

Decoration with a wink. A colourful armchair from US store Anthropologie provides relaxed seating under a framed vintage Big Pecker's surf wax t-shirt that cheekily reads, 'It's Clucking Good'. The ping-pong paddles are used for play on the table outside, upon which owner Richard Christiansen, an Australian advertising executive living in Manhattan, had an artist paint a map of the world pointing the way from Montauk back to Australia. OPPOSITE: surfboards are from Hawaii and California; some were designed by Christiansen and his team for New York store Saturdays Surf as limited editions. Chandelier Surf Shack signs are scattered around the property. Details, last pages.



# SURF'S UP

*A beach house in The Hamptons becomes an ode to the Australian summer from an expat who audaciously kicked out the rental furnishings and brought in his own surf aesthetic.*

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STORY COURTESY OF MEGAN MORTON/ROOM IMAGES

*During the summer, Christiansen hosts up to 50 people for outdoor dinner parties*

*To accommodate more guests, Christiansen and his team constructed canvas teepees, all hand-painted by artist Jimmy Helvin, featuring geometric squares, shapes and zigzags (Christiansen first came across Helvin's work at Art Basel Miami Beach). Like the bedrooms inside, each is fitted out with striped Hudson's Bay point blankets – a classic wool blanket sold by Hudson's Bay Company in Canada and the US during the 18th and 19th centuries. They are still sold in Canada. The chairs surrounding the bonfire were bought from 1stdibs.com.*

A SUMMER BEACH rental can mean dealing with dilapidated furniture, questionable decor and shoddy taste. That is, unless you're Richard Christiansen, Australian founder of hip Manhattan advertising agency Chandelier Creative, who rented a home in Montauk in New York's East Hampton, and moved all of the owners' furniture out and all of his own furniture in (after meticulously photographing each item, wrapping the home's contents in bubble wrap and placing everything in storage). He also replanted the entire garden, not to mention moving his colony of bees in to make his own honey. His parents are beekeepers, hence his innate love of the little fellas.

"I'm the guy who furnishes and landscapes a rental," laughs Christiansen, who grew up in Duranbah on the far north New South Wales coast. "I was so panicked the owners would find out." They did, but more on that later.

Since moving to New York 11 years ago, Christiansen's own beach holidays had been rare until a trip home to Australia brought on something of an epiphany. "I loved the physicality of Australia, of being in nature," he says. "I lived in New York for so long and I'd never set foot outside the city."

He returned to New York and drove out to Montauk the next day, spotting the cedar A-frame, built in the 1950s and owned by a couple who had raised two generations there. "It was perfect," he recalls. "It's a big property, really unpretentious and hadn't been touched in 30 years. It's not your typical Montauk house, which can be quite stuffy."

Stylistically, Christiansen thought the house had to be "hyper-colour, to inspire the senses, and it had to be vintage." His design aesthetic began "with patterns and rugs". He took a buying trip to Hawaii, where he scoured for antique Hawaiian fabric and vintage surf art. Further buying trips to the Rose Bowl Flea Market in Los Angeles and auctions in New York, New Jersey and Palm Springs unearthed everything from vintage crockery ("I've been collecting fish-shaped plates") to the lime-green Chesterfield sofa in the living area.

Christiansen says the property's basic three-bedroom, living room, kitchen, hallway and laundry configuration – along with its pine walls and floors – resembled an Australian beach shack. "It was very down to earth, very democratic," he says. "I wanted it to be my ode to an Australian summer."



The living area is adorned with vintage Hawaiian surf art featuring sunset scenes, waves and vistas. The lime-coloured Chesterfield sofa was bought at auction in New York and appealed to Christiansen for its unusual colour. His Montauk beach house serves as both a personal retreat and a creative compound for his staff to gather and brainstorm between surfs. All rugs and chairs are from Anthropologie.



ABOVE: when the picnic table is joined together on the deck it reads, 'For what we are about to receive, we give thanks'. RIGHT: a table is laden with vintage treasures including fish-shaped plates and bowls bought in Hawaii and Japan, and glasses from an antique dealer in Palm Springs. BELOW: a nautical theme in the kitchen: sailing barometers measuring wind, speed and tide hang above a board showcasing different types of knots, bought at LA's Rose Bowl Flea Market. The candles on the bottom right shelves are by Le Labo, custom made for Christiansen – they're his "Montauk candles".



