COLOUR CONFIDENT

Punchy tones and cheerful patterns create an uplifting feel in Sylvie and Mark Taylor's cottage, where maximalist design brings verve to each bijou space

LIVING ROOM The scheme is layered, personal and full of warmth, with ample seating, despite the small footprint. **Sofa**, sofa.com. **Curtain** in Flo stripe, Ian Sanderson. Bespoke **ottoman**, The House Upstairs

Create balance in an elaborately decorated small room with an ordered configuration of artwork on the wall

'Seating was a conundrum in the small living room. Opting for a smaller sofa and three armchairs made the space feel more sociable and generous, with more seats than expected'

A wood-burning stove is a visually smaller option than a large open fire

LIVING ROOM This is Sylvie's favourite place to spend time, especially by the fire. **Walls** in Setting Plaster, Farrow & Ball. **Armchair** in Magnolia fabric in Cream/Blue, GP&J Baker. **Rug**, Birdie Fortescue

The village of Tetbury and its surrounding rolling hills have always been a draw for Sylvie and Mark Taylor, not least because family and friends are based nearby, while the couple spend much of their time in Singapore. After years of visiting, they yearned for a place of their own; one connected to the countryside, close to amenities and with a sense of community.

They spotted the 18th-century cottage for sale and it instantly caught their attention with its classic Cotswold stone exterior and prime position on the iconic Chipping Steps, which date back to the medieval period. The garden was also a real find, with incredible views across Gloucestershire. While the house had great bones and bags of charm, the interiors lacked oomph and the couple wanted 'to make it feel interesting and full of character'. They discovered the work of interior designer Sean Symington (seansymington.com), who had renovated a neighbouring property. 'We loved his use of colour and pattern and the way he blends English heritage with a modern edge,' says Sylvie. 'We didn't realise his studio was just down the street, so that was an added bonus – it made the whole process very personal and collaborative.'

The first task was to maximise the internal space. Given the property is Grade II listed, Sean had to be creative with the layout and the primary focus was on the bathroom. It was super compact, with a bath hogging the space. 'For modern living, a shower was essential, so we reworked the room,' says Sean. A luxurious shower replaced the bulky tub and Sean paired half-height panelling with wallpaper and soft furnishings to make the scheme tie in with the rest of the house.

The living room was also a priority. By opting for a smaller sofa and three armchairs, it created more seating than the couple expected and has made the space feel 'more social, open and generous', says Sylvie. Sean used the large stone fireplace as the focal point, while a central ottoman brings the room together. 'Creating zones within a room helps it feel purposeful and layered, rather than cramped,' adds Sean. 'I love using bold colour and pattern in compact interiors; it sounds counter-intuitive, but it actually creates an illusion of space. The eye moves across the room more fluidly as the colours and patterns blend with the architecture, making everything feel cohesive.'

Custom joinery was also installed in the snug to house the couple's books and create a spot to work or watch TV, while the daybed doubles as an extra sleeping space when needed. The rich chocolate-coloured boxing around the walls helps blur the edges, giving a sense of space and depth.

When it came to decorating, Sean started each room scheme with a hero print, choosing 'that one fabric or wallpaper that really sets the tone'. 'It's a great way to create flow throughout the house while keeping each space unique,' adds Sean. In the bijou kitchen, a bright Molly Mahon fabric draws on the yellow and blue décor, while Carnival cushions from Christopher Farr pick up on the coral, blue, and yellow tones that run through the house. 'The bold colours and joyful patterns have transformed the cottage. It feels warm, inviting and full of life,' says Sylvie.

The project wasn't without its challenges, however. Being on Chipping Steps meant tricky logistics – everything had to be carried down the cobbled street. 'The stairs inside were so narrow that some of the furniture didn't fit, we even had to saw the feet off some chairs,' says Sylvie. 'The high point was arriving after a long flight and seeing everything finished – it was such a rewarding moment. Sitting in the outdoor bath with a glass of wine overlooking the valley really made it all feel worth it.'

AT HOME WITH

OWNERS Sylvie and Mark Taylor live here with their young adult daughter, Catherine, when they're in the UK.

