reflecting the sea

A California couple turned an oceanfront cottage into a guest-friendly blue-and-white retreat.

you might expect the home of someone dubbed a "lifestyle guru," "trend expert," and "pop culture diva" to be filled with dangerously fragile furniture. But in the case of writer and TV personality Sally Horchow, the opposite holds true. At the beach cottage she and her husband, Christopher "Paco" McCauley, rent in

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Sally (top) and Paco encourage a come-and-go-as-you-please schedule, so guests feel free to stroll the beach, swim, or nap. Elegant fabrics, pillows, and towels make visitors feel pampered. "Instead of art, Sally prefers personal touches—prints of friends' photos, old Nantucket lobster buoys, or Paco's trophy sailfish," says designer Kimberly Biehl Schmidt.

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—Sally Horchow

Malibu, Sally opted for interiors as casual and inviting as the coast itself.

The couple stumbled across this rental in 2002 and immediately knew it would make a restful weekend escape from Los Angeles. "We wanted the house to radiate warmth and comfort in order to make our guests feel more relaxed," Sally says. When they began redecorating, she and Paco kept those visiting friends in mind. "You can have the trendiest items in the world, but the ultimate reason for entertaining isn't to impress people," says Sally, who co-authored *The Art of Friendship: 70 Simple Rules for Making Meaningful Connections* with her father, Roger Horchow. "The goal is to inspire human connection and friendship. Your home—the way furniture is set up and the atmosphere you create—can help foster that."

Within the natural restrictions of decorating a rental, Sally and her good friend (and designer) Kimberly Biehl Schmidt set out to transform the 1920s house. They took the interior from a space filled with beige-brown hues and heavy winter fabrics to a home more reflective of its oceanfront locale. "The exterior already had a wonderful nautical feel with its porthole windows and bright blue-and-white paint," Kimberly says.

Tiny rooms posed the biggest obstacle in the 900-square-foot cottage. The solution? "A sectional sofa, which makes the sitting space as efficient as possible," Kimberly says. "Sally and Paco often have 10 or 12 friends over at a time, and it's important to them that the furniture

arrangement be conducive to conversation." With its bamboo base, the sectional gives off the beach vibe the couple wanted while still providing enough room for everyone to gather in the living area. The furniture is covered in soft, water-resistant fabrics to handle heavy traffic. "Sally isn't the fussy type at all," Kimberly says. "She loves a real, livable space where you can flop down and read the paper on the couch."

The stylish yet practical design extends throughout the pint-size getaway. "The master bedroom is as small as a ship's cabin," Kimberly says. "The bed barely fits in the room, so Sally and Paco have to climb in from the foot of the bed." But a few tricks, such as floating shelves for nightstands and wall sconces in place of bulky table lamps, make the most of tight quarters. Billowing fabric hung overhead softens the lines of the ceiling and walls, and adds texture and dimension without using paint—a stipulation from the landlord. "The fabric can be removed if they ever move out," Kimberly says, "and the walls won't have been altered in any way." The headboard cover can be unzipped and thrown in the washer.

sally's secrets
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"This is a classic example of what you can do with a humble space," Sally says. "Sometimes the more casual and cozy the place, the more comfortable and convivial guests feel. They can focus on having a good time."

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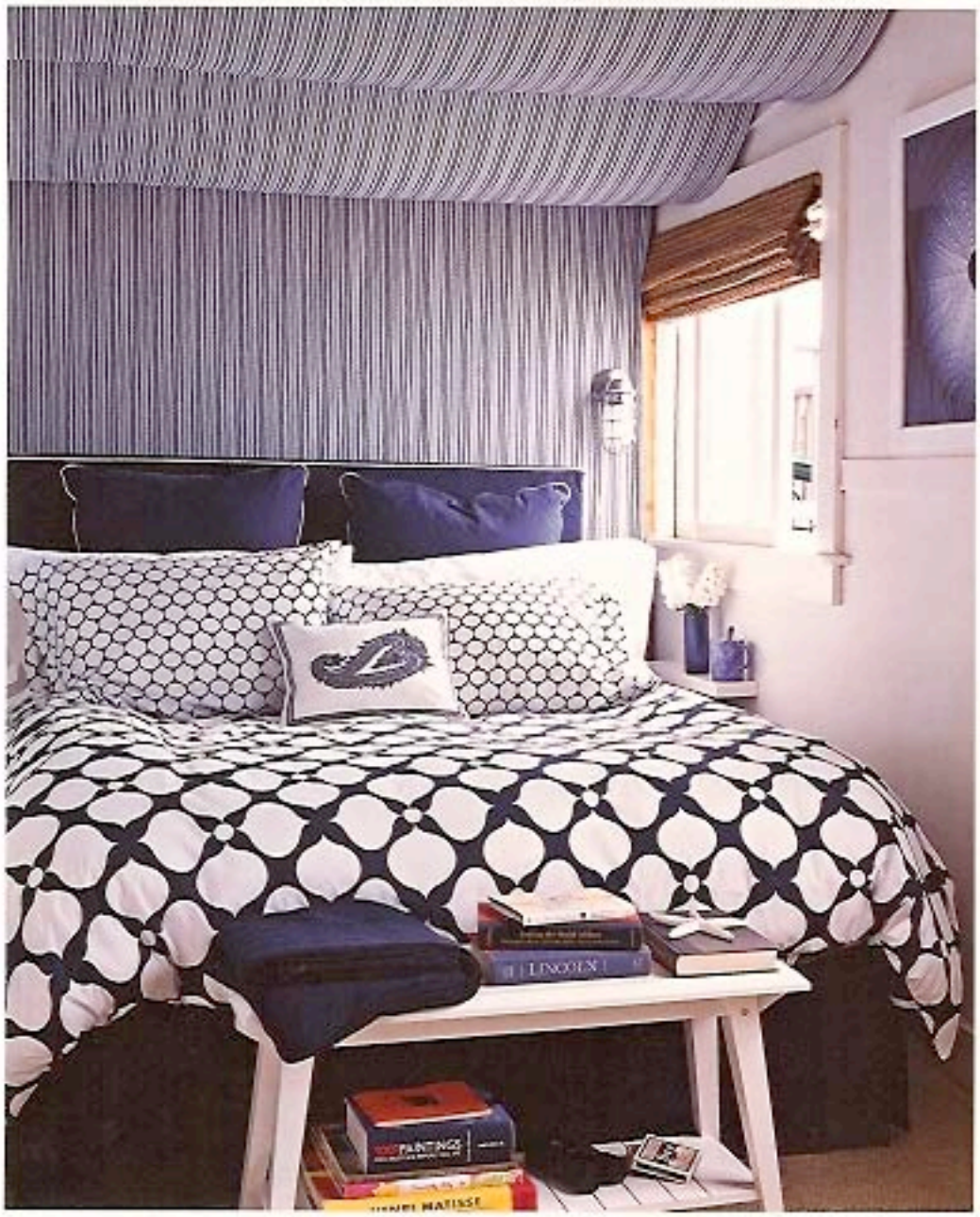

Though the bed and bench are a tight fit in this small bedroom, a mix of patterns and stripes gives the space added dimension, making it feel larger than it really is.