

Live the Island Life!



Travel may be tricky right now, but the resort-feel pieces from this Singapore store can take you to places, no passport required.

BY JO UPCRAFT



No travel? No problem! Bring the holiday vibe to your home thanks to **Island Living by Cocoon**. Close your eyes and cosy up on the brand's Aliko Daybed and you could be forgiven for thinking you're horizontal under the hot sun in the Gili Islands. Kick back in the Bungalow Armchair and the feel is not dissimilar to taking time out on a balcony in Nusa Dua. (Just don't get sunscreen on the cushions!)

Island Living is a one-stop-shop in Singapore for tropical and elegant pieces with that bohemian and beachy aesthetic so many of us are missing right now. As well as stand-out signature furniture, you'll find sustainable rattan and teak wood, hand-carved artefacts, whitewashed surfaces, luxurious textiles and darling finishing touches that prompt the question, "Oooh, where did you find that?"

Laid-back rustic looks

It was the difficulty of sourcing unique homeware that led Australian expats Karin Rysgaard and Denise Vrontas to launch Island Living in February 2019. "There were a lot of mass-produced, super-expensive and lovely but sleek home goods that were not really our style," explains Denise, who moved to Singapore seven years ago. "We felt there was a gap in the market for affordable pieces offering organic textures, natural lines and a laid-back rustic look that suits where we live geographically."

Setting out to create a brand that is affordable, on trend, ever-changing and accessible, the duo looked to vacay destinations such as Indonesia and Vietnam for inspiration and stock. "Pretty much all of our merchandise is handmade, so no two products are the same, from our Canggu pottery vases, to the Byron Bay baskets, and the wooden Kenyan bowls and spoons," adds Karin, an expat here for 16 years.

The pair were introduced by a mutual friend who had heard them both fantasising about launching a homeware company. Karin's background in interior design and styling and Denise's experience in PR and digital marketing made for a dream team. What began two years ago as a small e-commerce website and an 800 square-foot store is today a stylish online shop and stunning showroom of 2,500 square feet (plus much more for storage for new items which arrive on a continual basis).

Community spirit

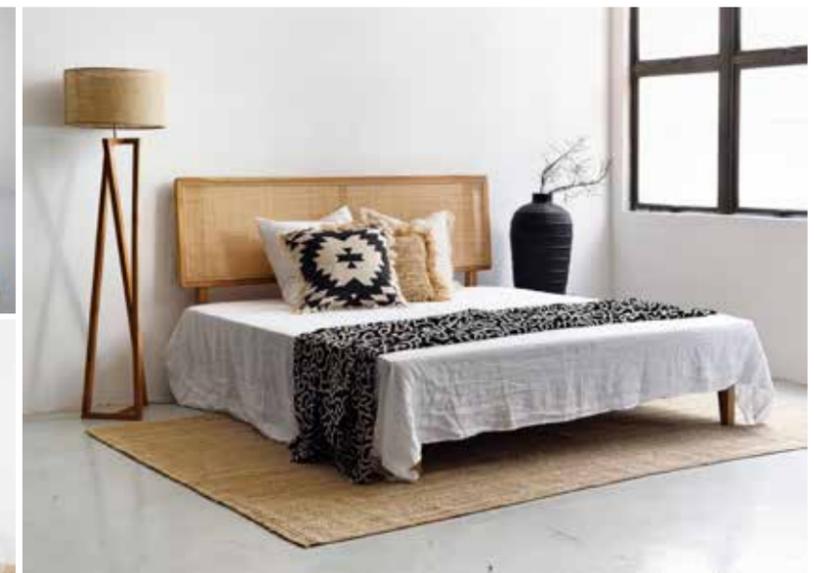
While COVID-19 caused disruption everywhere, it gave Island Living the opportunity to become even more community driven. "We were lucky to make great contacts with suppliers around the globe prior to the pandemic, so we continued working together throughout 2020 despite not being able to travel," Karin says. "Our larger suppliers introduced us to small local enterprises who were suffering, so now we support them, too. It makes our merchandise even more eclectic and creates a wonderful sense of community spirit."

The company has also thrived thanks to the new trend for home redecoration and stay-at-home projects. "People are definitely investing in making their homes more comfortable and enjoyable," shares Denise. Island Living's Havana Bed in teak and rattan is a hot-cake right now, along with decorative features such as trays, lanterns, vases and candles. "Updating your home with details like a linen palm tree tea towel provides an instant pick-me-up."

Unable to source for products directly, Karin and Denise currently look to international brands, Instagram and Pinterest to keep their fingers on the pulse. Clearly loving the journey together, when they're not in their showroom or working behind the scenes, you'll find them at Luke's or Butcher Boy, perhaps with a glass of fizz in hand, discussing ideas and planning prospective escapes to Bali and Hanoi.

Until we can all dust off our passports, you know where to go ... *El*

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Browse the online shop at islandliving.sg, or visit the showroom at #02-05 Henry Design Centre, 5 Eunos Avenue 8A.