

HOME SWEET HOME

Away



THE LEO COTTAGE
UNION PIER,
MICHIGAN

**STONEHOUSE AT
PRAIRIEWOOD**
MANHATTAN,
KANSAS

**MODERN ORGANIC
OASIS**
COLUMBUS, OHIO

LILLA NORR
MORA,
MINNESOTA

**FORGET THE MUG.
WHEN IT COMES TO
SOUVENIRS, HOW ABOUT
TAKING HOME STYLISH
DECORATING IDEAS?
EACH OF THESE PRIVATE
RENTALS REFLECTS A
SLICE OF MIDWEST CULTURE
AND DESIGN—AND
YES, YOU REALLY CAN
BOOK THEM!**



The Leo Cottage

Designers love lake vacations as much as the rest of us. That's made Michigan a hot spot for chic beach rentals and bungalows, especially along the Sunset Coast, within easy reach of Chicago. Exhibit A: The Leo Cottage, a sweet three-bedroom in Union Pier rehabbed by Illinois design firm Kate Marker Interiors.

To start, Marker and her team updated the home's curb (and click) appeal with a coat of Benjamin Moore's Deep River—a charcoal hue with a pinch of green that pops against the property's lush foliage. And she tucked outdoor seating everywhere, so guests could savor the temperate evenings and near-lake breezes. (The cottage sits just a bit inland from Lake Michigan.)

Inside, Marker kept the mood casual, befitting a vacation home, and used texture to reinforce a connection to nature. Rattan headboards, jute rugs and woven accessories bring a calming, subtly shore-like feel indoors. Then she sprinkled in the magic, with playful touches like a coral fridge and claw-foot bedroom tub, which give the place a slightly hodgepodge, escapist feel.

"Just like we ourselves first felt upon pulling into the drive of The Leo Cottage," Marker says, "we hope each and every visitor feels a wave of happiness upon arrival and throughout their stay."



TOP Kate Marker gave the kitchen a farmhouse feel, with a vintage island and stools, original floors painted in a quilt pattern, and throwback fridge and glam range (both Big Chill brand). **ABOVE** Throughout the house, washed wood and white walls are balanced with hits of high-contrast charcoal. In the main bedroom, for example, built-ins backed with dark beadboard wrap around the room like a hug. A whimsical tub flanks the bed for a relaxing soak. (On the other side, a wood-burning stove keeps things cozy and romantic.)

PHOTOGRAPHS: MARGARET RAJIC



TOP LEFT An outdoor shower, complete with privacy door and dressing bench, earns its keep after a day biking or at the beach.

LEFT A striking pattern on the loveseat injects energy into this sitting room's neutral cadence. Shelves above the window frames display a few treasures without cluttering the space.

TOP RIGHT Wide wraparound steps beg for afternoon porch hangs with ice cream or sun tea. Marker let the home's style guide the landscaping: Brick paths and pocket gardens reinforce a cottage look.

BELOW A simple wood and screen structure (painted white like the picket fence) encloses a backyard patio.



RATTAN ORBS. ROPEY CHANDELIERS. BLACK PENDANTS. EVERY ROOM IN THIS COTTAGE PLAYS TO WIN THE LIGHTING GAME.



BOOK A STAY

The Leo Cottage sleeps eight and starts at \$435 per night on Vacasa. Follow @theleocottage on Instagram for more photos and to see the home in all four seasons.

Stonehouse at Prairiewood

A century and a half ago, prairie covered much of Kansas, a windswept sea of grasses and flowers, roamed by bison and buzzing with diverse bird and insect life. That's the world Native Americans inhabited and covered wagons traversed—and that visitors can get a taste of at the Stonehouse at Prairiewood, an 1860s homestead estate outside the college town of Manhattan.

