your materials.

Howard took a quiet, somewhat restrained approach to the kitchen. "In a house where 50 percent of the walls are glass, you don't need surfaces to be too shimmery," he says. Instead, he emphasized texture, choosing woven rattan lighting, French bistro-style stools crafted of woven plastic, and muted ceramic backsplash tiles that subtly vary in color, evoking the movement of water.



### Embrace watercolor.

Just inside the front door hangs an aerial photo of a reef in Bora Bora. "The water in the art is the exact same color as in the Bahamas," says Howard, noting that he wanted to amplify the connection to the ocean, which is visible from the entry. The sculptural wood table is narrow enough to fit the slim space behind the door, "and it's organic, so it doesn't detract attention from the view," he adds.



### DESIGNER SECRET

Leave the corners of intersecting glass walls bare of draperies to help the room feel more nestled in the environment.

### Hunt for older treasures.

In the open dining room, Howard paired new, painted bamboo dining chairs with a vintage rattan-wrapped table he found at a shop in Palm Beach. "I always bring plenty of older pieces to new houses to layer in character," he says. A beaded shell chandelier lets light pass through and doesn't block the view.



### Play the long game.

Howard designed the built-in bunks in the boys' room as singles above, doubles below, and kept the pattern mix simple. "In rooms that will eventually have to work as well for teenagers as they did for young children, don't overdo it," he says. "You want to give teenagers some leeway." Howard used a simple striped pattern on the shades and opted for small, flush-mount reading sconces. "Bunk lighting should extend no more than six inches out from the wall to avoid head bumps," he says.

#### DESIGNER SECRET

For custom bunks, extend the length of twin beds to 80 inches (75 is standard) and outfit with twin XL mattresses. These sleep more like a queen or king, and remain more functional as kids grow up.



### Walk on the wild side.

Susan wanted one guest room that would be completely unexpected. "Everything on the island is so upbeat and fun, I knew the house could handle something with so much bright, colorful pattern," she says. Howard agrees: "Riding your bike here, you'll see many of the colors in this floral in the landscape, and some of the exact plants," he says. The painted bamboo bed (originally dark wood) tempers the lively print and lends a sense of age to the room. "We painted the green detailing into the banding to add a bit more character," Howard notes.

### Look to the landscape.

Each of the three "adult" bedrooms includes a pattern reflective of the foliage and animal life outdoors. For instance, in the master bedroom, Howard chose a tropical leaf pattern for the windows, complemented it with a smaller scale medallion print, and layered in a pale green coverlet and rug.



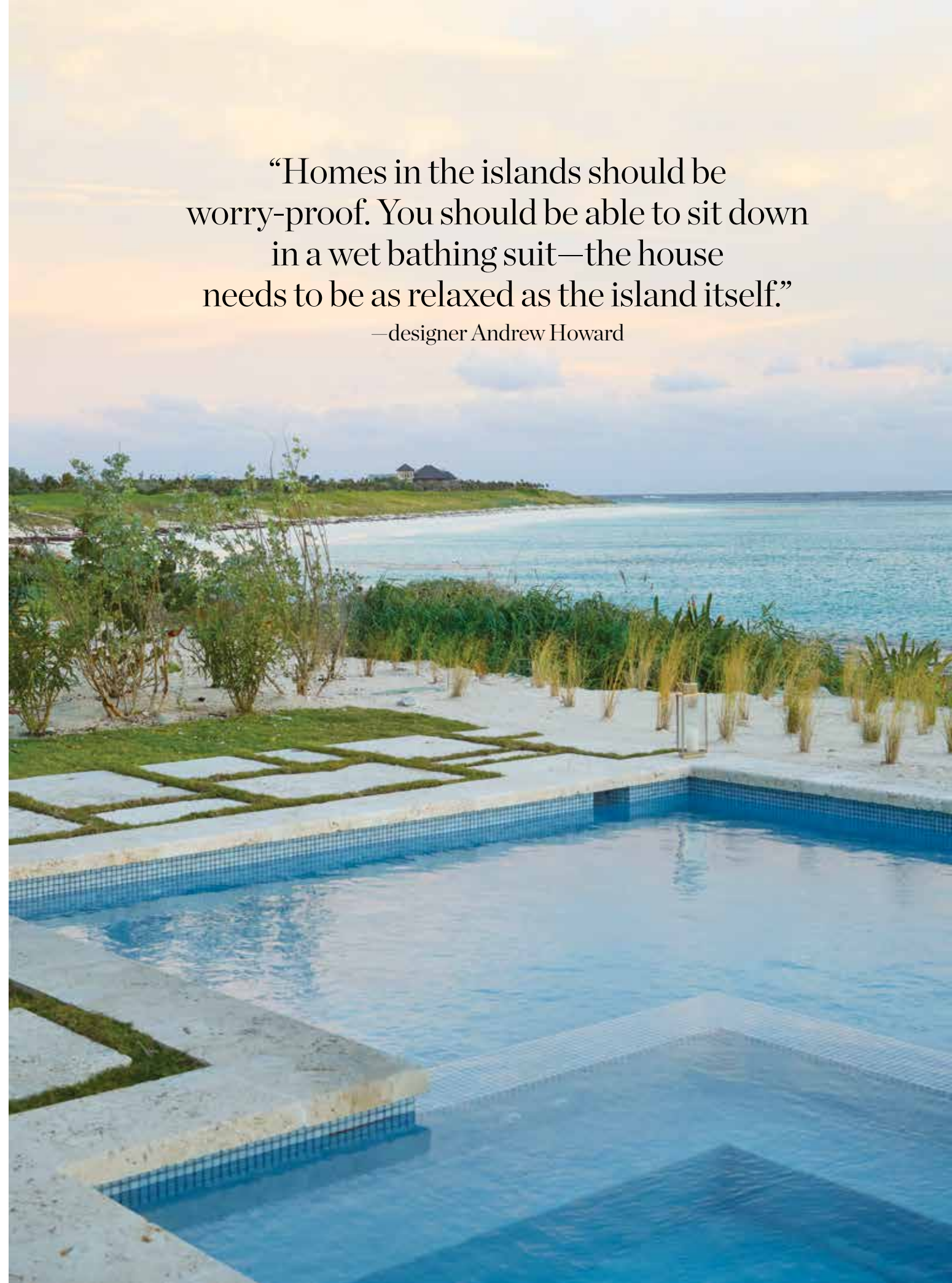


### Set a high bar.

A vibrant wet bar is tucked into the hall on the second floor, which is composed of the two guest bedrooms. “I wanted to add in an element that brings more functionality to the deck, and really draws people upstairs,” says Howard. The deep blue porcelain backsplash bounces natural light into the hall, and quirky accessories—for instance, a brilliant red sea fan and a Nassau Royale rum liqueur bottle—energize the nook with personality.

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—designer Andrew Howard



### Choose a head-lining pattern.

“We call this ‘the turtle room,’” says Howard of the artful likenesses of the sea creatures climbing the headboard. “A pattern like this is a great tool when you want to keep the design pretty simple.” Solid blue Roman shades and coral lamps, along with woven rattan nightstands, bring in color and texture, and a cabana-striped rug and upholstered stools layer in familiar prints without overwhelming the room.

