

# Neighbors with the Sea

**SETTLERS** In warmest Kenya, by the rim of the Indian Ocean, Ida Trygg-Andersson and Filip Andersson have created a home that is open for many. Here they manage a hotel where the care and respect for people and animals always come first.

## Open House

**To live your dream**, that is something that Ida and Filip really do. Every day they wake up to the sound from turquoise water of the Indian Ocean. Ida takes an early horseback riding tour at the beach, the three dogs run freely and Lova, the one-year-old daughter has Mum and Dad around all day. In December they, and all the other hotelkeepers along the coast, were hit by the political crisis in Kenya.

-But our guests that have come down here to the coast have noticed the disturbances more through the sms that they have received from their worries relatives. The people here are of course unhappy and think that their leaders have destroyed their country and many charter hotels have had to close down. But, thank heaven, we have not had to dismiss anyone, says Ida.

Kinondo Kwetu is today idyllic, but that was hardly the case when Filip's father Fred Andersson bought it a little more than three years ago. The hotel, that is situated on the south coast, a little more than an hours drive from Mombasa, was worn down. Then there was only the main house, four bungalows and staff quarters. The family realized that they had to improve and build more in order to attract guests. The first Christmas, Ida and Filip came to visit and, when they realized how much that had to be done, they decide to stay and assist with the reconstruction.

-We fell in love with the place and ended up by staying on. In the beginning it felt totally unreal to move here, says Ida, hotel manager, who together with Filip has 70 employees.

They move meant a huge contrast to the hectic but exciting life they led in New York, where Ida worked with commercials and Filip composed music.

-I was constantly working and practically slept with my cell phone under the pillow, tells Ida, who has past life as personal assistant to video producer Jonas Åkerlund.

Today Kinondo Kwetu consists of two fantastic houses and five bungalows with beds for up to 38 guests. But the place is flexible. In the open main house, where the kitchen, library and restaurant are situated, there are three rooms where children and teenagers can live without their parents. If guests want to sleep at the beach, a mosquito net is stretched around the beach beds with the generous mattresses. And, at the top of the water tower, where there are soft cushions on the floor, you can sleep or have a cozy. Dinner.

-It is the wishes of the guests that rule the whole operation, says Ida.

Dad Fred made the drawings of the houses and Filip finished the work with the houses that are built in typical, beautifully carved Swahili architecture. The pool was dug by hand by 50 men, all to provide employment to the villagers.

-When the biggest house, Villa Mama Taa, was built, we decided to call in local craftsmen. If you pay them well they can do marvels, tells Filip.

The furniture is hand made and made to measure. Ida and Filip have also designed many of the light sofas that are made of the African wood *mvule*, a hardwood that resists humidity well. To give them a patinated expression that melts in well, they are painted with whitewash and wax.

-The base was here from the beginning, but all details have come later, tells Ida.

**Filip, Ida and constantly happy Lova** themselves live in one of the old storages of 65 square meters. A new house of 50 square meters and an open kitchen that links the two houses together will soon be ready. The new extension consists of a large living room and a new bathroom with a bathtub and a basin in terrazzo, a kind of sand mixed cement.

-The craftsmen cast the bathtub and the basin in one piece, and then the taps come into place. Things rust fast down here, so all pipes and cables are made of copper and plastic. Not to talk of cars. It is crazy how they rust, says Filip.

The sea waves that hit the shore and the salty air result in a sky-high humidity that demands constant maintenance and repair. Cushions must be dried, walls painted and furniture repaired. Every day the gravel paths are raked free of leaves that fall from the gigantic trees, the bushes, the hibiscus and the bougainvillea.

-This is not a normal job, but a lifestyle. I often say that we do management by walking around, laughs Ida.

**All stone floors**, both indoors and outdoors, are made of Kenyan *galana*, the most frequent material in many Kenyan well-to-do homes. Antique carpets in various African patterns decorate both floors and walls. The carpets are long and about half a meter wide. Here you get them for a fraction of the price home in Sweden.

The bedroom is composed of a beautifully carved bed in dark wood with the obligatory mosquito net. The bedspreads a turquoise *kikoy*, sarong, and the white walls are used for storage. There are plenty of hangers and hooks, also in the hotel rooms. Ida's colorful kikoy, beautifully patterned dresses and tunics in own design, made up by the local tailor, all hang openly on a bar.

Underneath the immense hand knotted makuti palm roof, is the open part of the house, a combination of office and living room. A similar roof is in the main house where the family dines every day. There, the original brown chairs have ceded ground to more practical safari chairs.

-We soon realized that we had to be mobile, as half of both our home and the hotel is outside. It is human beings that carry all these things around, says Ida, who wants to combine function with what is beautiful and African.

**Ida and Filip do not only work** with their hotel operation. They also take a big social responsibility. Among other things, they are building Kinondo Kwetu Clinic for the villagers and they are involved in a school project that comprises 40 sponsor children and the establishment of an ecological garden.

Our soul and our gain are in creating a future both here and in the village. Whatever we do in the future, parts of our hearts will always be here.

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**Name:** Ida Trygg-Andersson and Filip Andersson

**Age:** 30

**Family:** Lova Joy Kenya Tom, 1 year, three dogs, three horses, three cats and the camel George.

**Live:** in Kenya

**Do:** Run the hotel Kinondo Kwetu, south of Mombasa

**Most important in a home:** The people

**Tips for an open living style:**

1. Create rooms outdoors. Cover with roof that protects against rain and wind. Our living room is a veranda where we also have our office.
2. Put rugs on stone, grass and sand.
3. Use unexpected spaces and furnish them. We have dinner in the top of the water tower. We serve lunch in the boathouse now and then.
4. Use your fantasy and use material and fabrics for other purposes than they were originally intended for. Do not be afraid of mixing colors and patterns. It is beautiful to put shawls and tablecloths over armchairs and sofas.
5. Make use of everything that nature has to offer. Design your own furniture and have them made by your local carpenter, if it is not too expensive