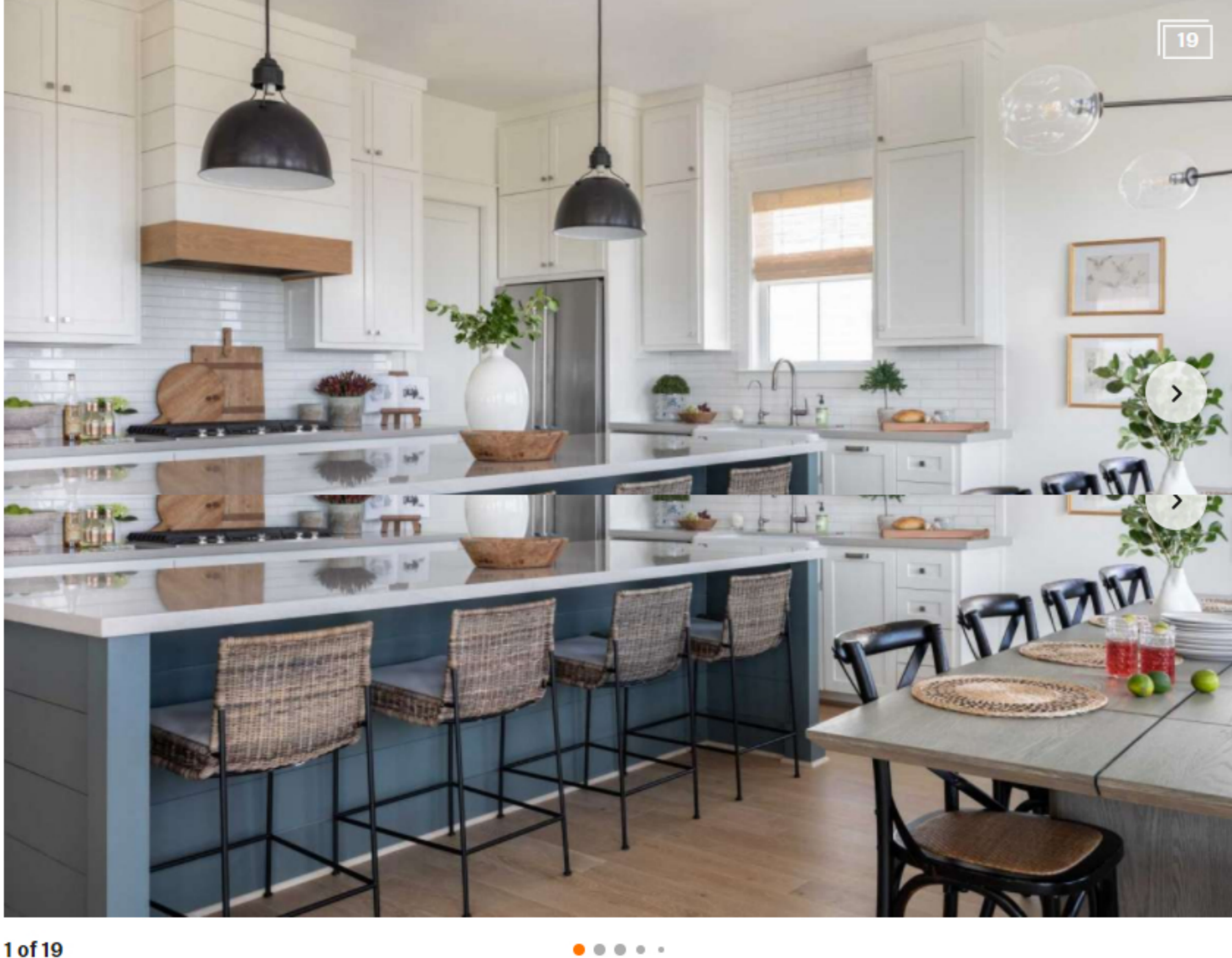


# Galveston beach home a game-changer for vacation-starved Houston family with 3 young kids

Diane Cowen, Staff writer

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The Galveston vacation home of Trisha and Eric English.

Kerry Kirk Photography

With three young sons, getting away for vacation was increasingly difficult for Eric and Trisha English. So they decided to simplify getaway opportunities.

The Houston couple put Galveston on their radar and settled for the laid-back Pointe West neighborhood nearly all the way to the San Luis Pass.

In Houston, they live in the Heights, across from the ballpark where sons Ashton, 8, Owen, 6, and Boyd, 4, play Little League. Their street is busy, so life for the kids is more restricted, compared to their almost free-range lifestyle at their beachside vacation house, where they make new friends and chase ice cream trucks on weekends.

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And Galveston is close enough that the kids never complain about the drive. For Trisha and Eric, both attorneys, it's much less hassle than maneuvering vacation schedules whenever they want to go somewhere.

They finished building their three-story island home – designed by architect Cate Black of [RISE Architecture and Design](#) and interior designer Katie Davis of [Katie Davis Design](#) and built by [Seaside Construction](#) – just as the coronavirus pandemic shutdown hit.

