

CIELAR — a cliff-edge house on the Southern California coast

The complete record of the house: its plan and palette, the signature moves that make it one idea, and the walk in order, arrival to edge. Everything the house is, set down so it can be built, shot, and composed directly from these pages.

0. WHAT THIS HOUSE IS

A single-story modern house set on a Pacific bluff, its long axis laid parallel to the cliff so that every principal room faces west into nothing but ocean and horizon. The house does not sit ON the cliff as an object dropped there — it grows out of the grade, a low band of honed limestone and glass pressed into the chaparral, its roof a single thin floating plane that reaches past the glass toward the water. The emotional argument of the house is the west edge: a stone floor that runs unbroken from the great room, through a wall of glass that vanishes into a pocket, out onto a terrace, to the lip of an infinity pool that dissolves into the sea. You arrive facing stone and reach a place facing horizon. That transformation — closed, warm, protective at the drive; open, weightless, oceanic at the edge — is the whole house.

Register / bar. Neutra's cliff-house discipline (the house as a frame for a view, glass held in the thinnest possible structure), Lautner's nerve at the precipice (the cantilever, the roof reaching past the ground it stands on), Olson Kundig's honest steel-and-glass and the big-moving-wall move, Ando's restraint of light on plane, Studio KO's warm material intelligence. Interior at the Van Dusen / Vervoordt warm-minimal bar: honest materials, calm proportions, rooms that read lived-in and luxurious, never staged-sparse.

Site facts (settled, invented-world). Southern California coastal bluff, roughly 90 feet above the water. West = Pacific, open ocean to the horizon. Chaparral and coastal scrub on the approach; the land falls away to the west. Arid, salt-clean light; golden hour over the water is the peak of the day and the peak of the walk. Prevailing wind from the northwest off the water.

1. THE PLAN LOGIC AND ADJACENCIES

Think of the house as a **long bar, one room deep on the view side**, so nothing stands between any principal room and the Pacific. It is organized on a single spine that runs the length of the house parallel to the cliff. You cross the spine once — at the entry — and from that moment on you are always facing west.

The bar, laid out south to north along the cliff:

- **South wing (private, primary):** the **primary suite** anchors the south end — the quietest, furthest from arrival, with the most uninterrupted stretch of glass and its own protected slice of terrace. Behind it (east, on the land side) its bath, dressing, and a private stair down to nothing (the suite is at grade with a direct step to the pool terrace).
- **Center (public, the heart):** the **great room** — living and dining and open kitchen as one continuous volume — sits at the middle of the bar, the widest and tallest room, the glass wall at its west face. This is the threshold room, the one that opens.
- **North wing (guest, service):** two guest rooms, a media/den room, and the service band (pantry, mud entry, garage) tucked at the north end and pushed to the land side, screened from the view rooms.
- **The east (land) side of the bar:** a solid warm-stone wall runs almost the full length — this is the wall you face driving up. It holds the front door, hides the service and circulation, and protects the house from the road and the afternoon glare from behind. Windows on this side are few and high, clerestory slots that wash the back wall with light without giving up privacy. **The house shows the world its back and gives the ocean its face.**

The single-loaded spine. A gallery corridor runs the full length behind the glass rooms, along the stone wall — you move north–south along it, and the rooms open off it to the west. Because the house is one room deep on the view side, that corridor is the only circulation, and it is glazed with the same clerestory light. A person walking the house walks this spine.

The terrace and pool. West of the great room and the primary suite, a continuous stone terrace steps once (a broad single 7-inch step, no rail where the ground still holds) and runs to the **infinity pool**, set at the very cliff lip. The pool's west edge is the cliff edge — its water plane and the ocean plane line up so the two read as one sheet. The terrace is the outdoor floor of the great room; when the glass wall pockets away, inside floor and outside floor are the same stone at the same level, and the room is 60 feet deep, half of it roofed, half of it sky.

The roof. One thin flat plane, warm-toned board-formed concrete soffit below, floating on steel. It oversails the glass wall by about 9 feet to shade the west glass from the low afternoon sun and to reach, visually, toward the water — the Lautner move, the roof pointing past the edge. Recessed linear uplight in the soffit; nothing hangs from it.

The through-line for the walk: DRIVE UP (you face the stone wall and the floating roof) → cross the spine at the front door → GREAT ROOM (the glass wall opens west) → walk the gallery spine south → PRIMARY SUITE (the private west room) → step out and down onto the terrace → POOL at the cliff edge, golden hour. Arrival to edge is one continuous move west and south. **The walk reads as one unbroken move, arrival to edge.**

2. THE MATERIAL PALETTE (named, sourceable)

Warm, honest, few. The whole house is built of maybe six materials, repeated everywhere, so the eye reads calm. Every one is real and specifiable at the Van Duysen / Vervoordt bar.

