



HOLIDAY HOMES:

the great escape

UNLOCK THE SECRETS TO ENJOYING THE BEST
YOUR HOLIDAY HIDEAWAY HAS TO OFFER

WORDS KYLIE JACKES STYLING WENDY BANNISTER PHOTOGRAPHY PATRICK McGRATH

WHO HASN'T SPENT the odd hour on vacation lingering in front of the local real-estate agent's window, fantasising about owning a piece of holiday heaven? More than half-a-million Australians have taken the dream a giant step further and are now the proud owners of every type of getaway, from winter lodges to beachside boltholes. Turn the page to take a closer look at one family's enticing Mornington Peninsula retreat and come on a journey as we share expert tips on creating the ideal escape, for homeowners and holidaymakers alike. >




“As soon as we arrive, we literally just plonk our bags down, open up all the windows and a bottle of wine, and the kids head to the beach on their bikes” ~ Jo

The scent of salty air hits Jo, her husband Steve and children Annabelle, 18, Sophie, 16, and Henry, 13, as soon as they pull into the driveway of their beach bungalow in a seaside village on Victoria’s Mornington Peninsula. For Jo and Steve, it was “sigh” at first sight when they initially visited the area, prompting them to begin the hunt for a holiday home to which they could also one day retire. Interior designer Jo knew exactly what she was looking for; the only problem was that it took several years to find. Their search finally ended with a 1970s brick bungalow which, although dated, ticked all the boxes. “It had everything on my wishlist – a great floor plan, sunken living area, character and plenty of north-facing windows, all on a big flat block,” recalls Jo, a seasoned renovator and founder of Beautiful Home. Keen to give the home a new lease of life and imbue it with her effortless style, Jo embarked on a swift, four-month overhaul with an eye firmly on tough, long-lasting finishes. “It was always our plan to holiday-let the house whenever we weren’t using it, so I specifically chose low-maintenance, timeless surfaces that could stand up to plenty of use,” she explains. Often, holiday homes are stocked with cast-off furniture and the bare basics, but here, every space is layered with texture and beautiful decor that give it a chic, coastal, home-from-home feel. With cupboards stocked with all the essentials, the only thing the family needs to bring when they come here is their clothes. Bliss.



sitting room Jo was keen to retain the home’s original features, such as the exposed rafters and timber panelled ceiling. However, she modernised the fireplace with a rendered surround to conceal an expanse of exposed brick. Easy-clean walls are painted in Dulux Wash & Wear ‘Natural White’. She also had custom sofa slips made by Bemz, a company that specialises in covers for Ikea furniture. “As it’s a holiday house, I wanted something that looked and felt great, yet was affordable and serviceable, and the removable linen covers are fabulous,” Jo explains. “They’re so easy to pull off and wash.” In keeping with the organic look, a jute and leather woven rug from La Grolla, coupled with timber furniture pieces and baskets of greenery, provides a subtle backdrop for a vibrant art print by Ali McNabney-Stevens, along with indigo accent cushions upholstered in Florence Broadhurst ‘Arabian Birds’ fabric from Jardan.





living area An open-plan layout allows for a seamless flow between the kitchen, dining space and living area, with large bay windows framing the coastal landscape outside. To furnish the narrow room, Jo splurged on a slim 'Leila' Jordan sofa that perfectly suits the proportions of the space, and dressed up Ikea armchairs with custom covers in Designers Guild linen, made by Bemz. >

kitchen Jo employed a few savvy changes to maximise the kitchen's compact size. To open up the space, the pantry, originally attached to the end of the island, was ditched in favour of a slim pull-out pantry cupboard beside a Miele fridge, integrated for a neat, unfussy finish. "The benchtops are coated in resin so they're sealed, and all the cabinetry is super-tough vinyl wrap, which won't chip like 2-pac can," says Jo. The new Carrara marble benchtop was also extended to create a breakfast bar, where Green Cathedral 'Babanees' stools from Coastal Living deliver extra seating.