The Englishes enjoy the house often on weekends and earlier in the pandemic would come for weeks at a time since work-from-home and school-from-home meant that Galveston could be their base. Even if the boys have games on Saturdays, staying just one night can be rejuvenating.

“We see the sunrise over the ocean and the sunset over the bay,” said Eric, who specializes in corporate restructuring and bankruptcy at the Porter Hedges law firm. “Even cleaning up here, sweeping the garage, I enjoy it. I’m so happy when I’m here that I’m happy even when I’m sweeping the floor.”

“One advantage we love is that it’s more likely that our friends will actually come and visit with us here,” said Trisha, 41, who has a solo practice and specializes in estate planning and probate, trust and estate litigation, [Trisha English Law](#). “Vacationing with friends is a big logistical issue. They’re more likely to come and visit for a beach weekend.”

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Trisha and Eric, natives of the Northwest, met in college and married later when they were law school students at Pepperdine University in California. They landed in Houston for clerk jobs with federal judges and found such a welcoming community – both in work and in life – that they stayed.

They frequently invite a family or two to join them, and each couple gets a bedroom while the kids pile into the six-bed bunk room.

Each bunk has its own electrical outlet and reading light, and the room is decorated in a blue-and-white palette with shiplap and the same white oak floors that are found elsewhere in the house.

The main living area on the first floor – living room, dining area and kitchen – is what Eric calls “the grownup floor.”

White walls and shiplap mixed with a white sofa and a pair of swivel chairs and a blue sofa – all in performance fabrics – are warmed up with natural seagrass window shades and white oak flooring, along with a little more white oak on the rim of the range hood in the kitchen and fireplace mantel in the living room.

The dining area is casual and inviting, with a slightly rustic wood table that can hold up to 12 people, contemporary wood chairs painted black and a Sputnik-style chandelier with a black matte finish and clear glass globes.

In the kitchen, Davis recommended white subway tile that would give both a clean look and be cost effective.

The front powder bathroom is small but full of charm. Its shiplap was painted Benjamin Moore’s “Lead Gray,” a deep, dark blue-gray, and is paired with [black-and-white floor tile](#).

The Englishes splurged in the primary bedroom suite, with a freestanding bathtub that Trisha doesn’t have in her bathroom in Houston. They used quartz for kitchen counters but chose luxurious Carrara marble for this bathroom.

Davis noted that many stone vendors try to dissuade customers from choosing softer marbles to avoid post-installation complaints that it stains or gets knicked too easily.

Trisha left her job with a large law firm before the birth of their third child, and she was drawn to both Davis and her architect, Black, because they were in similar life experiences: young mothers leaving a job or profession to strike out on their own. Davis, in fact, was an attorney before she shifted to interior design.

“This house made me realize how much the rugs make every room so much better,” Trisha said. “We would go home and think, ‘Yeah, we need to up our rug game.’”

So they’re working with Davis again on that house, refreshing their kitchen, building a new garage with a primary suite above it and creating another bedroom and a new playroom for their boys.

“The Englishes live in the Heights down the street from me. It was a blast to go down there and see Galveston in all four seasons as we worked on the house,” Davis said. “I grew up here but typically only went down there in the summer. It’s such a different experience. The minute you hit the deck, it is so peaceful and your cares go out the window.”

Black is a native of the Houston area and moved to Galveston with her husband more than a decade ago. She had worked for a larger firm, but launching her own business allowed her to have a better work-life balance.

Now, much of her residential design is for beachfront or vacation homes, so bringing in the beautiful views is offset by the need to keep the harsh sunlight out, she said.

That means that communal public spaces – the Englishes’ “grownup floor” – always face the water. Beachfront lots tend to be narrow, so designs go vertical.

“As you go up, you have to think, ‘What do we want to face the water?’ and then lay it out on the second and third floors,” Black said. “Out there, if you’re high enough, you have a view to the beach *and* the bay.”

Balconies and decks factor into entertaining spaces. But those decks – at least 10 feet deep – also create an overhang to keep the sun out when big windows are preferred, letting form, function and energy efficiency all work together.

Because of the hot, humid climate, engineered wood is a better option over regular hardwoods, and higher-end paints and even caulking have to be able to handle the more corrosive salty air, Black said.

The Englishes are so happy with their beach house that it made them harsher critics of their home in the Heights, a two-story Craftsman.

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Diane Cowen has worked at the Houston Chronicle since 2000 and currently its architecture and home design writer. Prior to working for the Chronicle, she worked at the South Bend (Ind.) Tribune and at the Shelbyville (Ind.) News. She is a graduate of Purdue University and is the author of a cookbook, “Sunday Dinners: Food, Family and Faith from our Favorite Pastors.”

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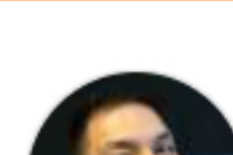
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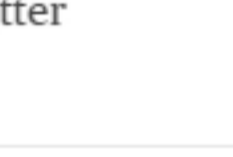
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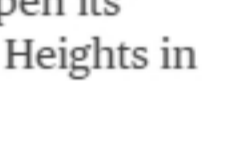
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