

Halcyon Days at Villa Halcyon

Be surrounded by nature at the Lanes' house in Puerto Galera

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Photos courtesy of Villa Halcyon





(top) Al fresco dining at the villa. (left) The living room. (above) The Filipino room. (opposite page) A breathtaking view from the villa. (bottom right) An outdoor sitting area in the villa.

An impressive sight welcomes travelers approaching Puerto Galera from the sea, with its verdant mountains overlooking its scenic bay, which is considered one of the most beautiful bays in the world. You can just imagine how it must look from the air. Which is exactly how Gerry Lane first saw it.

That was in the early 1980s when he flew small planes. "I used to fly over Lake Taal and all that," he relates, "then one day I flew down here. I saw Puerto Galera from the air. It looked beautiful. But there was nowhere to land a plane, so the next weekend, we decided to come down here by ferry." He came with his wife, Virginia. "We fell in love with the place. So we

bought some land and built a house here."

The house, which sits on 10-hectares of beachfront property, is basically of southeast Asian design with a tall, steep pitched nipa roof. It took 18 months to build. "Maybe even longer because we had to bring in everything from Manila," Virginia clarifies. The house has seven bedrooms, each one with its own theme.

"We travel a lot and we see many things that we like," Gerry explains. "We incorporated various ideas in the house. We wanted to have an eclectic beach house." There is a Chinese room and a Filipino room, a loft, a Japanese room and a minimalist room, which serves as their

sons' bedroom; an Indian room, which is their daughter's bedroom; and an Egyptian room, which is the master bedroom.

The dining room is Greek inspired. It is Virginia's favorite room in the house. "I like the openness about it," she says. "You can see all around it. I feel like I'm in touch with nature; like I can touch the trees. It's so refreshing."

The kitchen is named after her, Cucina Virginia. She likes to cook Italian. Among her favorites is osso bucco. She also likes to serve organic food. "I love my herbs," she says. "I like growing things myself. I love my garden. I'm a very keen gardener."



They have lived in many places. Gerry is from Ireland. Virginia is Cebuana. They met here in the Philippines. They were married in 1976. They lived in Indonesia, and they own a house in Australia. "When the kids were growing up, they never lived long enough in one place," Virginia relates. "We lived in hotels and rented houses. But whenever we came back, for Christmas or New Year, we'd stay here. So this is the house the kids know as home." Then the kids went away to college. Now, a son lives in Manila while the other lives in Sydney. Their daughter lives in Singapore. Chunga, the family's Doberman, keeps the couple company every time they visit the villa.

After working for multinationals, Gerry started his own business, Lane Moving and Storage, which grew and has been quite successful. Meanwhile, during all of the 20 years that they were away, from 1985 to 2005, the house has remained the same.

"The main structure is the same," Gerry explains, "but in the last five years since we came back, we did extensive renovations and improvements. We added the pool in 2006."

While it is still a private residence, they have opened the house for select guests looking for a quiet place to rent, away from the boisterous activity on the other side of the island. "This is not a place where you have to interact with so many different people," Virginia remarks. "This is the place to really get away from it all and relax; enjoy the calmness of the place, the serenity."

They gave the house a name, Villa Halcyon. Gerry explains: "Halcyon is the ancient Greek name for kingfisher. We have many kingfishers here in the mangrove. You know the expression in English, 'halcyon days', meaning wonderful days in the past; peaceful, happy days. It also refers to when the kingfisher is brooding their eggs, which are quiet days. Ancient Greeks also believed that the kingfisher can still the storms at sea and calm the waves."

Villa Halcyon is located in a secluded part, "nestled among coconut palms, a haven of tranquility." Virginia says, "We love our privacy here." The place is accessible only by boat or by helicopter (there's a helipad below the pier), or by seaplane.

Gerry notes, "Since 1982, the place has not changed. The view across, of the very beautiful bay, is still the same, still pristine, still not developed, unlike in the other parts here." The house has no TV, no air-con. "We have natural air-conditioning," Virginia says. "If you want to be away from the mainstream lifestyle, why come here and live the same way?" Perhaps it's time to recapture your 'halcyon days'. □