



## BOLDLY GO

A vibrant dash of colour is one of the easiest and most rewarding ways to revive a living space. Few home-design tricks provide a quicker, cheaper fix. A tip: go bold. Powerful shades stand out – and add a sense of fun.

madison

LIVING

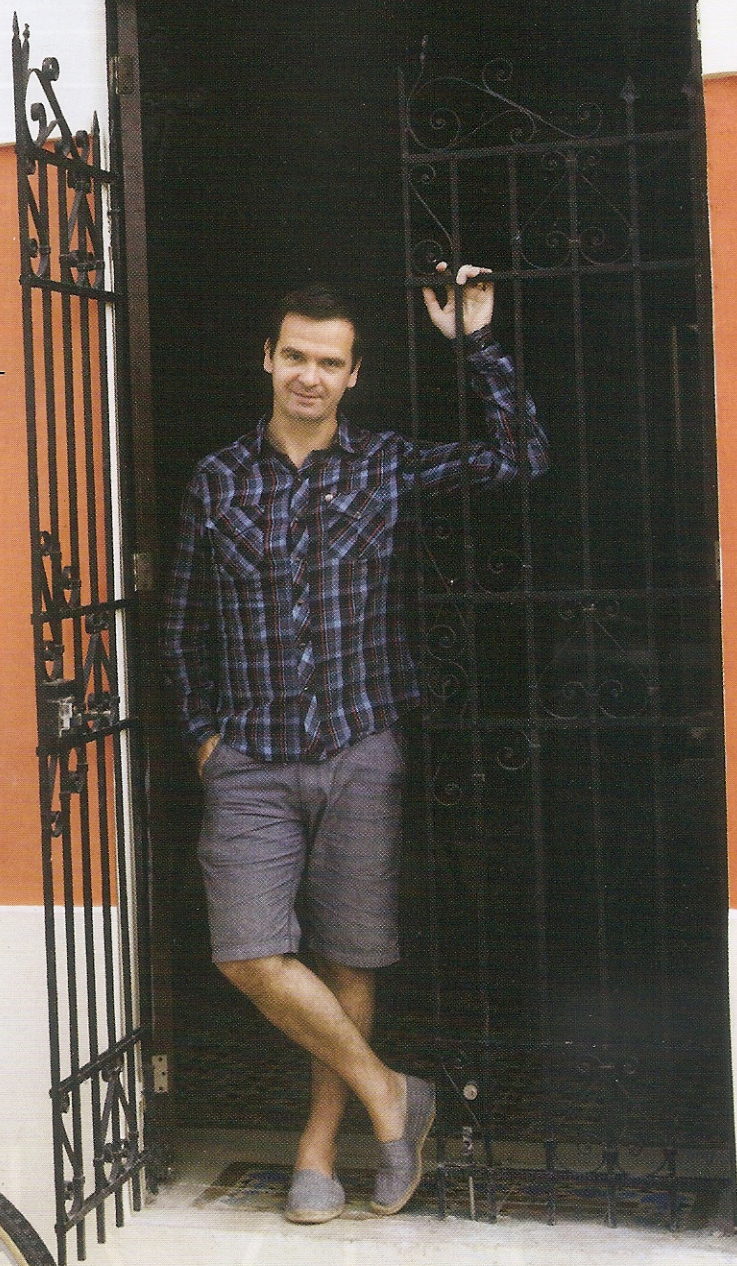
MEXICAN HIDEAWAY » BEACH BASICS » RUNWAY INSPIRATION

549

"We love riding our bikes around town. The traffic is terrible in Mérida and it's often too hot to walk far."

# CASA BONITA

PHOTOGRAPHY ADRIAN MESKO  
WORDS LAUREN POWELL



This playful Mexican abode is a tranquil escape for this New York-based Australian couple

"We had the cord 'conch' chairs made based on a design from the 1960s. They're next to the outdoor fireplace, which was a crazed addition given that it's hot year-round. We still light it for kicks!"

**WHO LIVES HERE:**

Freelance travel writers  
Emma Soley, 42, and her  
husband, Adam McCulloch, 41.

**THE HOME:** A two-storey, five-bedroom  
Spanish Colonial-style casa.

**WHERE:** Mérida, the capital of  
Mexico's south-eastern Yucatán  
Peninsula, which divides the  
Caribbean Sea from the  
Gulf of Mexico. →

able is from an antique  
n called Julio. The box [on  
kind of art piece: a display  
two-way glass filled with  
create infinite reflections."



*"One of the fantastic liberties you can take in a setting like Mérida is playing with colour; it's such a colourful culture."*



room has traditional  
ings, which is an original  
e home, as is the pasta-  
ch lends a Spanish-  
This is where we retreat  
ies or read."



"When we originally bought the house, the kitchen had these fabulous graphic black and white tiles. During construction many of the tiles were broken, so we decided to recreate the look with new ones."



## EMMA & ADAM'S TOP MEXICO HOTSPOTS

**FAVOURITE RESTAURANT:** La Chaya Maya, which serves traditional Yucatecan dishes like cochinita pibil (slow-roasted pork marinated with achiote paste and sour orange) and salbutes, delicious little fried tortillas.

