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Who needs a second
*home when you can have
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Most people get carried away conjuring up the particulars of a vacation home: ocean views straight to the horizon, a patio fireplace to take the chill off the evening, a pool warming in the morning sun for that first invigorating swim of the day. Californians Trent and Marilyn Merrill pictured all of this and more, but they didn't want to travel to a second house for the experience. Instead, they made the dream come true at home.

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Basking under clear skies, the pool area warms up early in the morning. Designer David Olin sited the home for best exposures to the sun, breezes, and views. Inset: Every Sunday, the family gathers for dinner to catch up on the week's happenings. Although Trent and Marilyn will be empty nesters in a few years, they've designated rooms for all three kids. "We wanted them to have bedrooms they can always come home to," Marilyn says.

The Merrills fashioned their ultimate escape on a 1/2-acre property atop a bluff in Palos Verdes Estates, south of Los Angeles. "We wanted one house we absolutely love and use every way we can—complete with the beach,

great views, surfing, and hiking nearby," Marilyn says. "Our idea was to come home to a place we share with our children that makes us feel like we're all on vacation together."

The couple's determination came after owning several consecutive vacation houses in California. "We were constantly splitting our time

For the family room, designer Lynda Murray chose blue upholstery that connects with the vast expanse of sea and sky through French doors. In keeping with the low-maintenance interiors, plantings are simple and hardy. Containers feature drought-tolerant grasses, palms, and succulents.



between home and getaway,” Trent says. “The kids didn’t always want to come with us for various reasons. It was getting harder to be together.”

The decision to sell both houses and consolidate into one home happened when a long-admired piece of property became available high above Malaga Cove. Sold on the site but not on its ranch-style house, Trent envisioned a renovation with two stories, underground garages, and views on three sides.

The Merrills hired California designer David Olin, who warned the couple that the city of Palos Verdes has one of the most exacting architectural review boards in the country. The approval process, which requires satisfying the Neighborhood Compatibility Committee’s mandate



The kitchen reflects the home’s Mission influence with heavy iron fixtures and dark-wood island cabinetry. Subway tile, treated as wainscoting, lends a modern twist.

The Merrills like to entertain family and friends around the outdoor fireplace. Below: Seemingly infinite windows make the master bedroom feel like it floats atop the sea. "We've never found a view better than this," says Trent. The Merrills often spy sea lions, pelicans, and whales from their straight-out-to-sea vantage point.



against intruding on anyone's view, ultimately took a year.

Worth the wait, David's plan reflected a modified version of the California Spanish Mission style. His take on the classic utilized numerous, larger windows. He laid out an H-shape with primary rooms on the ends so the family could see the ocean.

Patios flow off these first-floor rooms and gaze upon a coastline stretching from Redondo Beach to Malibu. Trent says he feels like he's on a ship's bow when pelicans fly past

the windows. He keeps a collection of binoculars in the family room for watching ships, whales, and sea lions beyond the west patio. During dinner parties, Marilyn hides away the pocket doors in the centrally placed dining room to open the room to the pool on one side and the L.A. lights on the other.

To enhance these vistas, the couple turned to L.A. designer Lynda Murray for an interior scheme. "I didn't want to take away from the views with too much furniture," Lynda says. By avoiding unnecessary decoration and making every piece count, she simplified the rooms for informal living. The house is filled with natural and

beachy elements: bamboo shades, sisal rugs, hardwood floors, and a flagstone deck. Upholstery in marine blues, greens, and white mingle with the Mission style's traditional earth tones. In the sparse master bedroom, the vast coastline provides all the necessary adornment. Says Marilyn, "Short of room service, this is as close to being on vacation as you can get." 🌿

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