Every preserved architectural detail stokes the imagination: What did it take to carve and stack the limestone blocks? Who cut the trees for the beams? How many hands have touched them since? Those raw, richly textural elements are the home's best asset, and luckily, Kail and Rebecca Katzenmeier know it. The couple met as students at Kansas State University and fell in love—with each other and with the Flint Hills. Their approach to decorating the Stonehouse, says Kail, “has everything to do with its DNA, and a deep sense of honor for historic built environments.” While adding modern amenities, such as soaker tubs and luxe bedding, they've kept the palette serene, leaning on neutral hues and materials like leather and wood.

“All of our design decisions begin with the same end in mind,” explains Kail. “How can this space best offer our guests renewal, connection, wonder and inspiration?” That translates into comfy sofas, a long table for family meals and ample lawns for games and gatherings. The Katzenmeiers also nudge guests to explore their 500-acre preserve. Five miles of trails weave through native tallgrass prairie and wooded ravines. Wildcat Creek beckons for a lazy canoe paddle. And at night, you can actually see the stars.



A HOT TUB TUCKS DISCRETELY IN THE CORNER CROOK OF THIS TERRACE WALL.

LEFT + BELOW, CENTER Grassy lawns surround the Stonehouse at Prairiewood. Other restored period buildings include the 19th-century livestock barn, spring house and ice house.

BELOW FAR LEFT The home's striking ceiling beams and exposed limestone walls dominate every room. You can still see original ax marks in the header beams above the doors and windows.

BELOW LEFT The home has four bedrooms, all furnished in earthy grays and taupes. This one has a generous en suite bathroom.

BELOW The upgraded kitchen channels the home's 1860s roots, with wood cabinets, a farmhouse sink and a 48-inch Italian range set against a brick wall to evoke a hearth.



PHOTOGRAPHS: ROD MIKINSKI



BOOK A STAY

The Stonehouse at Prairiewood has four queen bedrooms, plus a sleeper sofa, and starts at \$565 per night, booked directly or through Vrbo or Airbnb. Check out prairiewood.com for more photos of the home and 500-acre estate, which includes a nature preserve, a second rental house, a private swimming pool and an events barn.



A PARTIAL WALL WITH PEEK-THROUGH SHELVES OFFERS A COMPROMISE, BREAKING UP A BIG SPACE WITHOUT CLOSING IT OFF.



ABOVE LEFT En suite bathrooms accompany both bedrooms. In this one, rather than painstakingly cut tile to fill a steeply angled wall, the Williamsons opted for a loose, organic look. In a tight space, a mirror with an LED frame serves double duty as a light.

ABOVE RIGHT An oak slat wall partition with an integrated shelf divides this bedroom from its bathroom and functions as a headboard for a platform bed.

BELOW Rather than fight the second bedroom's small size with white paint (a trick that rarely works in tiny rooms), the Williamsons repositioned it as intimate and cozy, with warm gray walls and a channel-tufted headboard made from velvet curtains.



LEFT The kitchen is small but smartly organized, with a bank of sleek dark blue cabinets and a quartz-topped peninsula. A mod pendant hangs over the sink.



Modern Organic Oasis

When they purchased a 1900 duplex in the German Village neighborhood of Columbus, Ohio, husband-wife design team Bryan and Catherine Williamson had a vision to rehab the two sides as fraternal twins—one with a vintage vibe, the other swinging modern. The duality perfectly encapsulates German Village, a quaint, brick-paved pocket within Ohio's capital and largest city. Columbus has deep design roots, particularly in fashion. However, a few years ago, the Williamsons noticed the city lacking for cool private places to stay. So in 2013 they launched The Village Host. Today, the company manages five renovated properties, including the two halves of the duplex. "We leaned into the modern organic aesthetic of this space," Catherine says of the contemporary side,

completed in 2020. Although more than a century old, the building had no character, which gave the Williamsons guilt-free creative freedom for a radical makeover. They aimed for a look both stylishly new and warmly relaxing—clean lines, blond wood, light walls and dabs of black throughout. Those traits could quickly skew builder-bland, but the couple worked in decorative details that befit a city with a thriving and eclectic arts scene. Thin oak slats stripe the side of the built-in bookcase that divides the living and dining rooms. Large-scale paintings cover the walls—most by the couple themselves, and one favorite by local artist Kirsta Benedetti (on the bottom in the dining room, above). A funky bathroom backsplash forgoes neat-and-tidy finishing. The creative flourishes are subtle and tasteful, not garish. "We wanted it to feel like an escape," says Catherine, "where you can walk in and just exhale."

