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1 The first-floor lounge overlooks the double-height kitchen and family area on the ground floor, and benefits from lots of light owing to a large picture window Bilson installed in the upper part of the exterior wall. The room is colourful and cosy, featuring a bright orange Jaipur two-seat sofa (\$7,200 from G.O.D., Lighten Centre, Sharp Street East, Causeway Bay, tel: 2890 5555; www.god.com.hk). The Pamela Ottoman (\$4,600) and the gastakia rug (\$5,500) are also from G.O.D. Bilson built a dividing panel to shield the living room from the stairwell, leaving it open at both ends. The 42-inch Samsung plasma TV cost \$30,000 from Fortress (Admiralty Centre, 18 Harcourt Road, Admiralty, tel: 2864 2441).

2 The terrace is an ideal space for entertaining. The free-standing, reconstituted marble island table parallel to the barbecue unit (far left, unseen), was designed by Bilson and built by project contractor Charles Lam of Fame (Unit 3, 15/F, Block B, New Trade Plaza, 4 On Ping Street, Sha Tin, tel: 2642 0966), who was responsible for much of the custom-made features. The Triconfort Rivage bar stools cost \$1,790 each from Warric Company. The rectangular Gloster Ethos dining table (\$50,245) and the set of eight Gloster Luna chairs (\$12,640) are from Resource Asia (Room 1613, Horizon Plaza, 2 Lee Wing Street, Ap Lei Chau, tel: 2554 9088, www.resourceasia.com.hk).

3 The ground floor family area is comfortable yet practical. The Pump II semicircular sofa from OVO cost \$23,880 and the Nuc coffee table from Axis Collections (2/F, Gee Yuck Building, 14 Bonham Street, Sheung Wan, tel: 2858 4777; www.axiscollections.com) cost \$1,860. The pair of Tom Vac white chairs are from Aluminium 00/F, 8 Kingston Street, Causeway Bay, tel: 2577 4764; www.ki-aluminium.com). The Italian Lea Ceramiche floor tiles, from Pacific Building Materials (22A, Times Tower, 391 Jaffe Road, Wan Chai, tel: 2543 8870), extend onto the terrace for visual continuity.



Keeping the city at bay

Inspired to swap the hustle and bustle of Mid-Levels for the gentler pace of Sai Kung when they had their first child, Craig and Ai Lin Wallace have created a spacious abode with panoramic vistas of the bay.

Having spent 15 years paying high Mid-Levels rents for poky apartments, Australian banker Craig Wallace and his wife, Ai Lin, headed for the open spaces of Sai Kung after the arrival of their daughter, Alexandra, now three.

"We had always been fans of the area and after the birth of our daughter we became increasingly determined to move there for the quality of life it affords," explains Wallace.

They bought a three-storey, 2,600-square-foot house in a secured complex near Hebe Haven after a seven-month hunt

that took them from Clear Water Bay to Sai Kung Country Park. As soon as they saw it, they pounced. "The interior layout included a ground-floor living room with a six-metre high ceiling that had great potential and the view over the marina is spectacular."

How true. Standing on the ground level, with a wall of glass doors flung wide open to access a large, greenery-fringed terrace, and unobstructed views across the bay below, it is both an open yet surprisingly intimate location.



Wallace commissioned architect Ed Bilson (MAP Architecture and Planning, tel: 2877 9282) to rework the interior space. "It was fun to get into this house and realise the potential of it," says Bilson.

Bilson rethought the space to make the house work in tandem with its superb natural setting. To this end he relocated back to the ground floor the kitchen, which was, bizarrely enough, on the first floor; installed a huge picture window and a wall of bi-fold doors in the double-height wall leading onto the terrace, knocked out or moved most of the interior, non-structural walls and used glass balustrades throughout the home to offer practical safety barriers without restricting views or light.

