



This page, top left: the cottage has been built in the local vernacular style, with roof tiles salvaged from the shed that used to occupy the site. Top right: two reclining garden chairs from Dedon stand on the veranda. Bottom left: the full-length wrought-iron doors onto the veranda were inspired by an African lodge. A late 19th-century wicker rocking chair looks out across the lake (opposite). Bottom right: inside, a French chandelier bought in Amsterdam hangs over a table made by Ardeco Interier. The ladder leads to the children's sleeping area

SHORE FOOTED

Situated on the banks of a lake just 20 minutes from Amsterdam, this newly built holiday home fulfils a bucolic fantasy for its owners. With its clapboard exterior and salvaged roof tiles, fine oak woodwork and carefully chosen antiques, it looks as if it's been there forever, says Amicia de Moubray. Photography: Huntley Hedworth

All of the internal carpentry was executed by Ardeco Interior, which sources its wood from the Czech Republic. The blue-and-white tiles behind the sink in the kitchen area are from Makkum. The bedlinen is by Ralph Lauren





AT SOME STAGE in our lives most of us dream of escaping to a little rustic cottage. The epitome of such bucolic fantasies is surprisingly a mere 20 minutes from the less than bucolic Amsterdam. The cottage overlooks an extensive lake in the middle of a beautiful nature reserve. 'Whenever I visit I never want to leave,' says interior designer Scarlett van Ketwich Verschuur of Equilibre Interiors, who, along with her partner, Toscha Gast-van Randwijck, was largely responsible for the design of the cottage both externally and internally.

Although they are both Dutch, Scarlett and Toscha have international backgrounds and are always travelling, looking out for decorative items, new ideas and inspiration for their many jobs, which range from schemes in London to ski chalets in Verbier, all masterminded from Amsterdam.

The owners of this house are also Dutch, and they have another house in Amsterdam. Currently living abroad, they love to escape at weekends to the country. The cottage lies a short distance from the original weekend retreat. 'They thought it would be fun to decamp to a little house. It would also be so much more convenient than traipsing backwards and forwards from the lake with dripping children to the main house,' says Scarlett. An architect was involved at the outset of the planning, but Toscha and Scarlett can claim most of the credit for the end result.

'It was a huge challenge to fit everything into the 40sq m allowed by the planners,' says Scarlett. 'Our brief was for a bathroom with a bath, a kitchen, a sitting area and sleeping areas for the parents and the children, with views across the lake from every corner of the cottage. It felt like a puzzle trying to work out a plan.' The owners wanted to make the cottage look old, echoing the feel of the main house, which was built around 1900 and which Toscha and Scarlett had originally helped the owners decorate. They showed Toscha and Scarlett lots of pictures of American wooden cottages in the Adirondacks to give them an idea of their vision.

But eventually it was a picture of an African lodge which solved the problem of how to fenestrate the elevation overlooking the lake. Whopping picture windows would have

been totally against the owners' vision. A series of tall wrought-iron-framed glass doors, painted black to match the windows of the main house, enable light to come flooding into the house and those inside to look out. The vertical lines are echoed in the parents' antique French brass bed and the picket fencing demarcating the boundary between the deck and the lake.

The clapboard construction of the exterior is the local vernacular. Toscha and Scarlett planned to paint the cottage green, but the owners fell for the colour of the primer – and so it remained. The cottage is built on the site of an old shed. Happily, it was possible to reuse the antique roof tiles from the shed, helping to create a gently weathered appearance. Discreetly tucked away next door are two smaller versions of the cottage, which contain the paraphernalia of real life such as the children's bikes, deep-freezers and crates of wine. There is even a vegetable garden, which has been carefully designed and planted to look as if it has always been there.

Despite the diminutive appearance of the cottage, it has surprisingly palatial proportions. The height of the ground floor is 5m, as is the height of the mezzanine ingeniously incorporated to provide a sleeping platform for the children. 'They love the idea of climbing up a ladder to bed and sleeping on futons.'

A starting point for the overall look of the interior was a pair of old French doors found in Amsterdam, which divide the parents' sleeping area from the main living area. The doors' geometric pattern is echoed in wooden paneling on the wall behind the bed, skilfully creating a unifying theme in a restricted space. The internal oak woodwork has been carefully treated to look old by Ardeco Interier, which sources its wood from the Czech Republic. The ceiling's supporting beams were salvaged in Eemnes.

One of the most charming features is the clever idea to raise the bath platform above the bed area, so that one can lie in the bath and look out across the lake. The children, too, have a little window in the mezzanine area that they can look out from. It is a typical 19th-century Dutch window. 'We didn't want anything to look new, so we had the idea of incorporating the basin in an old, slightly chipped painted table.' Its quirkiness is totally in keeping with the overall look of the scheme. An antique French chandelier adds another eccentric note in the kitchen. Again, it has been left in its rusty state. And round the kitchen table, which was also made by Ardeco, inspired by an antique French table owned by Scarlett's parents, are old Dutch benches with painted panels reminiscent of the Pennsylvania Dutch style. Antique Dutch tiles from Makkum surround the kitchen sink. The old brass taps were found by Scarlett in Belgium. The fabrics are all by Ralph Lauren and were chosen by the owners.

The chimney, enormous for such a minuscule size of dwelling, can be explained by the fact that it functions both inside and outside, doubling as an outdoor barbecue in the summer months. It must be delightful to sit inside by a roaring fire in the winter looking out over the ice-skaters, like a scene from a 17th-century Dutch painting. And equally delightful to sit outside on the decking in the summer, listening to the birdsong and watching the boats go by ■
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Opposite: the round-headed antique window in the main bedroom is typically late 19th-century Dutch, and was found in a salvage yard. Above: old French doors divide the living area from the bedroom, and provided the starting point for the entire interior scheme. The 19th-century brass bed was bought in Amsterdam. In the corner of the room, an antique basin from Affaire d'Eau is set into a painted table