



Here comes the sun

La Casa Dos in Mallorca was hiding its light under a bushel until Lorraine and Stuart added Caledonian creativity to its Mediterranean design

Words **Nichola Hunter**

It wasn't quite love at first sight for Lorraine Elkins when she came across La Casa Dos, but with help from friend and interior designer Pat Renson, she's now totally smitten.

Lorraine had aspired for several years to buy a holiday home in Mallorca but bizarrely she'd never actually visited the island. "It was through some research I was doing that the idea came about but my husband Stuart and I were both in the military and away a lot, so it was put to the back of my mind. Then in 2013 life calmed down a bit and I thought we could do this; we could go to Mallorca, and we did."

The village and area around Deia is what initially had inspired Lorraine and she focused her search there. "We set up several viewings and La Casa Dos was one of the first. However, the interior was really dark. Whilst I like a house to give you a bit of a hug, if we were going to spend holidays in Mallorca we wanted a place that was light, bright and with a bit of luxury, and it just didn't have that."

However, the couple had fallen in love with the village of Fornalutx, which is considered to be one of the most beautiful on the island and has also held the accolade for prettiest village in the whole of Spain. "There was always a "but" when we viewed other properties and this drove us to return to La Casa Dos and to look at it through different eyes."

Lorraine and Stuart started to think maybe with a bit of effort... "You talk yourself into it but we could see it had potential. The estate agent linked us up with local artisan builder Rocky and a month after we got the keys he started work."



Clockwise from far left: a view of the surrounding hills; the concrete sofa; the almost cave-like kitchen; another view of the lounge





Lorraine also engaged interior designer Pat Renson, who had worked on her house in Comrie, and she and Pat set about injecting some light into La Casa Dos. “Pat’s reaction when she saw the property was, ‘It’s gorgeous but this layout is just wrong.’” says Lorraine. “Downstairs was pretty much as you would expect from a Mallorcan town house. There’s the entrada as you come in and a couple of steps to the back area and kitchen.

“On the middle floor there was a lounge with arches everywhere, a huge fireplace and the bathroom and on the top floor was the master bedroom which led out on to the sun terrace.”

Pat’s solution was immediate. Move the bedroom to the middle floor and put the lounge on the top floor. As the middle floor windows faced north and the bathroom was already on that floor it made for a cooler sleeping environment and was practical too.

The swap meant removing the huge fireplace on the middle floor and opening up the area around the staircase and pillar, which had previously been enclosed, and opening up the archway between the bedroom and bathroom. “Pat wanted to create a feeling of space rather than being hemmed in by walls and arches that were unnecessary and to ensure that the house felt as big as it could but with a uniformity throughout,” says Lorraine.

Rocky’s input was also worth its weight in gold. “He’d worked on several large properties in neighbouring Deia, and whilst the scale was different the same finishes could be applied. That was where I first came across polished



Clockwise from above: the courtyard; the master bedroom featuring distressed beams; the dining area with treated pine table; the entrada; the bathroom

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concrete, and when I saw it I decided I must use it in the kitchen.”

The effect is indeed stunning. Using breeze blocks covered in polished concrete to create the shell, the shape of the room has essentially stayed the same. Rocky built shelves around the twists and curves rather than removing them, the local carpenter built all the drawers and the blacksmith made all the handles. “It’s a unique and bespoke space but it has everything you need,” says Lorraine. “You can’t have a holiday home without an integrated dishwasher but for me the pièce de résistance is the sink. We went to what is known as the quarry shop in Palma, and you just pick the rock you like. You choose how much space you want on the inside and it’s hewn out and polished and the outside is pretty much as it was in the quarry. I added some beautiful French taps and now it’s quite a talking point.”

Kitting out the kitchen wasn’t too much of a headache as it’s on the ground floor, moving up the three-storey building, bringing in new furniture became a carefully considered affair. “The staircase is still quite narrow in places so Rocky suggested some built-in pieces. Initially Pat was cautious of this idea as she didn’t want it to look like a caravan, but we had been referring to a gorgeous Mediterranean interior design book and that gave us some inspiration on how to do it well.”

Rocky built a concrete sofa for the top floor lounge and a concrete base for the bed. “I was worried about the bed as I really like my comfort, but I bought a fabulous mattress and many guests have commented that it’s the best sleep they’ve had,” says Lorraine.

Aesthetically it works well, and most definitely is not reminiscent of a caravan, but then again there’s nothing in this property that isn’t easy on the eye. Every detail has been thought of, from the distressed beams, the rusted metalwork, the stuccoed bathroom walls with their delicate shimmer to the dining table which started life as a basic piece of pine. And don’t forget that Pat spent hours with the electrician to ensure the lighting is just perfect.

And then there are the accessories and smaller pieces which came in about 100 boxes in a van all the way from Pat Renson Interiors in Auchterarder. “That decision was two-fold,” says Lorraine. “Mallorca is expensive but Pat also has access to a huge range of suppliers and stocks some great pieces. Pat measured everything and created templates for the sofa covers, window treatments and cushions and had them made in Scotland. We used a lot of Ralph Lauren cushions as the colours worked so well here. I think the only thing that isn’t from Scotland is one of the lamps.

“Ultimately, I didn’t want the finished house to feel contrived and I didn’t want it to feel like a brand new house. I wanted to mix the old and the new, and I didn’t want to take the soul out of it. I think the quirks and irregularities are still here. Pat and Rocky have combined both so well.” For Lorraine and Stuart, La Casa Dos was certainly worth a second look.

La Casa Dos is available to let through www.lacasados.com

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