

# RIP KAI

Designed and built to accommodate a multi-generational family, Rip Kai embodies beachy vibes and a West Indian aesthetic on a grand scale.

*Words by Natasha Were. Photography by [www.rons-prophoto.com](http://www.rons-prophoto.com) and [www.ten20photography.com](http://www.ten20photography.com)*

A simple Caribbean beach shack – that was Jay and Barbara Ripley’s Cayman Islands property dream. But with a large family – five children and 11 grandchildren – whom they wanted to be able to host all together, the dream wasn’t entirely realistic. And yet, while Rip Kai, the nine-bedroom property they ultimately built, may be far larger and sturdier than any shack, it maintains the essence of that initial idea: traditionally Caribbean in style, informal and welcoming, and infused with beachy vibes.

The perfect location for their project was a double lot at Cayman Kai with 200 feet of beachfront and wide-open ocean views. Having previously renovated a property on the island, the

couple was ready for a design-build project – but a modern home was out of the question.

“We love the style of Grand Old House and Upstairs at Kaibo, and we wanted to capture that West Indies feel,” the couple said. “And John Doak came highly recommended to design it.”

In order to create the multi-generational estate, they needed with the West Indian aesthetic they wanted; Doak explains, “It was decided to lay out the house following the traditions of a Caribbean plantation, with the Great House forming the heart of the estate and other accommodations arranged as a series of pavilions to meet the needs of the family from grandparents to newborns.” →





The Great House features an expansive open-concept living and entertainment area on the lower level and five bedrooms upstairs. Off each corner of the main house lies a pavilion: the two at the front of the house being guest bedrooms, while those on the ocean side bookend the pool, one featuring an outdoor kitchen, the other a games room. Independent from the main structure are two additional buildings: a three-car garage on one side and, balancing it out, a two-bedroom cottage on the other.

Although the original design was on three levels to give the owners a private, top-floor principal suite, when Eric Kline of Encompass was contracted as project manager, he provided an alternative perspective.

"We love being involved in the design and build process, helping to connect the client's and architect's visions to practical construction. When we review a set of plans, we make positive contributions to improve the process and make it more efficient," Eric explained.

Rather than a tall, imposing design with ample bedroom space but more limited gathering spaces, he suggested removing the top level and expanding the main level footprint. This would reduce the total mass of the building but create more usable space where the family could all spend time together rather than retreat to separate areas. →





“Standing seam metal roofs – and sometimes barrel tiles – are the norm in the Cayman Islands, but we wanted to capture that West Indian aesthetic with Shake-style cedar shingles,” Eric said. “Obviously, we couldn’t use real cedar as it wouldn’t last, so we did a lot of research and eventually found this synthetic product made from recycled tyres.”

The result exceeded all expectations: extremely durable and waterproof, it adds texture and richness to the design, and the dark brown contrasts perfectly with the cream walls – a classic colour scheme evocative of traditional Caribbean style.

The same colour palette continues indoors, creating a timeless background onto which more contemporary elements are layered.

“This property is far bigger than anything we have ever owned, but I didn’t want it to be fancy or grand. I wanted it to be dialled down in style, cosy and casual,” Barbara said of the interior. The beach shack dream had not been abandoned – it had just grown. And in Rip Kai, she was determined to create a barefoot ambience and a definite sense of being at the seaside.

To do this, she worked with a Florida-based interior designer to source everything from tile work (for which they shipped a full container from Italy) to artwork and furniture to fans, creating richly decorated scenes filled with tactile textures, organic materials, and coastal accents.

Every bedroom has its own character no two feature the same, furniture or colour schemes, but all offer an abundance of textures and materials. Natural wood, rattan and wicker, marine-themed prints and photographs, and a pleasing symmetry are the common threads that unite the nine bedrooms – and, indeed, run through the entire property.

The children’s bunk room, in fresh blues and whites with fun octopus prints, offers a tremendous amount of floor space for younger family members to lounge or play, whilst the primary bedroom, centrally located on the upper floor beneath a classic Caribbean vaulted, beamed ceiling, is a tall and airy space. With a regal four-poster bed positioned to look straight out to the horizon, a conservatory-like seating area and walls adorned with photography, it is subtly layered without being grandiose. →





However, the true mastery of the design is in the vast Great Room with its wall of ten-foot high glass doors that frame the blue-on-blue of pool, sea and sky – because, despite its hotel lobby dimensions, the space is warm and intimate. It's the result of careful planning, with minute attention paid to lighting, furniture arrangements, and wall and ceiling treatments, which combine to create distinct zones within a single space.

Dark wooden beams and large area rugs create one cosy seating area, where sofas and armchairs with generous curves cluster around a sculptural coffee table crafted from tree roots. A second seating area is separated by a unit housing a pop-up TV, which rotates to face either way, enabling one group to watch the news while another chats, reads or plays.

A clean white ceiling and a vast kitchen island covered by gleaming Cambria quartz define the kitchen. Here, simple white cabinetry allows the vintage copper hood and the stunning backsplash – Barbara's favourite tile in the house, made from shimmering water-cut marble – quietly speak volumes.

Closer to the pool terrace, nickel joint tongue and groove panelling on the ceiling and a row of leaf-shaped fans lend the dining area a different feel. Jay's grand piano – a part of the design from the get-go – creates a further division between this and the bar area, where a river stone wall treatment creates yet another ambience within this open space.→





Outdoors, the choice of gathering spaces continues, with a dining table and comfortable seating arranged along the length of the deep, covered terrace and sun loungers surrounding the pool and beach deck. At 40 feet long, the infinity pool is large enough for Jay to swim laps but also allows for plenty of fun, with a sunbathing shelf, submerged seating and integrated hot tub – and it's the perfect spot to sit and watch the grandchildren playing in the garden.

At one end of the pool, the games pavilion embraces the coastal theme with a vivid under-sea mural painted by local artist Carlos Garcia, and mirroring this, at the other end of the pool, is the barbecue pavilion with a complete outdoor kitchen, where cut-outs in the side walls perfectly frame picture-postcard views. However, the star feature of this space – perhaps of the entire property – has to be the spectacular glass backsplash that covers the entire rear wall in shimmering blue and green abstract shapes, effortlessly tying in with the hues of the ocean and the iridescence of the pool.→





#### SERVICE PROVIDERS IN CAYMAN

General contractor and project management:  
Encompass Ltd.

Architect: John Doak Architecture

Audio visual and home automation: 345 AV Ltd.

Kitchen design (indoor and outdoor), indoor  
countertops and outdoor cabinets: Pooley Cabinets

Glasswork: Iberica Materials Ltd.

Land surveyors: Abernethy & Associates

Landscaping: Vigoro

Pool design: Pool Patrol



And that is the beauty of Rip Kai: throughout this vast property, the architecture, the design, and the décor merge exquisitely. From the perfect symmetry of the architecture to tiny details such as the pops of extravagant and unexpected tile work, the hanging bedside lights in every room and the ubiquitous references to the ocean, there's a continuity to the design that lends it complete coherence. As a result, despite its sizeable footprint, Rip Kai ultimately creates a series of different moments – with areas for everyone to come together, space to spread out, and private pockets in which to take refuge. 🌴