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# Soaring Aspirations

On the shores of South Carolina's Sullivan's Island, an architect reaches for the stars to create a spacious home within a limited footprint.



The dining room in this coastal home is located on the upper level to take advantage of vistas of tidal marshes. "On a spring tide, one can see open water out the windows," architect Stephen Herlong says. "A midtide shows hummocks and tidal flats that become finger creeks leading out to the harbor. Low tide is all green marsh, oyster beds, and sand flats."





# An expert at navigating the quirks

of coastal home design, architect Stephen Herlong knew the only way to fulfill his clients' wishes for a spacious home on a narrow lot on South Carolina's Sullivan's Island was to build up. But the exact details took a little time to come together. "We had to be extra creative," says Herlong, who was restrained by zoning laws and the natural shoreline the house overlooks.

Working with project manager Sabrina Cochran, Herlong devised a barbell-shape design. Essentially one room deep, the home climbs four levels and includes multiple porches and outdoor spaces. The main living areas and master bedroom occupy the upper level, while guest rooms reside on the main level. "The most

stunning views are up high, and we had such a small footprint to work with, so this plan made the most sense," Herlong says. "Plus, it gave us rooflines that create additional volume. We were able to create some really dramatic open spaces on the upper level using what would otherwise have been attic space. That, more than anything, helped us create a true beach-house feel, which is what we were really after."

Dormer windows tucked into the lofty trussed ceiling of the combined living and dining rooms welcome in light and set an airy mood, which is reflected by walls covered in white beaded board and a pair of mirror-front cabinets that flank the fireplace. A crisp ivory and blue color palette plays off the breathtaking water views, amplifying the effect of spaciousness while striking a casual note.

To achieve the relaxed elegance his clients were after and to add an instant patina to the new home, Herlong incorporated salvaged materials. An etched-glass door turns a corner cabinet into a showpiece in the dining room, and a pair of antique doors provide a grand entrance to the master bath. In the master suite, a wall of antique mirrors visually expands the space.

In the kitchen, Herlong used exquisite crown molding and custom cabinetry to pack a lot of luxury into a relatively small space. As elsewhere in the house, the grand millwork is balanced by informal elements, such as a large island, which features open shelves for cookbooks and a deep overhang to accommodate wicker bar stools. "My clients wanted a family kitchen that also had a lot of warmth and character," Herlong says.

Working a host of outdoor entertaining options—a deck, two porches, and a ground-level alfresco living room—into the home's basic footprint ensured a seamless transition between inside and out that further caters to relaxed living. "Nearly all of the rooms share the porch areas, so it creates a sense of fluidity," Herlong says. "You can enter from the living room and exit to the hallway, so it's almost like there's no division between inside and outside." And for Herlong, that's mission accomplished.





**This photo:** Situated at the heart of the upper level, the kitchen features an open layout that flows toward the living and dining rooms. Small transom-style upper cabinets turn potentially wasted space into handy storage. **Opposite:** To give the home's facade interest, Herlong used a mix of materials, including metal for overhangs, cedar shake shingles for siding, and stucco for the foundation.











The living room balances casual and formal elements. The grandness of the fireplace is tempered by beaded-board walls; the elegant walnut floors are softened by a sisal rug; and the traditional silhouette of the sofa is relaxed by a cotton slipcover and tweed accent pillows.





“The full island experience means living with the outdoors.”

—ARCHITECT STEPHEN HERLONG



**Above:** In the master bedroom, a deep cranberry-color rug and silk accent pillows with Asian motifs play off the intricate carved doors that lead to the master bath (shown opposite top right). A wall of antique mirrors provides a dramatic backdrop for a linen-covered headboard.





**Clockwise from top left:** Regular screens block about 25 percent of a view, darken the rooms behind them, and can cut breezes in half, so Herlong installed retractable screens on all of the outdoor rooms for a smooth connection between the spaces and the views beyond. To prevent the long, narrow layout of the master bath from feeling too linear, Herlong placed a sinuous soaking tub at a slight angle just inside the doorway. Angling the white square backsplash tiles above the cooktop created subtle interest without a lot of fuss. Outfitted with comfortable wicker armchairs and a spacious dining table, the porch off the upper level is used year-round for family gatherings. While the home stretches upward, docks reach out into the quiet marshes. For a casual approach to the traditional double vanity, Herlong employed pieces that resemble freestanding furniture.

