

COTTAGE LUXURY

THIS ENDURING STYLE
IS ALL ABOUT ATMOSPHERE
AND A COLLECTED LOOK



Comfy, inviting, and abounding with charm, “cottage” is a style of decor that can feel luxurious yet familiar at the same time. If you picture a cottage, you’ll likely imagine painted woodwork, calming colors, and an easy-breezy home. But this enduring style can be tailored to any taste and take on many faces.

“Cottage-style is more about atmosphere than any particular decorating style,” says Georgia Zikas, an interior designer in West Hartford, Conn. Zikas explains that cottage decor can be translated in different ways and include casual furnishings, durable, easy-to-maintain fabrics, and a mélange of colors, patterns, and textures contributing to a collected look. “Ultimately, the core of cottage design is about relaxed, laid-back luxury as opposed to everything needing to fit a certain aesthetic vibe.”

Paige Gray, co-founder and principal at Parker & Harlow in Powell River, British Columbia, agrees, stating that decorating in the cottage style is about staying authentic to your lifestyle. “Look at what motivates you and makes you feel most comfortable,” she advises.

LET NATURE INSPIRE

A home’s backdrop is perhaps the most obvious place to glean inspiration for any interior, cottage decor included.

“If the landscape is bustling with raw organic textures, bluffs, and wild coastline with dense woodlands, I prefer the interiors to reflect a deeper tonal range with more attention focused on bringing those organic touches into the home,” Gray says. In which case, she’d probably pick warm earth tones and bold woven textures. But if the cottage is seaside, she prefers a soft white interior to play off the beach and serenity of the ocean.

Still, she says, “there’s something also very refreshing when beachside cottages get bold with unexpected color.” While red may make some homeowners anxious, “the statement hue could spark a fond recollection for another. If it reminds you of dockside buoys and memories of a childhood lighthouse, go with it,” she says.

Elevated tradition, as seen in this room in a Connecticut home decorated by Georgia Zikas, is one of the characteristics of cottage style.



ESTABLISH THE FRAMEWORK

Custom woodwork is an excellent starting point, embellishing the architecture before decorating.

“Millwork is always a wonderful element to add into a room because it adds instant depth and charm,” Zikas says. “I love beadboard or wainscoting to help frame a space that perhaps needs a bit more definition.” She suggests adding wood paneling to a sunroom, dining room, or bedroom. But don’t overdo it. “Avoid the trend of putting paneling in every room of the house,” she stresses. “It can start to make the space feel one-dimensional, defeating the purpose of using beadboard to add dimension.”

Zikas recommends purchasing high-quality furnishings and upscale draperies and lighting first to shape a room’s framework. After confirming those key components, introduce fun accents “to bring the cottage feel to life.”

STAY SIMPLE AND PRACTICAL

“Keep things simple and veer away from anything that feels clichéd,” Gray says. “Have storage solutions to keep practical items like board games and crafts tucked away when not in use. Kitchens should also be straightforward yet elegant. Choose low-maintenance fixtures and finishes, but one exception is an old-world stove.” Gray recommends an antique look-alike to boost the cottage theme.

In terms of furniture, slipcovers are pragmatic, attractive, and often quintessential to the cottage style. A well-fitted slipcovered sofa or pair of lounge chairs can enhance a room’s design. “It’s a dying craft, but worth

the investment to have slips that properly fit your furniture,” Gray says. She recommends going with custom slipcovers in durable fabrics. “As lovely as a 100% linen fabric looks, the fabric industry has evolved so much over the past decade and getting a textile with a poly mix in it will be much more beneficial for wear and tear as well as longevity.”

To keep a high-end aesthetic, steer clear of frilly fringe skirts and overly stuffed sofas, but there’s no need to avoid printed fabrics. “A club chair in a ticking stripe is a fabulous option for a cottage,” Zikas says.

ULTIMATELY, CURATE AND COLLECT

The “collected look” may be the decor style’s signature, so curating pieces slowly will lend charm and appeal. “Overall, let your space breathe and allow your home to gather touches over time,” Gray says. “Some of the best cottage spaces I’ve toured over the years have that certain collected vibe that only comes from years of letting a home evolve with you and your lifestyle.” For example, a medley of cups in the cupboard can boost that curated look. “I don’t think I’ve been in a single cottage where all the coffee mugs match, and I love that,” she says.

According to Zikas, the finishing touches are all about character and comfort and tastefully mixing and matching, traits for which cottage design is most recognized and celebrated. “A great linen throw; a floral-printed throw pillow alongside a solid one in the same color family; a wicker lamp with a sleek lampshade; or a colorful rug to offset the neutrality of the space—all of these elements will instantly warm up your home and create that cozy, lived-in feel that cottage design is so loved for.”

An elegant yet classic kitchen by Georgia Zikas, shown above. This page, bottom right: Laid-back luxury is on display in a Connecticut living room also designed by Georgia Zikas



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