STONE — the ground and the walls.

- **Floors, inside and out (one continuous plane): honed Roman travertine**, warm cream-beige, large format (roughly 24×48 in. slabs), vein-cut and filled, matte honed finish so it holds light without glare. The same stone runs from the great room floor across the threshold onto the terrace and down to the pool coping — this continuity is the point: no material change tells you when you left the house. (*Sourceable: Italian travertine, honed/filled, Royal Stone LA / California Builders Supply grade.*)
- **The long east wall and the entry mass: creme limestone**, split-face and honed in bands, dry-stacked coursing at the entry so the front wall reads as a warm quarried mass. (*Creme di Lys limestone, honed, Ollin Stone grade.*) This is the stone the buyer faces on the drive up.
- **Pool and terrace edge: travertine coping** matched to the floor; the pool's interior finish is a pale grey-blue plaster so the water reads the color of the Pacific, not tropical turquoise.

TIMBER — the warmth.

- **Ceilings of the view rooms and all soffits: Dinesen Douglas fir**, wide reclaimed boards, oiled to a soft honey tone, run west-to-east so the grain points at the water. The warm timber ceiling against the cool ocean light is the emotional temperature of the interiors.
- **Joinery, doors, dressing, kitchen cabinetry: reclaimed European oak**, straight-grained, oiled matte, no hardware that glints — recessed finger pulls, oak on oak.
- **The front door: a single oversized pivot in the same oiled oak**, floor to lintel, so the entry mass reads as stone with one warm timber slot.

PLASTER — the quiet walls.

- **Interior walls: hand-troweled lime plaster** (Marmorino / tadelakt family), warm off-white with the faint tonal movement of a troweled surface, so walls recede and the stone and timber carry the room. The bath surfaces are tadelakt-sealed plaster, seamless, warm.

GLASS — the dissolve.

- **The great-room west wall and all view glazing: minimal-frame, low-iron structural glass**, floor-to-ceiling, in slim dark-bronze steel frames — the frames are the thinnest the span allows so the wall reads as horizon, not window. Low-iron so there is no green cast on the ocean.
- **The great-room wall is a sliding pocket system**: three tall panels that slide fully into a pocket in the stone wall, so the west face of the great room opens with NO frame standing in the middle of the view —

the corner and the middle both go to nothing. This is the "opens to the view" move.

STEEL — the structure that lets glass be horizon.

- **Slim dark-bronze / blackened steel:** the frames, the roof edge, the few exposed columns. Blackened, matte, oiled — never bright, never chrome. The steel disappears against the bronze frames; the roof plane reads as a floating line.

LANDSCAPE — the setting.

- Chaparral and native coastal scrub kept low and silver-green (California sagebrush, buckwheat, toyon, some agave and blue senecio at the terrace edges), so nothing competes with the ocean. Decomposed-granite and travertine at the approach. No lawn — the house sits in its own dry landscape and the green is the sea.

The palette in one line for a frame: cream travertine underfoot, honey Douglas-fir overhead, warm off-white plaster receding, oiled oak joinery, thin dark-bronze steel holding low-iron glass, and beyond it the Pacific. Warm materials, cool view, arid light.

3. THE SIGNATURE ARCHITECTURAL MOVES

Five moves make this house one coherent idea. Every beat below is built from these; naming them here keeps the house the SAME house shot to shot.

1. **The single floating roof plane.** One thin flat roof, warm board-formed soffit, oversailing the west glass by ~9 feet, reaching toward the water. It is the strongest line in every exterior frame — arrival, great room, pool. It is what makes the house read as one object.
 2. **The show-your-back-give-the-ocean-your-face parti.** Solid warm limestone to the land/road side; all glass to the west. Closed and protective at arrival, fully open at the edge.
 3. **The disappearing glass wall.** The great room's west wall pockets fully into the stone so there is no frame in the middle of the view. Inside floor and terrace floor are the same travertine at the same level. The room becomes the terrace becomes the horizon.
 4. **The continuous stone plane to the edge.** One travertine floor runs from the heart of the house out to the pool coping — no threshold strip, no material change. The eye is drawn west, unbroken, to the water.
 5. **The infinity edge that lines up with the sea.** The pool's west edge sits at the cliff lip; its water plane is set to align with the ocean plane beyond, so pool water and Pacific read as one continuous sheet — the pool pours into the ocean. This is the emotional close and the money shot.
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4. THE FOUR BEATS — each a real place, shot-ready

Each beat set down as a composable frame: what you face, the light, the materials in frame, the view, the camera's place. The beats are in walk order and physically continuous.

