

# reallife

CARIBBEAN LUXURY LIFESTYLE, PROPERTY AND DESIGN MAGAZINE

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FEATURE PROPERTY INSIDE

## CAMANA BAY

A return to the heart  
of the hometown

EXCLUSIVE SHOWCASE PROPERTY

# NOW OR NEVER

Asian-Caribbean fusion  
on Grand Cayman





# now or Never

*A private tour of an Asian-inspired plantation home in Grand Cayman uncovers an irrepressible 'carpe diem' spirit.*

Words by Juliet Austin  
Photography by Martyn Poyner

**S**weeping up the circular cobblestone driveway of the main house, I am struck by its intriguing sculptural silhouette. Making an indelible mark against the inky horizon, the angled façades and pavilion-style structure of Now or Never are given wings courtesy of the clever

interplay of traditional hipped roofs, gable ends, wide overhangs, dual pitches and dramatic Polynesian forms, creating a unique three tier roofscape reminiscent of a small village.

Situated on the secluded Mangrove Point peninsula, this six-bedroom home features self-contained guest

accommodation, a triple garage, boat house and an abundance of entertainment areas spanning three floors. Each of the five linked pavilions is sized proportional to its use, harbouring its own unique character and hinting at the meticulous, personalised nature of the design. →





**Opening Spread:** Quintessential Caribbean living – expansive shaded terraces are perfect for enjoying spectacular panoramic views.

**Above & Right:** Built in sympathy with the unique locale and micro-climate, each pod can be accessed via a network of deep-set, wraparound walkways.

**Opposite Top:** The home’s third storey elevation adds an evocative top note in drama.

**Opposite Bottom:** Grand without being grandiose, the spacious Great Room forms the heart and soul of the home.

With a main living area elevated sixteen feet above sea level and two hundred feet of ocean frontage, uninterrupted views across the North Sound to the world famous Seven Mile Beach guarantee magnificent sunsets from the many terraces, rooms and gazebos, “with not a single high rise in sight. It is,” the owner tells me, “what water living is all about.”

With doors wide open, the mélange of Caribbean and Asian influences traverse boundaries, resulting in an ease of flow facilitated by the network of interconnecting wooden walkways with beautiful tongue-and-groove ceilings and spinning fans affording comfortable outdoor living. Viewing platforms and balconies conspire to draw the eye outward, past swaying palms and over walls of sun-baked natural stone to the ocean beyond. Nowhere is this seen to more dramatic effect than the spectacular roof →







terrace – accessible via a customised spiral staircase by local craftsman Karoly Szücs of Artisan Metal Works – where I am hard pushed not to dally, gazing longingly across the mesmerising seascape in Caribbean *French Lieutenant's Woman* fashion.

But do not be misled by its somnolent ambience, Now or Never boasts 'all guns blazing' home automation with surround sound, audio-visual and security all at the touch of a button. Designed by veteran Caribbean architect and 'imagineer' John Doak with Project Technologist, John Yeo of John Doak Architecture, it embodies Doak's telltale contextual 'inside-outside' signature. Painstakingly orientated to maximise prevailing breezes while offering resistance to hurricane-force winds, the pavilionised approach works in sympathy with the site's unique terroir. Spanning the

width of the double lot, the crescent-shaped estate capitalises on views and lushly landscaped gardens, while nestling a stunning vanishing edge pool with deep-set beach and ocean to the west. "Raising living areas above the flood plains and creating breezeways and sacrificial ground level accommodations gives the home a 'king of the castle' feel, combining the need for security with space for future expansion as the family's needs grow or diversify..." explains Doak.

Favouring clean-cut lines, masculine forms and a rustic ambience, details such as the metal railings, square light fittings and statuesque columns assert a certain strength and assuredness repeated in the heavy mahogany front doors, custom cabinetry, window trim and furniture – handmade exclusively in Guatemala and installed on site. Bespoke chairs dotted around the →



**Above:** This Caribbean stairway to heaven leads up to a stunning viewing platform.

**Left:** The inherent beauty of stone, wood and natural fibres brings the outside in, resulting in visual harmony.

**Right:** Dangling from an outrageously high ceiling, the 'had to have them' Mexican lanterns exude warmth over the sixteen-foot-long poured concrete countertop and simple hardwood dining area.







**Top Left:** Interesting ceiling detail adds a quirky touch to this rooftop room.

**Top Right:** Wood furnishings and a neutral palette offer the perfect foil for the classic Caribbean vista visible through walls of windows in the master suite.

**Right:** Island living at its best – fusing indulgence and functionality, the fully-equipped thatched gazebo is the ultimate room with a view.

**Left:** Soft swathes of fabric, pebbled flooring and intricate mosaic work deliver a feast for the senses in the master bathroom.

**Above:** Never far from the horizon, cosy window seats are perfect for curling up with a good book.



terraces and in the striking thatched beach gazebo, are crafted from tree trunks, while floors and countertops inside feature stained poured concrete, displayed to full effect in the sixteen-foot-long kitchen countertop poured in one fell swoop by local expert, Gary Hollins. Opening onto the balconies, the low-maintenance, wood-look, hurricane rated doors with special impact glass from Germany and a roof of concrete ‘cedar’ shingles give the home a fortress-like façade, while inside wood-look ceramic and rubber tiles offer brilliant, practical alternatives to floorboards with no sacrifice on style – perfect for cavorting in the Caribbean.

In keeping with substantial proportions, the expansive, open plan Great Room boasts oversized seating, accented by throw cushions in vibrant greens and oranges, emphasising the

homely ambience and warm wood hues and making me feel instantly welcome. Atmospheric recessed lighting highlights a latticework of exposed beams in a ceiling suspended to facilitate free air flow and camaraderie. Lit up at night, the magical seaside hideaway shimmers like a mirage – as glass and water reflect a galaxy of stars. Inside, the simple, hardwood dining area and unpretentious kitchen speak to authenticity – offering space and place for family and friends to gather. Add to this the humorously-named ‘Linga Longa’ bar atop the guest suite, in full bamboo splendour, and this may be one party palace you could be forgiven for forgetting.

Housed in their own pavilion, bedrooms seamlessly fuse functionality with creativity and indulgence: sumptuous fabrics, cosy nooks, idiosyncratic ceiling details and

unimpeded views make each room liveable and stylish, no more so than the master suite with its cathedral ceiling, wall-to-wall windows and scatterings of sensuous carved wood furniture.

Intent on seizing the moment, this visually daring home captures the essence of tropical living. With an intoxicating ‘joie de vivre’, Now or Never makes no apologies for what it is – a family home with heart, humour and humility at its core. Guided by the principles of architect Charles Moore, who said: “To make a place is to make a domain that helps people to know where they are and by extension, to know who they are,” Now or Never succeeds wildly in marrying luxury with authenticity, creating the ultimate home where the heart is. I leave feeling like I have spent the day at an old friend’s. 🏠



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