HOUSE A Grade II listed cottage dating back to the 18th century. It comprises a living room, utility, kitchen, bathroom, snug/guest bedroom and main bedroom.

LIVING ROOM Bold patterns, a mix of textures and vibrant colours work together for an inviting living space. The Hem **console**, £149, John Lewis, is similar. **Mirror**, Oka. **Baskets**, La Redoute

HALLWAY The beautiful original stone walls give the cottage its rustic yet charming feel. For a similar **carpet**, the Sisal boucle carpet in Cardamon, Fibre Flooring, would complement the stone walls perfectly

KITCHEN A fabric skirt hides the dishwasher from view while adding another decorative element to the space. **Curtains** in Poppy Block fabric, Molly Mahon. **Skirt fabric** in Hor Seku, Namay Samay. **Rug**, Aarohana

KITCHEN Featuring Sylvie's favourite colours – blue and yellow – the kitchen has a nostalgic feel with Shaker units and a rail for pans. **Woodwork** in Hay and **joinery** in Stone Blue, Farrow & Ball. **Range**, Lofra

LIVING ROOM The 18th-century Cotswold stone walls add character in the entry way to the cottage, while the console gives a bright burst of colour. The Hem **console**, £149, John Lewis, would work here

Embrace the diminutive proportions of a cosy snug with an elaborate wallpaper and decorative accessories

SNUG Sean designed the daybed, which came in sections, so it was easy to carry up the staircase. **Sofa** in Vito fabric, Manuel Canovas at Colefax & Fowler. **Curtains** in Olive Sacking fabric, Guy Goodfellow

THE SNUG Built-in joinery provides ample room for guests' luggage and office essentials in this multifunctional space. **Joinery** in Etruscan Red, Farrow & Ball. **Hardware**, Matilda Goad. Home Park **wallpaper**, GP&J Baker

'A dragon-themed print takes centre stage in the main bedroom. There's something playful and mystical about the design, it's full of movement and colour, and really sets the tone'

Maximalism can work in small spaces with multiple repetition of a single pattern

BEDROOM Pattern drenching the room with a dragon-themed fabric creates a cocooning sleep space. **Wallpaper**, **curtains**, **cushions** and **ottoman** in Gertrude print, GP&J Baker. **Side table**, Mahe Homeware

Be bold with detail to draw the eye to the tallest piece of furniture in a room

BEDROOM Floor-to-ceiling wardrobes utilise the wall space available. **Armchair** reupholstered in Wilde fabric, Colefax & Fowler. **Joinery** in Red Earth, Farrow & Ball. **Wardrobe** scallop border, Ottoline

BATHROOM A sink skirt softens the space while cleverly concealing everyday toiletries and essentials. **Woodwork** painted in Aquatic, Edward Bulmer. **Tiles**, Bert & May. **Skirt** in Tiger Palm fabric, Schumacher

EXTERIOR The Grade II-listed cottage is situated on the Chipping Steps in Tetbury. Its Cotswold stone exterior instantly caught the couple's attention. The **windows** and **doors** are painted in Bancha, Farrow & Ball

GARDEN The garden was a big undertaking, with a covered outdoor bath taking centre stage. It is one of Sylvie's favourite spots to relax. **Bath** and **bath filler**, William Holland. **Curtain fabric**, Christopher Farr

FEATURE CHARLOTTE LUXFORD
PHOTOGRAPHS CHRIS WAKEFIELD

SYLVIE AND MARK'S COUNTRY LIFE

SIMPLE PLEASURES 'We love escaping to the tranquility of the Cotswolds. Chipping Steps is a beautiful spot with nice cafés and restaurants.'

FAVOURITE VIEW 'The outdoor bath in the garden, which overlooks the valley surrounding Tetbury. The lush greenery is gorgeous in every season.'

SHOP AT 'Brownrigg (brownrigg-interiors.com), Lorfords (lorfordsantiques.com) and Trilogie Antiques (instagram@trilogieantiques), where many pieces in our home were sourced from. Tetbury is a real antiques hub.'

EAT AT 'Lola and Co (lolaandco.co.uk), it's a cosy spot with great food and atmosphere, plus Martin & Malthouse (martinandmalthouse.co.uk) is perfect for a glass of wine or coffee.'