BEAT 1 — THE DRIVE UP (arrival)

Where you are. Coming up a decomposed-granite drive through low silver-green chaparral, the land rising gently. The house reveals itself long and low against the sky — you do NOT see the ocean yet; the house withholds it. What you face is the **long warm limestone east wall** (dry-stacked creme limestone, honed bands), almost windowless, protective, running the length of your view, and above it the **single thin floating roof plane** with its warm board-formed soffit reaching out to the left, west, toward a brightness you can sense but not see. A few high clerestory slots in the stone catch light. Set into the stone mass, one tall slot: the **oiled-oak pivot door**, floor to roofline. The house reads as a quarried wall with one warm door and a floating lid.

The light. Warm, dry, raking afternoon side-light across the limestone's texture — the stone's coursing throws soft shadow. The sky above the roofline is bright with the ocean's reflected light, a glow the house is keeping from you. Chaparral in warm low sun.

Materials in frame. Creme limestone (split-face + honed), warm board-formed roof soffit, dark-bronze steel roof edge, oiled-oak pivot door, decomposed-granite drive, silver-green chaparral.

The view. Withheld — no ocean yet. The promise is the brightness over the roof and the roof plane pointing west. The gasp is being saved for beat 2.

Camera. Low, approaching, the drive leading in — the roofline and its reach to the west are the strong lines; the oak door is the destination. Move toward the door. The withholding is deliberate: arrival is stone and mystery, and the ocean is the reward past the threshold.

BEAT 2 — THE LIVING ROOM OPENING TO THE VIEW (the threshold)

Where you are. You have crossed the spine at the entry and stepped into the **great room** — the widest, tallest room, the heart of the bar. The **Dinesen Douglas-fir ceiling** runs overhead, warm honey boards pointing west at the water. Underfoot, the continuous **honed travertine** floor, warm cream. Van-Duysen-calm furniture in low warm tones — a long linen sofa, oak and travertine tables, a few honest objects — arranged low so nothing stands in the sightline. Ahead of you the **west glass wall is pocketing away**: three tall low-iron panels sliding into the stone, and where they were is now open air. The frame vanishes from the middle of the view. The floor runs straight out — same travertine, same level — onto the terrace and toward the pool, and beyond it: **nothing but Pacific to the horizon**. The room breaks open. Warm timber overhead, warm stone underfoot, cool ocean filling the whole west face.

The light. Bright oceanic daylight pouring in from the west, the deep roof oversail keeping the sun off the glass so the room is shadowed-warm and the view is bright — the contrast of a warm sheltered interior opening onto brilliant water. The Douglas fir glows; the travertine holds a soft warm light; the plaster walls recede.

Materials in frame. Douglas-fir ceiling, honed travertine floor (running out unbroken), lime-plaster walls, oiled-oak joinery/kitchen behind, dark-bronze slim-frame low-iron glass sliding into the stone pocket, and the Pacific horizon filling the opening.

The view. The full west Pacific, horizon-to-horizon, revealed for the first time in the walk. The point of the room is that the wall is GONE — no mullion in the middle, the corner open, the horizon uninterrupted.

Camera. From inside the room looking west, low, the fir ceiling framing the top, the travertine floor leading the eye out through the vanished wall to the horizon. This is the gasp — the reveal of the ocean the drive withheld. Compose so the opening reads as no-wall: the interior warm and framed, the ocean bright and boundless.

BEAT 3 — THE PRIMARY SUITE (the private west room)

Where you are. You've walked the glazed **gallery spine** south, along the warm limestone wall, clerestory light washing down it, the ocean flickering on your right the whole way — into the **primary suite** at the quiet south end of the house. It is the same architecture, calmer and more private: a single generous room with its own uninterrupted stretch of low-iron glass facing west, its own protected slice of terrace, no pool in view — just ocean and sky and the edge. The bed faces the water. Overhead the same **Douglas-fir ceiling**; underfoot the same **travertine**, softened here by a large natural-wool rug in warm oatmeal. **Reclaimed-oak** dressing joinery, oiled matte, along the land wall; through a plaster opening, a glimpse of the **tadelakt** bath — seamless warm plaster, a travertine trough, no glint. The room is warm, quiet, protected, and entirely turned toward the horizon.

The light. Softer than the great room — a private, lower light. Late-afternoon warmth beginning; the fir ceiling honey-lit, the plaster walls warm, the wool rug soft, the ocean cooler beyond the glass. Intimate, still.

Materials in frame. Douglas-fir ceiling, travertine floor + oatmeal wool rug, warm lime-plaster walls, oiled reclaimed-oak dressing joinery, tadelakt bath glimpsed through a plaster opening, dark-bronze slim-frame glass, the Pacific beyond.