ABOVE The Oasis reveals itself in a front-to-back layout typical of urban dwellings, with a living room, dining area and kitchen lined up like dominoes. To keep the narrow space feeling open, the Williamsons opted for furniture with slim legs—the coffee table, armchairs, dining set and even a planter. The stripy wood trim that hangs like an arm cuff on the bookshelf wall is an easy DIY.

PHOTOGRAPHS: COURTESY OF THE VILLAGE HOST

BOOK A STAY
 Sleeping four, the Modern Organic Oasis is listed on Airbnb for \$277 per night. Check out thevillagehost.com or follow @beginninginthemiddle on Instagram to see all of the Williamsons' properties and current renovation projects.



ONE FAVORITE FURNISHING FIND: THE CURVED 1986 CARSON'S SECTIONAL SOFA.



BOOK A STAY

Situated on a private acreage near the Snake River, Lilla Norr sleeps four (with one queen and one full-size bed) and is listed on Airbnb for \$200 per night. For healthy doses of hygge, follow @lillanorr_agram on Instagram.

Lilla Norr

Two deep cultural currents in Minnesota—Scandinavian lineage and woody cabins—meet under the sloped roof of Lilla Norr. (The name means Little North in Swedish.) The 1978 A-frame, located 90 minutes north of the Twin Cities near the Snake River, is a self-described passion project for Ashley Hewitt Lemke and Jamie Hewitt Budnick (and their husbands, Brooks and Alex). The twin sisters own the Minneapolis vintage shop Arlee Park, and they see Lilla Norr as an extension of their retail ethos: curated, collected, sleek and intentional. They furnished the cabin with vintage pieces dating from the '50s through the '80s. (Yes, that's 40 years old now, so it counts.)

The tiny cabin offers an open-plan main floor, with one bedroom downstairs and another up in the peak of the A. The sisters embraced its stark, clean bones as an opportunity to explore Scandinavian design principles of simplicity and functionality. "We wanted to keep the inside consistent throughout," Budnick says. "We used natural tones and shades of white to make the space brighter, not like a stereotypical cabin. The neutral palette doesn't compete too much with the outdoor scenery." And oh, that scenery. A massive, triangular rear window wall provides Lilla Norr's greatest selling point, and it's the first thing you notice upon opening the front door—the clear view straight through to 5 acres of private woods beyond, where a picnic table, firepit and nature await.

ABOVE A-frame cabins emerged as American vacation homes in the 1930s, but the genre was in decline by 1978, when builders from British Columbia constructed Lilla Norr in just two weeks. The cabin's current owners have taken a slower, more deliberate approach to furnishing the interior, thoughtfully scouting out each pitch-perfect piece.

PHOTOGRAPHS: COURTESY OF LILLA NORR



ABOVE LEFT Though they gave the cabin a thorough refresh, Ashley Hewitt Lemke and Jamie Hewitt Budnick vowed not to touch one beloved detail—the original sawn cedar paneling on the slanted walls.

ABOVE RIGHT Many people opt to visit Lilla Norr in winter, when snow cloaks the woods outside, and the svelte 1970s Morsø woodstove radiates cozy heat.

LEFT Though compact, the kitchen is built for real cooking. Open shelves and a slim fridge keep it from feeling cramped. A spiral staircase playfully winds up to the second-floor sleeping nook. MWL