

BUCOLIC *Beauty*

A 17TH-CENTURY HOME
IN FRANCE PROVIDES
A PICTURESQUE AND
RELAXING GETAWAY FOR
EUROPEAN VACATIONERS.

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TRANQUIL FOUNTAINS, LUSCIOUS GARDENS AND PRESERVED HISTORICAL FEATURES make this 17th-century home in Luberon Valley, France, the go-to destination for a country retreat. As the homeowners Sioned Rees-Thomas and her partner, Gavin, purchased the home in 2007 mainly for a holiday getaway, they've chosen to rent it out during the spring, summer and autumn.

To provide the perfect atmosphere for themselves and future renters, Sioned and Gavin hired Susannah Cameron, director of Chez Pluie Provence, to update the style of the home while maintaining its historic roots.

SERENE SURROUNDINGS

Sitting on almost nine acres of land, the home is surrounded by the beauty of the countryside, including fruit trees, cherry trees, olive groves, old farm homes and a view of the Luberon mountains, providing a relaxing atmosphere perfect for European vacationers. "It's bucolic luxury. You're very aware you're in the countryside, but you haven't been on the tractor all day," says Susannah. "The smell of jasmine and the sounds of the birds are instantly relaxing."



[opposite]
SEASHELLS MOUNTED ON SALVAGED PIECES grace the music salon in a rustic zinc tray. One of the salvaged pieces even carries an ostrich egg.

“Most things have an aged patina, so you’re engaged by the *texture* rather than the color.”

HAVING NO TELEVISION IN THE MUSIC SALON makes the space ideal for reading, talking and, of course, listening to music by the fire. A built-in bookcase spans an entire wall of the room, providing the homeowners and guests with endless literary options. “The homeowners are always on the hunt for old books,” says Susannah.



THE FARMHOUSE KITCHEN has an open fireplace the homeowners use for cooking and a grill you pop on the coals. Antique accents, such as the 19th-century scales, marble mortar and pestle and 19th-century birdcage give the space an Old World feel.



With six bedrooms, private courtyards and balconies, a music salon and two outdoor summer kitchens, the grounds offer ample space for guests to visit and explore, no matter the time of day. “You really do live outdoors in Provence, so you’d be following the shade,” says Susannah. “There are different outdoor dining areas for breakfast, lunch or dinner, depending on where the sun is located.”

HISTORIC UPDATES

The home had been renovated before the homeowners moved in, making only interior design changes necessary. “I helped them push the boundaries a bit with accents from the midcentury up to the 1980s,” says Susannah. Her company provides interior design services, but they’re also an online store that specializes in French antiques and vintage homeware, so she incorporated some pieces from her shop into the home. “I switched out some of their Asian influences and replaced them with something softer, such as the Karibou painting over the music salon piano,” says Susannah.

Though they updated the décor of the home, a lot of the original features remain

A TESTAMENT TO THE 17TH-CENTURY HOME, the dining room boasts original wood beams on the ceiling and red terra-cotta tiles that were typical for that time period. A gilded-frame antique chandelier brings elegance to the space, while garden chairs surrounding the table give the room a relaxed vibe.



THE GARDEN ROOM is aptly named for its proximity to the courtyards and the multiple doors that lead to them. “It was a tricky room to add to because there’s so much nature around it you don’t want to mess with it,” says Susannah. “There are two doors that go to different courtyards, and the 1980s gold poppy lamp is an exaggerated version of the garden outside.”



untouched, such as the dining room ceiling beams, the staircase and the original summer kitchen. If something was added or changed, it was made to fit the centuries-old vibe, like the red terra-cotta tiles in the dining room and the built-in shelves in the music salon. This practice allowed them to make functional updates without altering the overall feel of the historic home.

While outdoors there is plenty of color from bright flowers, the interiors stick to a neutral palette, letting the age and character of the décor speak to its style. Though beige and brown are the prominent colors in the home, Susannah introduced gold accents in dinnerware, light fixtures and vintage pieces. “Most things have an aged patina, so you’re engaged by the texture rather than the color,” she says. “The home is neutral, but the touches of gold are really nice and lush.”

COUNTRY IN THE CITY

Even if you live in the middle of a crowded city, this relaxed, country look can be emulated with a bit of creativity. “Start with some entry-level antiques,” says Susannah. “You don’t need a huge budget to enjoy something old and precious.” Try using things in a different context, such as garden pots indoors or a watering can as a vase. This will bring the feel of the country to your home whatever your location. //

[left] WHEN GOOD WEATHER PREVAILS, the homeowners use this summer kitchen to take full advantage of the sun. The cover provides shade while allowing visitors to enjoy the views. “This is the original summer kitchen,” says Susannah. A farm trestle table and antique butterfly-back chairs continue the simple décor style and complement the original look and feel of the period home.





THOUGH THE HISTORIC INTEGRITY OF THE HOME REMAINS, there have been some additions since it was first built in the 1600s. The pool house and second summer kitchen were added by the previous homeowners around 1990, but they made the additions fit with the home's period look by featuring a giant antique clock and a salvaged lightning rod from the 19th century.