The view. West Pacific again, but private and framed by the suite — no pool, no terrace furniture, just the water and the cliff edge and the bed facing it. Calmer than the great room's boundless reveal.

Camera. From inside the suite, the bed low in the foreground facing the water, the glass wall and the ocean filling the west, the fir ceiling overhead. Intimate scale — this is the private room, the one the buyer imagines waking in. Warm materials close, cool ocean beyond.

BEAT 4 — THE POOL AT GOLDEN HOUR (the edge, the close)

Where you are. You step out of the suite (or the great room — the terrace is continuous) down the single broad travertine step onto the terrace, and walk west to the **infinity pool at the very cliff edge**. The travertine floor of the house has run all the way out here — coping, terrace, pool edge, all the same warm cream stone. The pool's pale grey-blue plaster makes the water read the color of the sea. Its **west edge is the cliff lip**, and the water plane is set to line up exactly with the Pacific plane beyond, so the pool's edge dissolves — **the pool pours into the ocean**. Above and behind, the **floating roof plane** and the warm glowing house; ahead, only water and the low sun. Low chaparral and a few silver agave at the terrace edges; nothing else competes.

The light. Golden hour, full. The sun low over the Pacific, laying a warm gold path across the water and straight up the infinity edge into the pool; the limestone house behind lit warm-amber, the travertine terrace glowing, the water gold and rose, the sky deepening. The whole west face of the house catching fire in the last light. This is the emotional peak of the house and the film.

Materials in frame. Travertine terrace + pool coping (continuous), pale grey-blue pool plaster, the warm limestone house and floating roof behind, dark-bronze glass reflecting the sky, silver chaparral/agave at the edges, and the golden Pacific filling everything west.

The view. The infinity edge lined up with the ocean so pool and sea are one gold sheet running to the horizon, the sun low over the water. The edge reads as if the house's floor pours straight into the Pacific.

Camera. From the terrace / house side looking west across the pool: the infinity edge low in the frame, the gold water beyond, the sun low over the horizon, and the warm house catching the last light at the frame's edge. The strong line is the vanishing pool edge aligned with the sea. Golden hour is truth here, not filter — the arid coastal light doing what it does over water at the end of the day. Hold this; it is the close.

5. THE WALK SEQUENCE (in order, continuous)

One unbroken move, arrival to edge, always heading west and then south then west again to the pool:

1. **Approach** up the DG drive through chaparral → face the long limestone wall and floating roof → the oak pivot door. (*Beat 1. Ocean withheld.*)
2. **Cross the spine** at the entry, one step across the house's depth.
3. **Enter the great room** → the west glass wall pockets away → the travertine floor runs out through the vanished wall → the Pacific is revealed. (*Beat 2. The gasp.*)
4. **Walk the gallery spine south**, limestone wall on the left washed with clerestory light, ocean glinting on the right through the view rooms.

5. **Into the primary suite** → the private west room, the bed facing the water. (*Beat 3. The quiet.*)
6. **Step out and down** the single travertine step onto the continuous terrace.
7. **West to the infinity pool** at the cliff edge → the edge dissolves into the sea → golden hour. (*Beat 4. The close.*)

Because the house is one room deep on the view side with a single spine, this walk never doubles back and never leaves the west orientation for long. The same travertine floor, the same Douglas-fir ceiling, the same limestone wall, the same floating roof, and the same low-iron glass appear in beat after beat — that repetition IS the identity that must chain shot to shot. **The house is one place; the walk moves through it once.**

6. WHAT HOLDS THE HOUSE TOGETHER

The identity anchors. Six things hold across every beat so the house reads as one place, frame after frame: (1) the single thin floating roof plane with warm board-formed soffit; (2) creme limestone on the land side, all-glass to the west; (3) continuous honed cream travertine floor inside and out; (4) Douglas-fir honey ceiling in the view rooms; (5) thin dark-bronze steel frames on low-iron glass; (6) warm arid light, cool Pacific, golden hour as the peak. Beat 1 withholds the ocean (stone and roof only); beats 2–4 reveal it. Golden hour belongs to beat 4.

The narrative. The story of the house is the walk itself: withheld arrival → the reveal → the private room → the golden close. The material palette in section 2 is the spec, named down to the real stones and timbers — travertine, Dinesen Douglas fir, creme limestone, tadelakt, oiled oak, dark-bronze steel. The five signature moves in section 3 are the argument for why this is one idea and not a collection of rooms. Warm materials against a cool boundless view is the whole temperature of the place.

On the name. The house carries a working title — **CIELAR** — but it was never named by its owner, so it stays a working title, not a fact to assert.

The house is coherent, buildable, and one place — a complete record, ready to be built, shot, and composed from these pages.