**FAVOURITE BAR:** In Mérida, we spend a lot of time at Hennessy's, an Irish pub run by a couple of fabulous Irish boys.

**FAVOURITE PLACE TO STAY:** A resort called Rosewood Mayakoba on the Caribbean coast of the Peninsula that fuses high design with traditional architecture.

**FAVOURITE TOURIST HUB:** We're fans of the Riviera Maya, which has some of the most perfect beaches on earth, and Playa del Carmen has a lively restaurant, bar and club scene.



**F**reelance travel writers, Emma Sloley and Adam McCulloch are, as they say, living the dream. The globetrotting Australian-born husband and wife duo now call New York City home and Mexico their home-away-from-home.

The couple relocated to the Big Apple for their careers back in 2004 and they reside in the trendy West Village. But as much as they adore Manhattan's exhilarating buzz and the tree-lined streets of their historic neighbourhood, it didn't take them long to fall in love with their nearby southern neighbour. So much so, that in 2010 the couple purchased a property in the colourful Mexican city of Mérida as a convenient escape.


"We fell in love with Mexico the first time we visited around six years ago, especially the Yucatán Peninsula [where Mérida is located]," says Sloley. "It has a languid charm that really gets under your skin. Life is lived at a slower pace here and there's a fantastic mix of European, Mayan and Mexican influences that make it a unique melting pot."

"In terms of the building, we were ultimately attracted to the home's high ceiling, the wooden vigas beams (typical of the late 1800s architecture in Mérida) and the original handpainted pasta tiles (made from cement paste)," explains McCulloch of the early 1900s home they purchased from the original homeowners' family.

After giving their new home a modern refurbishment – including reinstalling the wiring and plumbing, adding a second storey, a pool, the staircase and three bedrooms – the interior, is just as you'd imagine: fresh, invigorating, yet still brimming with Mexican charm. It's complete with a combination of bright cerulean blue and tangerine walls, kaleidoscopic handpainted floor tiles (a different style in every room), bold abstract art, and minimal and contemporary fixtures.

"We both love design and decorating and got to a point where every inch of room in New York was crammed with furniture and art, so we had to put a moratorium on buying anything else!" laughs Sloley. "Therefore, it was like being set loose in a candy store to have so many rooms to fill, yet also a little intimidating." In her own words, the home has "original Spanish Colonial bones with dynamic contemporary touches".

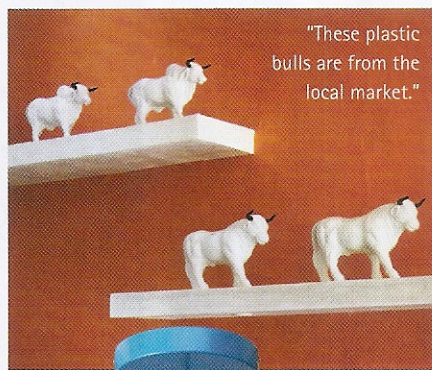
With a grand plan to spend at least three months of the year here in their vibrant haven, it seems likely that this time may increase as the years go on. "It's a distinct contrast to our lives in Manhattan, which is lived out of a tiny shoe-box apartment matched with a lot of stress and a busy social schedule," admits Sloley. "Mérida really feels like an escape. It's a little oasis of calm and we tend to live a really decadent lifestyle down here that we can't elsewhere." →



"The astroturf and portholes on our upstairs deck make you feel like you're on a cruise ship!"



1



"These plastic bulls are from the local market."

"We chose desert-friendly plants on the upstairs deck as it gets a lot of sun."

*Get the look*  
 Mexican classics and modernist shapes

2



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WE LOVE



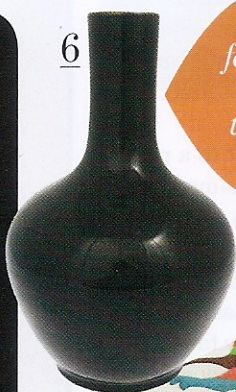
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*"It sounds cheesy but it really feels like coming home. Each time we unlock that antique iron door and walk inside, I'm blown away."*

8



9

"There's a 1950s Danish sideboard in the front room and some old industrial signage. 'Reik' is a nonsense word we created."

REIK



- 1. LANTERN, \$49.99, by Dusk, dusk.com.au.
- 2. BULL HEAD, \$495, by Magnolia Interiors, magnoliainteriors.com.au.
- 3. PENDANT LAMP, \$149, by Ikea, ikea.com.au.
- 4. TILE (43cm x 23cm), \$168, by Naj Studio, najstudio.com.au.
- 5. BIKE, starting from \$499, by Papillonaire, papillonaire.com.
- 6. VASE, \$210, by Meizai, meizai.com.au.
- 7. THROW, \$489, by Table Tonic, tabletonic.com.au.
- 8. CHAIR, \$69, by Life Interiors, lifeinteriors.com.au.
- 9. BATH TOWEL, \$75, and HANDTOWEL, \$30, both by Missoni at Top3 By Design, top3.com.au. **m**

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