*Stylistically, the house had to be "hyper-colour, to inspire the senses, and it had to be vintage"*

Given its modest size, the large deck became the home's centrepiece. During the summer, Christiansen hosts up to 50 people for outdoor dinner parties, usually followed by a movie (he has a large screen hanging from one of the trees). "We join picnic tables together and we'll cook, and have really nice china, but it's still casual. Then we'll watch a film." To accommodate his guests, there are antique Swedish bunk beds in the guest bedrooms as well as hand-painted teepees, which he and his team constructed, on the lawn.

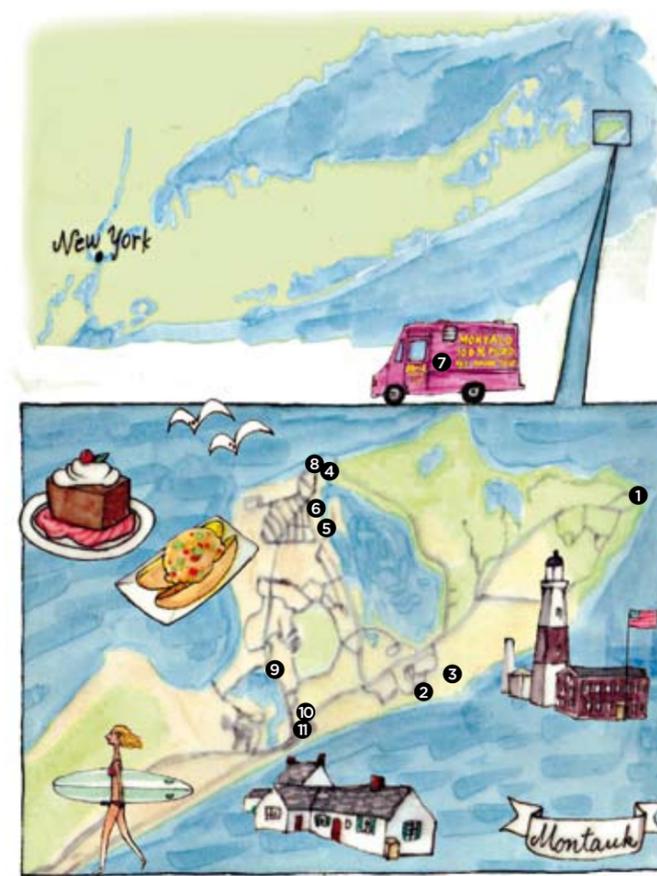
Inspired by Camp David – the country retreat of every American president since 1942 – he wanted to create something of a compound for his own staff. For his 40 employees (many of whom are hardcore surfers), the home is an extension of the office. "It's a lovely retreat we can go to, but where we can still be creative and productive," he says. It's also a destination for clients. "I have some fairly serious clients, so the house has to feel like me and the company – it has to have a bit of a wink." Indeed, it does. The sheets and pillows are embroidered with slogans and there are pick-up lines written on bathroom mirrors: *Hey, I lost my number – can I have yours?* "I did that to make people feel good about themselves," he says.

And what did he do at the end of summer, when he had to move all his furniture out and haul the original back in? Fortunately, he didn't have to move a thing. The owners discovered what Christiansen had done with the house (they spotted a piece in the *New York Times* on how he had constructed something of a Disneyland for his staff) but were so thrilled that he'd shown such a passion for the home that they offered to sell him the property.

"It's funny, I was so scared they'd find out but when they did, it's what pulled on their heartstrings to let me buy it," he says. Sometimes it pays to be audacious. **VL**



The art in each bedroom is specific; the first guest bedroom (THIS PAGE) features modern photography. Rest is provided with Swedish bunk beds from an antique dealer in New Jersey, adorned with wool Hudson's Bay point blankets, all found on eBay. OPPOSITE: a movie screen hangs from a tree in the yard for post dinner-party film watching, surrounded by collapsible lawn chairs in all sorts of patterns and colours, bought on eBay. Details, last pages.



## MONTAUK MY LIST

by Richard Christiansen

Richard Christiansen, of advertising agency Chandelier Creative, shares his favourite places to relax while staying at his beach house in The Hamptons.

