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# SOUTHERN COMFORT

THIS PROVENCAL HOUSE HAS BEEN DECORATED BY ITS  
INTERIOR-DESIGNER OWNER WITH AN EMPHASIS ON  
COLOUR AND COMFORT

Victoria Waymouth's house in the South of France is a virtual new build – designed in an updated vernacular idiom to the original ground plan of an earlier house. The swimming pool (opposite) is a focal point of the garden. It is overlooked by a loggia (main picture), in which folding bistro chairs and deep, built-in banquettes sport cushions in 'Sumat' by Victoria Waymouth for Osborne & Little. The table, covered in an Indian cloth, is laid with glasses and hurricane lamps from Allure in Paradou





Victoria Waymouth's passion for Provence is not new. She spent time at school there and friends took her on holiday to wonderful houses in the Mont Ventoux region. She has returned regularly, always hoping she would have a house there one day – 'There is so much to do, the landscape is constantly changing and the walking is fantastic.' Friends suggested that she should buy a cottage in the Cotswolds, but the English countryside never really got a look in.

The old saying 'If you want something badly enough, you'll get it' came true three years ago when Victoria and her then partner Jeremy Clyde met an English builder called David Price. David had set up his business near St-Rémy-de-Provence providing holiday-house owners with all-important contacts and his own architectural, restoration and building skills. 'We danced a brilliant dance,' says Victoria. 'It would have been almost

impossible for me to bring this old house back to life without him and he introduced us to some lovely people, especially our neighbours Robert and Jim.' Situated a short drive from the centre of St-Rémy, with views of the Alpilles, the old beekeeper's house was essentially a two-up-two-down with a workshop, stables and some run-down outbuildings; hardly the light and sophisticated house one sees today. To transform a tiny, eighteenth-century cottage into a spacious, modern home for herself, her two children, Jeremy and his two children might have seemed a daunting task, especially given the area's stringent planning regulations, but Victoria has long been a respected interior designer. She grew up in exquisite houses and began her career with David Mlinaric, before setting up her own business in her twenties. Victoria asked David Price to draw up new plans for the house, working roughly to the original ground plan; happily, permission for a virtual new-build came through without a hitch.

Behind the house is the terrace (top left), swimming pool and a pantiled loggia. Inside, the house includes areas for summer and winter living: the broad hallway doubles as a comfortable library (top right), with chairs and a sofa covered in 'Anisha' by Victoria Waymouth for Osborne & Little grouped around a large fire (below left). In the kitchen and adjoining dining area (below right and opposite), azure tiles made locally and striking upholstery – including 'Anisha' (stripe) and 'Tulasi' (floral) by Victoria Waymouth for Osborne & Little – inject vibrant colour





Victoria Waymouth is best known for her work on large country houses and for her knowledge of, and passion for, Oriental rugs and textiles. Nevertheless, she is quite comfortable with more up-to-the-minute, simpler design. 'I recently decorated a nineteenth-century boathouse in Ireland that is all matchboarding, painted floorboards and sisal rugs – nothing could be simpler than that,' she says. With planning permission in the bag, Victoria set about choosing the finishing elements. From pre-Roman times Provençal stonemasons have worked the region's quarries, extracting stone and marble. Victoria chose pure white limestone blocks for flooring throughout the spacious ground-floor rooms, the sunny, shaded terraces that open off these rooms and the pool surround. 'I like continuity and wanted everything to be pale; the colour comes from the fabrics and flowers as well as from lots of brightly coloured vases and glass candle holders I found here,' she says.

Choosing fabrics was easy. Victoria designs collections for Osborne & Little. 'For years there was a gap in the market. I couldn't find sophisticated, ethnic designs so relished the chance to design my own.' Inspired by Ottoman patterns, Turkish rugs and Mogul textiles, her palette is a vibrant mix of blues and lime, cerise and emerald tones.

What began as a holiday home grew into something much bigger, and Victoria and Jeremy realized they would need to rent out the house for several months a year to make it pay. This didn't change Victoria's ideas about how the interior would look: if it worked for her, it would work for others – 'and I'm not really into white linen upholstery anyway,' she says with a laugh. She used Francesca's Lime Wash in white and pale pastels for the walls, with simple rugs on the limestone floors. The

glossy white kitchen is sleek and practical, and leads through tall glass doors to a covered outdoor eating area, which is used all summer and often in the winter. This house can be bitterly cold in winter or when the mistral blows, so Victoria made sure a large and efficient traditional fireplace warms the open-plan living area. Comfortable sofas and chairs are covered in richly coloured fabrics from Victoria's 'Moghul' range of stripes and summery floral linens. Behind the kitchen, facing a wide hallway/library, is another large stone fireplace around which are grouped capacious chairs and a fat sofa for winter reading and relaxing.

'Some people tell me this is not a very French house, which is surprising given that most of the contents were bought or made locally. My vision of Provençal style has always been lots of bright colours against a pale background,' Victoria says. She decorated the bedrooms to be cool in summer and warm in winter, with an emphasis on comfort. Comfort is a word Victoria uses a lot: beds are heaped with down-filled pillows and soft, colourful wool blankets.

Even though the house is practically new, it has the air of having evolved. The bookcases are full; furniture, lamps and mirrors look as if they were made for the place – this is not holiday decorating. Victoria has treated the beekeeper's house to the same intense consideration as any other design project. 'I give 100 per cent effort to my work and believe that every detail counts, no matter whether I'm my own client or not.' No doubt it is this attitude that has made her such a success in the competitive world of design □

*Victoria Waymouth Interiors (tel: 020-7376 5244)*

*David Price (tel: 00-33-490 54 36 04)*

ABOVE The Pink Room – in a palette of mid-green and pink – is pretty and feminine; painted lampshades and the bedcover echo these colours. The curtains and chair cover are in 'Mohini' by Victoria Waymouth for Osborne & Little. Victoria designed a built-in wardrobe using the doors of a nineteenth-century fruit-wood armoire bought locally



In the television room (above left and right), the chairs and sofa are covered in 'Majnun', by Victoria Waymouth for Osborne & Little (now discontinued). Victoria bought the prints from a market in Isle sur la Sorgue and commissioned the white-painted cupboard from Brown & Harman (tel: 01273-814588). Hand-painted lampshades by Carolyn Benson and a Danielle Hartwright rug complement cheerful cushions covered in 'Sumati' and 'Anisha'. In the main bathroom (this picture), voile curtains offer respite from the bright Provençal sun outside; coloured glass knobs enliven the pale painted cupboards