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Concerns about the strong sunlight on the west porch led to the pitched-roof, Polynesian hut design. The roof's angled edges act just like a visor, deflecting rain from the house and blocking rays until just before sunset. Traditional Carolina beach bungalow elements—high ceilings, French doors topped with transom windows, long eaves—raise the house's energy efficiency by bringing in more natural light and keeping things cool with coastal breezes and shade.

how they live now

Since they found Bald Head Island, the Cooks have celebrated quieter days with wildlife walks to see turtles, alligators, and deer on the island trail. They also enjoy fishing trips and excursions to the mainland on a boat they dock in the harbor, visible from their bedroom. "Living without a car at the beach gives us a real sense of escape from our day-to-day lives," says Drew Ann. "As soon as I set foot on the ferry from the mainland, I know I'm leaving all my tension behind and getting closer to nature."

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"WE WANTED TO BE AS CLOSE TO THE WATER AS POSSIBLE TO HEAR THE WAVES AND FEEL THE BREEZES"

—HOMEOWNER STEVE COOK