

# THE SCOTSMAN

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## Take a look at this stunning revamp of an off the beaten track Scots home

When it comes to beaches, Katerina Lewis has high expectations, which is no surprise as she hails from Australia. It is therefore rather fortunate that her husband inherited a property overlooking one of the best beaches in the world.

By [Nichola Hunter](#)

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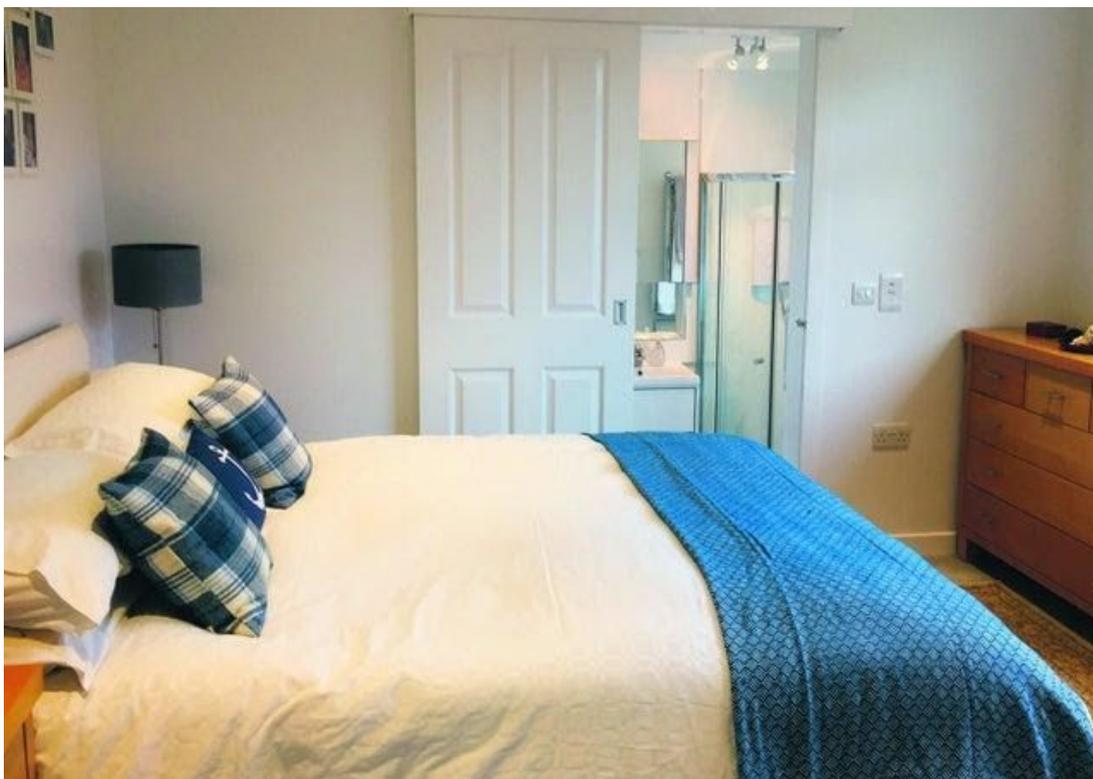


Mellon Udrigle

Mellon Udrigle is a hamlet on the north-west coast of Ross-shire and home to a multi-award-winning beach. It's also home to 3A Mellon Udrigle, which has a lengthy history as Katerina explains. "My husband's grandmother, Lily Macrae (née Maclean), was born in Mellon Udrigle into a family of crofters who had been here for generations. The family home was originally the building which is now the small barn just behind 3A. They later moved into the crofter's cottage next door which had previously been the local school.

"In the 70s, 3A was built for Lily's sister, Alice Maclean, when she retired after a career as the local district nurse. She had lived in the area for most of her life and was a well-known and much-loved member of the local community. When Alice died the house was left to my mother-in-law, and latterly to my husband David and I."

David's parents had embarked on an extension to make the property into a three-bedroom, two-bathroom house, but sadly they both passed away before it was fully complete. "It was about 90 per cent there; they'd built the shell, but they hadn't had a chance to fit the new bathrooms or upgrade the kitchen. Two years ago, we decided to complete the project.



"David spent many of his summer holidays here and when we had our own children, we continued the tradition. I can't think of a more beautiful place for children to run around and be free. We spent days building dams, sandcastles and playing on the

rocks and beach. We would go fishing in the bay or off the rocks. Many days were spent exploring, sitting on the Big Rock behind the house reading books and daydreaming, going for walks, riding our bikes, kayaking, or looking at the seal colony close by. We have even been lucky to see the spectacular Northern Lights here.”

But Katerina can't spend as much time at 3A as she would like. “We live near London and obviously can't pop up every weekend to use the house, so until David retires, and we can use it more often, we thought it made sense to do something with it. I thought we could renovate it and rent it out, but it had to be somewhere that we'd still look forward to visiting, it had to be special and retain its history.”

Living so far away, Katerina was determined to ensure that the property was low maintenance and could withstand the elements. “I wanted to ensure that everything we did and everything we put in would last, right down to the railings outside, which are marine-grade quality to minimise corrosion from the sea. I didn't want to be doing maintenance and chores every time we visited. Also, we really are in an isolated area. It's almost a four-hour round trip to Inverness, which is our nearest big town. You can't just ring a tradesperson and ask them to pop round and fix something.”

The solution was to go high spec throughout with granite worktops, Amtico flooring and an eclectic mix of antique furniture to add character. “The furniture belonged to Auntie Alice and David's great grandparents and I didn't see the point of getting rid of it to replace it with pieces from IKEA. It adds something to the house. I also had some of the chairs reupholstered by my sister, who is a designer in London. She suggested doing the back of one of the chairs in Butterfly Parade Opalin by Designer's Guild, which I love. The dining chair cushions and a few of the scatter cushions on the sofa are in Domino and Corniche fabrics from Osborne & Little's Ragtime collection.”



With the interior complete, Katerina turned her attention to the outside space and how best to maximise the stunning views. “The house is built on a slope and I decided to extend the patio right to the edge of the property so we could fit a garage underneath. It’s great storage for all the beach gear and we now have a huge terrace on which to enjoy the fabulous views of the beach. And, it doesn’t matter what the weather is like, the view is always amazing and so calming. In winter you have the snow-covered mountains as the backdrop; in autumn it’s all orange hues and in summer the sea becomes a gorgeous turquoise colour and it doesn’t actually look real.

“Being Australian, I have very high standards when it comes to beaches and the sea and the white powdery sand here are just perfect. The other bonus is when you come here with kids, it’s so relaxing as you can sit on the patio and watch them on the beach because you have a clear view for miles around. I actually thought about installing a bell that I could ring to tell them it’s time to come home.”

Surprisingly, despite the beach appearing regularly in various Top 10 beach awards, it’s not a tourist hot spot, as Katerina explains. “We are really off the beaten track; you don’t really get people driving through, which is part of the appeal. Mellon

Udrigle is rather special, there's definitely an aura about it and we're incredibly lucky to have a house here."

3A Mellon Udrigle can be booked through CoolStays, [www.coolstays.com](http://www.coolstays.com) or at [www.mellon-udrigle.com](http://www.mellon-udrigle.com)

