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SUSTAINABLE STYLE

AN ECO-FRIENDLY ABODE IN TULUM

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Located on the east coast of the Yucatan Peninsula near Tulum, Mexico, the Sian Ka'an biosphere encompasses more than a million acres of protected tropical forests, mangroves, marshes and coastline. It was in this verdant oasis that designer Susan Jamieson of Bridget Beari Designs helped a Richmond, Virginia, couple create a retreat in harmony with the area's unspoiled nature.

The couple vacationed regularly in Tulum, and when the biosphere opened up to sustainable building projects, they jumped at the chance to create a more permanent

residence. They tapped Susan to help bring their vision of an environmentally friendly retreat that takes full advantage of its lush surroundings to life.

The home was built to be open-air with no air conditioning, cooling naturally with sea breezes that filter through the retractable windows and shutters. Outdoor decks and a rooftop escape complete with a mosaic tiled pool and multiple areas for dining and lounging provide the perfect setting for enjoying the spectacular ocean and jungle views.



(Clockwise from left) Sea breezes through open windows cool the home's interior; custom furnishings by local craftsmen help give a sense of place; mahogany was used throughout the exterior spaces; outdoor decks provide ample space for enjoying the lush surroundings; a mosaic tile pool sets the scene on the rooftop deck.

To meet the area's green building specifications, the home has its own windmill for power and a septic system. The Mexican architect working on the project also incorporated touches that speak to the area's architectural tradition, such as a large palapa — a woven grass structure — at the center of the home.

Susan also tapped into the local culture, working with area craftsmen for details like the front door with Mayan carvings and the magnificent mahogany bathtub. The designer also incorporated mahogany throughout the outdoor spaces on decking and railings.

Most of the outdoor furnishings came from Janus et Cie, selected by Susan both for the brand's fashion-forward style and reputation for durability — a must in the damp, salt-air climate surrounding the home.

Susan was challenged during the project working with a local crew who only spoke Mayan. With the help of an interpreter — and a crash course in converting to metric measurements — she was able to help create a home that sits peacefully with its natural surroundings and allows the homeowners to live the ideal indoor-outdoor lifestyle. ▀