



Paradise Found in the Bahamas

A serene, Thai-style home in the Caribbean

By [Judith Ritter](#)

November 3, 2014

The Grand Bahama oceanfront villa that New Yorkers, Patrick and Gigi Salisbury, so carefully crafted is so much more than a family getaway, says Gigi. It has simply but profoundly changed their lives. "Time spent here looking at sunsets and the ocean just makes you realize how important quality of life is." Pausing thoughtfully, she adds, "And how important just doing things for one another is."

Her husband, Patrick, knows something about doing for others too. In what might have been his greatest surprise for his wife, he presented her with the idea of building a Thai-inspired house in the [Bahamas](#). Thai architecture was something they had both found enchanting since a trip to that country a decade before. As Gigi recounts it, it was during a visit to the famous [Jim Thomson House](#) (founder of the Thai silk industry) that she told her husband if she ever built a new home, it would be a Thai-style structure. And what a surprise when years later on a fishing trip to the Bahamas, Patrick pointed out two acres of land that he had chosen for their dream house. “I couldn’t believe he remembered what I said years before in Thailand. I was overwhelmed that he was so thoughtful,” says Gigi.



The couple already knew they liked Grand Bahama for its quick access to both Manhattan and Miami where they lived and worked. But it was the island’s tranquility that meant the most to them, Gigi says. “What I like about our location is that there is nothing going on!” And so they decided to build their Southeast Asian dream house and call it “[Nandana](#)”, the Sanskrit word for “paradise”.

Bringing that reverie to fruition was demanding, Gigi says laughing, but she was undaunted. With lawyer-husband Patrick working in New York and frequently on the road, much of the project management was in her hands. Leading the construction was an unmatched experience. Fortunately, says Gigi, the Hawaii-based architect they chose, “got it”. “The very first drawings were right on.”

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Of course finding the right architect was just the beginning, explains Gigi. “We wanted to capture the serene feel of the Jim Thompson House and bring that to the Bahamas.” Easier said than done. Thai homes are made of teak for the floors, ceiling and walls. So the Salisburys brought teak from Burma to the Bahamas. Not finished boards, Gigi says, remembering the day eight containers of teak logs were delivered. “Two hundred logs!” she says, still with a bit of wonder in her voice at the scale of the project. Almost everything for the home had to be imported and delivered by ship.



The couple hired the best craftsmen they could find. On Grand Bahama that meant yacht carpenters. And so the work began. The logs were milled into boards. Bahamian coral stone carefully collected and fashioned into seawalls. A gifted local landscaper began transforming the property into a graceful garden of palms. Building a ten thousand square foot house in itself is a challenge, but building one that defied the local British colonial architectural conventions in a place where not infrequent hurricanes stopped all ongoing work was even more of a challenge. The whole project took more than three years and a less determined couple might have thrown in the towel. Not the Salisburys. Gigi says. “Once you get involved in a project this complex and this important, you don’t just throw your hands up.”

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The spectacular interior presented another challenge. While the couple wanted a minimalist feel to the space, all the furniture, doors, and appliances had to be imported to the island. Southeast Asian influences are everywhere and the beautifully constructed home is threaded with surprise details. Approaching the house through a walkway of Bismarck palms, the first thing visitors see are forty-foot high Javanese temple doors. “When the doors swing open,” says Gigi, “and you walk in you are mesmerized by the view straight back to the ocean.”



In the airy interior the couple chose Balinese and Cambodian freestanding carvings, a dining room table fashioned from an Indonesian antique door and a South Indian carved partition separating the kitchen from dining room. The sleeping quarters, with their teak beds, Thai silks and palette of taupe and white are all in freestanding buildings of their own at the back of the house. Each opens out onto the broad terrace, the 120-foot pool and the sea.

Counting a canopy suite in a large white tent, the house has five bedrooms, each with its own outside shower and lounging area. But it is the canopy suite that has Gigi's heart. The rippling of the white tent fabric in the ocean breeze, she says, "makes you absolutely forget where you are."

Both Gigi and Patrick are California natives and though the copper-roofed house is quite faithful to Thai architectural conventions, there is a quality of openness and light that is not unlike the aesthetic of California waterfront homes. But Nandana, Gigi explains, takes waterfront living beyond the access to boating (the house has all sorts of watercraft), fishing and snorkeling. "It's kind of a spiritual thing. This place is about the sky, the light and the water. It is just so peaceful."

Find out more about [Nandana](#)