

Above the PROMENADE

A last minute change of holiday plans led interior designer Anji and her husband Barry to their seafront home

WORDS AND STYLING ABIGAIL EDWARDS/NARRATIVES
PHOTOGRAPHY ALUN CALLENDER/NARRATIVES



EXTERIOR
Formerly a coastguard's lookout, the apartment is perched right at the top of a vivid pink building overlooking the sands at Cromer




SEAFRONT
Anji and Barry enjoy walking on the beach with their miniature Yorkshire terrier Fifi



TERRACE
With uninterrupted sea views, the large balcony is a glorious suntrap



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'I still find the walk
along the clifftops
to the next village
incredibly beautiful,'
SAYS ANJI

LIVING AREA
The windowseat, built
by one of Anji's former
colleagues from Smallbone
of Devizes, and an
animal-print chair found in
Hong Kong are perfect
spots for enjoying the sea



TERRACE

Anji chose pink chairs from Ikea and a bright yellow umbrella that was a souvenir from a trip to Hong Kong to enhance the building's pink paintwork



KITCHEN

A local company supplied the units and the bar stools are from Ikea

Looking forward to a holiday in the Italian sun, Anji and Barry Connell were disappointed when their flights were cancelled at the last minute and they were forced to change their plans. After sticking a pin in a map to find a new destination, they travelled to the north Norfolk coast – and fate stepped in.

The couple hadn't booked accommodation for this hastily reorganised break. They drove across the county admiring the views along the way, but had no luck in finding a hotel with a vacancy until they arrived in Cromer. 'It was late at night but we managed to get a room in a pub on the seafront,' says Anji. 'The next morning I opened the curtains and saw an extraordinary and extremely pink Georgian building next door with an apartment advertised for sale. We were intrigued and although we weren't planning to buy, we contacted the estate agent straight away and arranged to go and see it.'

Located on the top floor of the building, the apartment had originally been the coastguard's lookout and the sea was visible from all the living room windows. The couple couldn't resist it and despite living and working in London – Anji, 54, as an interior designer and Barry, 54, as a military doctor – they put in an offer, which was accepted.

They weren't able to take possession immediately as there were some outstanding legal issues that took a while to sort out. But in the meantime Anji and Barry drove to Cromer every weekend and the sympathetic vendor would hand over a key so they could let themselves in. 'We'd sit surrounded by the woodchip wallpaper and green carpet, eating fish and chips or crab sandwiches that we bought from the pier and then go back to London,' recalls Anji. 'Despite the decor, the apartment had a lovely atmosphere and we were so grateful to the

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BEDROOM
A local builder built the bunk beds in the guest room to Anji's design. The room is small and has very high ceilings so it was a good way of making the most of the space



HALLWAY
Anji designed the cupboards to look like beach huts and the extra storage means the guest bedroom is clutter-free



BATHROOM
The ceramic sailor on the windowsill came from an antiques fair in Shanghai. 'It combines both of our loves: the sea and China,' says Anji

vendor. I think he knew how much we loved the place and how desperate we were to be there.'

The couple continued to visit every weekend once the sale had finally gone through. 'We would stay here as long as possible; I always thought I'd go stir crazy in the country but this was amazing. I couldn't get enough of the sea view,' says Anji.

'We spent the first couple of years living in the apartment just as it was, although we did take up the carpets and paint the walls,' she says. But once they removed the woodchip wallpaper Anji was on a roll and set about redesigning the entire space. Walls were clad in wooden panelling for a more coastal look and bunk beds were built in the smaller bedroom to provide a place for guests to sleep without blocking the view from the large window. Anji also indulged her passion for colour, painting the walls a sunny yellow and layering the beds with bright bedlinen.

After several years commuting between London and Norfolk and an extended stay in Hong Kong where Barry opened a psychiatric practice, the couple returned to Cromer full time and became immersed in Norfolk life. 'It was easy to be self-sufficient when we were visiting at weekends but once we moved here permanently it was quite a different prospect. There are interesting bars and restaurants in the town that weren't open when we first came here. We've had to go out and make new friends and have met some lovely people including fashion and textile designers. There are lots of very creative people living here.'

As Anji explains: 'Despite having travelled the world I still find the walk along the cliff from Cromer to the next village incredibly beautiful. I never get over its magic. Looking down to the vast, white sandy beach below is both inspiring and restorative.'

● For information on Anji's interior design business see <http://anjiconnelldesign.4format.com>

FOR STORE DETAILS SEE 'WHERE TO BUY' PAGE

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SAYS ANJI



BEDROOM

The vibrant Designers Guild bedlinen complements the striking painting above the bed, which Anji bought in Hong Kong