### SEE

**1. MONTAUK POINT LIGHTHOUSE**  
The historic Montauk Point Lighthouse, perched on the edge of the Atlantic seaboard, is the oldest in New York State (dating back to 1796). It's a must-see.  
2000 Montauk Highway, Montauk, NY,  
(+1) 631 668 2544; [montauklighthouse.com](http://montauklighthouse.com).

**2. DITCH WITCH**  
When you spend every summer day surfing, you can work up quite an appetite. I always head straight to Ditch Witch, a retro caravan-cum-food truck, which sits in the East Deck Motel parking lot. A Ditch Plains mainstay, it's a hugely popular, family run stand, where you can find the best iced coffee and breakfast burritos, not to mention my favourite – the Ciao Bella ice-cream sandwich.  
40 Deforest Road, Montauk, NY.

**3. STANFORD WHITE HOUSES**  
If you want to see how the other half lives, check out the Stanford White-designed houses. Hiding on a dirt road just past America's most expensive caravan park, Montauk Shores (where caravans are a steal at \$600,000), sit the estates of Andy Warhol, J. Crew boss Mickey Drexler and filmmaker/artist Julian Schnabel.  
[montauklife.com/history/history\\_warbol.html](http://montauklife.com/history/history_warbol.html).

### EAT

**4. GOSMAN'S DOCK**  
Gosman's is the best place to grab a fresh lobster roll, with fantastic service, great views and an excellent fish market with everything you need for your seafood barbecue.  
500 West Lake Drive, Montauk, NY,  
(+1) 631 668 5330; [gosmans.com](http://gosmans.com).

**5. THE HIDEAWAY**  
When I get a hankering for a delicious Mexican meal among locals and friends, I head straight to The Hideaway. All my guests at the Chandelier Surf Shack have been known to go there for margaritas and guacamole after a long day catching rays and waves.  
364 West Lake Drive, Montauk, NY,  
(+1) 631 668 6592; [thehideawaymontauk.com](http://thehideawaymontauk.com).

**6. LIAR'S SALOON**  
Tucked away, far from the tourists, Liar's Saloon is a watering hole for local fishermen. Of course, its anti-cool aesthetic has made it a not-so-secret pub for the cool fashion set. Where else can fishermen and models sit and share stories about the one that got away?  
401 West Lake Drive, Montauk, NY,  
(+1) 631 668 9597; [facebook.com/pages/LIARS-SALOON/117109768328784](http://facebook.com/pages/LIARS-SALOON/117109768328784).

**7. MONTACO TRUCK**  
Montaco is a Montauk taco truck that spends the winter months in Miami. I love the fresh food and pure ingredients, mixed with the sea air, which makes it the perfect summer combo.  
(+1) 917 940 9774; [montacotruck.com](http://montacotruck.com).

**8. DAVE'S GRILL**  
I have a lot of barbecues in Montauk, but when I want a delicious steak or meal away from the Chandelier Surf Shack, I head to Dave's Grill.

For those with a sweet tooth, you can't go past their Chocolate Bag dessert; Belgian chocolate filled with scoops of vanilla ice-cream, fresh whipped cream, raspberry and mango sauce.  
It's as good as it sounds.  
468 West Lake Drive, Montauk Harbor, NY,  
(+1) 631 668 9190; [davesgrill.com](http://davesgrill.com).

### SHOP

**9. MELET MERCANTILE**  
The Montauk outpost of the SoHo-based vintage store will make you spend like crazy – you'll want everything! A true ode to beach culture, the store is housed in an old garage and has everything from rare surfboards to sailing artefacts, vintage sundresses, t-shirts, frayed cut-offs and '70s-style board shorts.  
102 Industrial Road, Montauk, NY,  
(+1) 631 668 9080.

**10. AIR & SPEED**  
The best surf shop in Montauk to rent or buy boards. Everyone is so friendly and helpful. It's a true Montauk landmark for the surf enthusiast.  
795 Montauk Highway, Montauk, NY,  
(+1) 631 668 0356; [airandspeedsurf.com](http://airandspeedsurf.com)

**11. SHARE WITH**  
Share With has become the destination for New Yorkers looking for fair trade, recycled, sustainable and reclaimed products during the summer months. The store really keeps a tightly curated eye on promoting conscientious designers and artists.  
764 Montauk Highway, Montauk, NY,  
(+1) 631 668 2205; [sharewith.org](http://sharewith.org).

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