

The dining area of the kitchen is an elegant but informal space, where a lime-washed stone wall provides a backdrop to a table sourced from a local antique dealer and a copper pendant bought in Jodhpur. The cane chair by the entrance lobby is framed by two Indo-Portuguese pots from Kerala.

Passion project

Once a wreck with just two rooms and an open fire, Alice von Baum's house in Goa has been transformed into a comfortable base, combining European and Indian elements

TEXT JOHANNA THORNYCROFT | PHOTOGRAPHS ANDREAS VON EINSIEDEL | LOCATIONS EDITOR LAVINIA BOLTON



OPPOSITE In the kitchen, polished concrete with a marble-chip terrazzo effect has been used for the floor, island and units. THIS PAGE The front veranda is furnished with an old wooden swing seat and a metal-legged charpoy covered in pillows designed by Alice

ACCORDING

to a date neatly carved into a wooden beam in Alice von Baum's house in Goa, it was built on December 26, 1936. Seen from the quiet village street, the house, known as Frangipani, looks very much like the others – survivors of the Portuguese era, which ended in 1961 when the state became part of India. The houses, many of which have been crumbling for decades, have broad verandas, chunky stucco columns and tiled roofs – a style as instantly recognisable as the snow-white Baroque churches that rise above the banana, cashew and coconut plantations. This is European architecture that has been adapted and changed to suit a monsoon climate.

After studying architecture and design in London, German-born Alice went on a research trip to Gujarat to record the traditional dowry collections made by young women. "That visit changed my life," she says. "I adored the tribal areas, the fabrics I came across, the shawls and jewellery." She ended up moving to Jaipur to design, print and make her own fashion collections; by the mid-Nineties, she had boutiques in Munich and London and was living a madcap life. "I had to find a more solid base and a house of my own, and Goa seemed like a natural choice with its good climate, international crowd and what was potentially a good client base. I wanted to concentrate on interior design and here was a ready market."

In 2004, after seeing only four houses, Alice settled upon Frangipani. "Even though it was a wreck, I was completely captivated," she recalls. The garden was full of goats, most of the roof was missing and the kitchen still had just an open fire. Restoring and enlarging the house was a challenging experience. "Essentially I had two large rooms, so a major job was to excavate into the sloping rear hillside." She made space for what is now the main living area, two bedrooms and bathrooms and the broad terrace off the kitchen beside the old stone well. Added to this was the construction of a spacious and airy main bedroom with a bathroom and a study above the ground-floor rooms. "It was a



THIS PAGE The exterior of the house, which is typical of Goa's Portuguese era. **OPPOSITE CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT** A reading area in the main bedroom is marked out with fitted shelving. The bedroom has a polished concrete floor in a striped design. The teak and shell screen in a spare room is a reproduction of the originals that still exist in many houses. A daybed on the side veranda was bought in London

testing time," she admits. "But doing this house was key to building my team for the work ahead on my business."

The house itself is built from the iron-rich laterite stone found all over Goa, while the original hefty shutters in some rooms are made from jackfruit timber. Alice

saved what she could from the original house, including several old doors and even some of the carved curtain pole supports that were still in place. "I found reclaimed things and copied others, like the traditional *tesk* and shell screens used to create light internal partitions and some of the windows."

The new floors are made of polished concrete with a white marble-chip terrazzo effect and rows of small pebbles where the floor meets the walls and columns. Tiny pieces of inlaid mirror were added to the pebbles. "Local builders are good with concrete," notes Alice. "I used it for the kitchen counters and they make good cement *jali* blocks and tiles, which I design myself and use in both restoration and newbuild projects." Another effective solution was using iron tubing – there is no wrought iron available locally – to make the sinuous, tree-of-life window screens.

Cool and shady, the kitchen is lit by a number of glass panels inserted where roof tiles have been removed. There is a large walk-in pantry beside the dining terrace. Breakfast is served on the typical red-polished front entrance veranda, dinner on the back veranda and in wet weather indoors in the open-plan kitchen-dining area. The eclectic mix of furniture and objects is something of a guide to Alice's life and travels – from Portobello Road and continental Europe to all over India.

The house was completed in 2012 and Alice's interior-design career has moved apace, with clients ranging from Delhi-based media moguls to Europeans who own Goan holiday homes. She is also in the process of setting up an interior-design and textile studio in Palma, Mallorca. "This house is important to me for many reasons. This was a heart and soul project," she says □

Alice von Baum: alicevonbaum.com

