



Sand Between the Toes

By Kate Farr; photography by Helen Jenkins

A relaxed family home with some surprisingly chic additions make the Shek O pad of CAT BENTOTE a beachside retreat with a difference.

Stepping into the Bentote family's eclectic and stylish Shek O home, it's easy to see what first drew them to this tranquil beachfront corner of Hong Kong. Along with six-year-old Imogen and three-year-old Ethan, Cat and Andy originally relocated to Stanley from Shanghai, where they had spent four years soaking up the city's vibrant culture and international lifestyle.

In Cat's own words, "After a year in Stanley enjoying long-forgotten favourites in the grocery store we began to miss China and all the mind-blowing things we experienced there each day. In a smaller and quieter way, Shek O offers the same authenticity and uniqueness," and so the family once again upped sticks and headed to their current location, an 1,800-square-foot ground-floor apartment in Shek O village.



Settling in

Ideally positioned midway between the children's schools, it was immediately apparent that the new location had plenty to offer the family. "Shek O has great walkability and standout eateries, plus the beach, the surrounding hikes and the playgrounds. Yes, the parking is a nightmare in summer, and sometimes – on my sixth trip of the day up and down Shek O road – I find myself gritting my teeth, but the views out of the window are so spectacular that I quickly unclench!"

Although the family's Stanley apartment was larger than their current home, their new home offered that

rare-in-Hong Kong combination of good value with excellent flow and efficiency. A few nips and tucks to the space, including installing a new IKEA kitchen and creating a spectacular garden out of an old parking space allowed the Bentotes to make the space their own, while preserving plenty of the character that had attracted the family to the property in the first place.

From the ancient bamboo railings on the balcony to the mismatched floor – a reminder of the building's previous life as two separate dwellings – the property is about as far from a cookie-cutter Hong Kong apartment as it's possible to get. A long hallway

leads to an open-plan living and dining room, with virtually all the other rooms opening off this space, creating a central hub for the family and making the most of the apartment's abundance of natural light and seaside views.

When it comes to décor, design-loving Cat and Andy's tastes are eclectic, but surprisingly practical. Cat says, "Much of our furniture was bespoke-made in Shanghai by Kava Kava Home and ASIG Design, and it has stood up to five house moves and hauling up and down balconies on ropes beautifully! Here in Hong Kong, we added a few pieces from TREE, Indigo Living and Bowerbird, and try to keep IKEA mostly to the kitchen."

Living room and bedrooms

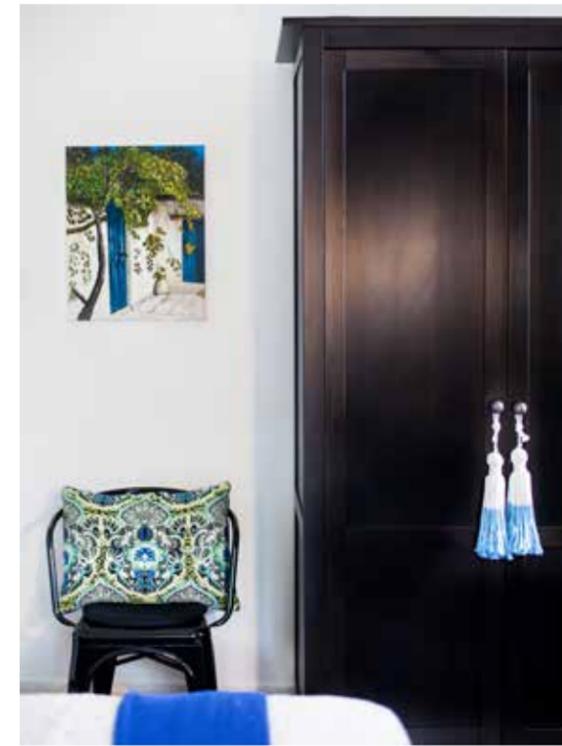
The striking central family space acts not only as the heart of the home, but also as a living gallery to display the family's collection of original artwork. The Bentotes' impressive collection is carefully curated, comprising Shanghai-bought replicas, young British artists sourced from the Royal Academy's summer exhibit and emerging contemporary Chinese artists, including one piece in red, ochre, black and gold so large that it gives the entire living space its theme. The room also features a DLM table, bar stools by Hay and a contemporary lime-washed dining table that Cat has



"now hidden under a Cath Kidston oil cloth, as it doesn't fit in at all!"

The children's bedroom is generously sized, allowing space for sharing without squabbles, and is furnished with a combination of bespoke and high street finds, including a striking turquoise Chinese-style bookcase and toy cabinet and bedding by Joules and ASpace. The kids' room benefits from its own cute Jack-and-Jill ensuite bathroom, which Cat accessorised with a statement Jonathan Adler shower curtain and baskets by TREE.

Mum and Dad's room is no less of a welcome sanctuary, with a statement black chinoiserie bed and bespoke drawers from Kava Kava Home, a reclaimed wooden bench from TREE, replica Arne Jacobsen desk lights by J4Kids and White Company bed linen adding an air of tranquillity.



Alfresco space

The outside of the property features a talking-point garden, with bamboo walls, an artificial turf lawn, a decked area with comfortable sofas and a bar for entertaining – and a hot tub with a story!

Cat elaborates: "We bought the hot tub from Toto Living for our Stanley rooftop and the company was great, visiting several times to assess whether a huge crane could lift the single-piece six-person tub up four storeys. Thank goodness they returned to help it make the move to Shek O! At one point it looked like we'd need a large crane to lift it down from our Stanley rooftop, a lorry to transport it to outside Shek O village and then eight strong men to transfer it by hand onto a smaller truck that would make it through the narrow village lanes. Fortunately, the lorry made it through the village and so the hot tub made it to our new home!"

When it comes to explaining why their self-proclaimed "beach shack" holds so much appeal, Cat doesn't hesitate: "Our home suits our lifestyle, enabling us to be all together even when enjoying separate activities, and the sea view means that even when it's too hot to be outside, we're still by the beach."

Add in a family lunch in the garden and a glass or two of champagne in the hot tub, and Shek O seems like a little slice of paradise on the Southside.





Cat's

Recommendations

Home & Garden

Bowerbird

Unit 5, Level 2, 2 Lee Lok Street,
Ap Lei Chau
2552 2727 | bowerbird-home.com

Homeless

homeless.hk

Indigo Living

6/F, Horizon Plaza, 2 Lee Wing
Street, Ap Lei Chau
2555 0540 | indigo-living.com

Loveramics

Shop 207, Level 2, The Pulse,
28 Beach Road, Repulse Bay
2994 1289 | loveramics.com

Manks

3/F, The Factory,
1 Yip Fat Street, Wong Chuk Hang
2522 2115 | manks.com

Marimekko

G/F, Lai Chi Building,
42-52 Leighton Road, Causeway Bay
2203 4214 | marimekko.com

Tai Ping Carpets

taipingcarpets.com

Tori Murphy linens and cushions

torimurphy.com

Toto Living

21/F, Gee Chang Hong Centre,
65 Wong Chuk Hang Road, Aberdeen
2580 1758 | toto-living.com.hk

Overseas Stores

ASpace

aspace.co.uk

M50 Art Hub, Shanghai

m50.com.cn

Kava Kava Home

kavakavahome.com 