Everything is about the view in this house. "The views from each floor have been captured well and provide a vacation feel," explains Wallace. Hence, the rear entrance door swings open to allow direct access to the view though the ground-floor open living room onto the terrace beyond. On the first floor is a family room, office and Alexandra's bedroom; and the whole of the second floor has been converted to an elegant open-plan bedroom and bathroom, with views of the sea from the bed, the bath, the shower – even the toilet (see *Tried and Tested*).

The main bedroom is probably the most unusual part of the house, says Wallace. With its king-sized oak bed, oiled-oak floor, huge marble tub, plus lots of built-in

cupboards and wardrobes (making it easy to keep clutter in check), it's the perfect place to relax.

When it came to interior furnishings, Wallace wanted a pared-down look. "He is very much into the late 20th-century aesthetic, so the look is very international, very simple," explains Bilson. Wallace wanted regular shapes, with minimal colours and materials to create a functional, spacious and bright home. "I felt that restricting the number of colours, shades and shapes would create a relaxed environment, not one where your brain is working overtime to try to take in a bunch of different colours and angles," he says.

As well as being comfortable and relaxing, it was also important that this should be a hi-tech home. "It needed to have all mod cons, so it is internally wired for music systems, speakers, wireless broadband, satellite and cable television, security system, etc.," says Wallace. "We wanted it to be able to offer several options for entertaining and living."

The redesign works well for the whole family, who now enjoy an unrivalled sense of space. "As an Aussie, my favourite place is the outdoor area, which, subject to the weather, is where you will find us on weekends and where our guests end up hanging out," says Wallace. "My wife will probably say her favourite space is the bedroom, with enough cabinet space to swallow up her wardrobe. As for Alexandra, she will most likely vote for the family room with the plasma TV."



tried & tested open up

With large windows to the left and to the fore, the Wallaces took some convincing before agreeing to Bilson's open bathroom plan, but the architect argued that no one really overlooked the space and, to preserve modesty, it was easy enough to pull down roller blinds on each window. The Duravit Philippe Starck wall-hung toilet (\$9,560) and the Duravit Philippe Starck toilet-roll holder (\$896) are both from Sunny (PROL, G/F, 193 Lockhart Road, Wan Chai, tel: 2156 038).



4 The master bedroom and bathroom suite take up the entire top floor. Glass doors make the most of the view across the green hillside and to the sea. The oak Kris king-sized bed (\$30,490) is from OVO (16 Queen's Road East, Wan Chai, tel: 2526 7226). On the balcony are a pair of aluminium Tricentfort-Rivage deck chairs with teak armrests (\$4,500 each from Warric, 401 Capitol Plaza, 2 Lyndhurst Terrace, Central, tel: 2527 7349). The pair of Tolomeo bedside lights are available at Artemide (Rutledge Centre, 11 Duddell Street, Central, tel: 2523 0333). The oiled white-oak floor, which runs through the house, is by Been and distributed by Equal



Engineering Limited (12/F, First Commercial Building, 33 Leighton Road, Causeway Bay, tel: 2881 7066).

5 A revolving circular glass cabinet sits neatly at the end of the kitchen units, its curved shape offsetting the predominantly linear design of the rest of the space. The unit is from The Essentials.

6 The open kitchen features an Italian white marble island preparation area, which faces bi-fold doors and the terrace beyond, ensuring the view can also be enjoyed while cooking. To solve the problem of cooking



smells, Bilson built a cantilevered extractor unit over the food preparation area. The kitchen was supplied by The Essentials, 77 Leighton Road, tel: 2142 1409.

7 The spacious, two-person tub in the open bathroom was custom designed by MAP and is finished in reconstituted marble. From the tub, the occupant can enjoy sea views. Next to the bath is a glass-enclosed shower unit; to the rear is the basin area featuring a pair of Tecla rectangular ceramic basins (\$2,840 each) from Sunny (PROL, G/F, 193 Lockhart Road, Wan Chai, tel: 2156 038).