dining space Thinking beyond the needs of her family of five, Jo opted for an expansive dining table that could host a large number of holiday guests, and paired it with lightweight chairs from Coastal Living. A retro pendant light from Globe West is a nod to the home's heritage.



surfaces A splashback in small 'Hexagon Mix' Carrara tiles from Perini, resin-coated Carrara marble benchtops and handle-free white vinyl-wrap cabinetry are key elements of the kitchen's restrained palette.



outdoor entertaining The sizeable outdoor setting from House Of Orange is large enough to cater for a crowd. For year-round use, Jo enhanced the existing pergola frame with perspex and timber slats, which provide dappled shade and keep out the rain. A trio of suspended woven market baskets from Coastal Living creates a coastal feel. "When it's warm, we eat all our meals outside," says Jo, pictured at the table with (from left) Sophie, Henry and Annabelle.



"The moment we get here we all just chill and, with the beach and local village within walking distance, we don't even need to use the car" ~ Jo

laundry In its original state, the laundry wasn't functional, so to make the most of the small floorplan, Jo grouped appliances, added a bench for sorting clothes and installed custom cabinetry above and below. With a cohesive palette throughout, the benchtop, splashback, cabinetry and tapware echo the finishes in the kitchen and bathrooms. >

"It's just over an hour's drive from our home in Melbourne, but the atmosphere here is so much more laid-back." ~ Jo



bedroom "In every room, I looked to include functional pieces that would suit the proportions of the space. Here, it was all about keeping things simple and uncluttered," says Jo, who chose a 'Mandal' bed frame with drawers from Ikea to boost storage. Shelves in the matching slatted headboard and clip-on 'Ranarp' spotlights, also from Ikea, cleverly alleviate the need for side tables. On the bed, an Abode Living navy blanket, teamed with a quilt cover from Provincial Home Living and Bella Casa Linen sheets, keeps the look cool and crisp, with a decorative juju hat adding texture.



chilling out Henry relaxes with a book on a bean bag, the ultimate casual recliner. "There's a lot of bean bags in the house, which are ideal when the kids' friends visit," says Jo. "They're easy to move from room to room."



bathroom As an experienced renovator, Jo knows small changes can make a big difference. In this case, punching a wall out a further 60cm under the eaves enhanced the bathroom's proportions and allowed for a freestanding bath. "Choosing a light colour scheme, installing a floating vanity and opting for shutters also really help the space feel larger than it actually is," adds Jo. "Because it had to be robust and still look good for years to come, I went with black Astra Walker tapware, large-format Perini porcelain tiles on the floor and ran white tiles all the way up the walls."

"I wanted the place to reflect the things I love and have the comforts of home, but being a holiday rental, everything had to be affordable and practical" ~ Jo



bunk room The one adjustment Jo's children have had to make is bunking together. "At home, they've always had their own rooms, but here I turned one of the three bedrooms into a bunk room and was adamant they share it," says Jo. Despite initial protests, Jo says it's been a great way for all three to bond - without the distractions of laptops and wi-fi. The custom king single bunk beds from House Of Orange are layered in sophisticated linen and 'Jean' quilt covers from Bella Casa Linen, while the room's soft tones are reflected in the rug, also from House Of Orange.

interior designer Jo McIntyre, Beautiful Home, 0417 341 853, beautifulhome.net.au. >

TIPS TO TURN YOUR HOME INTO a holiday rental

add in extras

Guests will expect basic kitchenware, crockery and cleaning materials to be supplied, says Anton Stanish of holiday accommodation specialist Stayz, but it's comfortable, quality furnishings that people will really remember. "Great holiday homes should have a unique feel that reflects the style of the property and its location," adds Sonya Brien of Byron Bay Holiday Rentals. "Whether it's a rustic house in the mountains or a cute beachfront cottage, it's important to style the home beautifully and supply extras such as board games, bikes, beach towels and umbrellas." All this helps to create a holiday feel, which can inspire guests to return and recommend the place to others. "Providing wireless internet, Foxtel and offering complimentary gestures such as luxury linen and firewood, as well as local tourism information, will add to the property's appeal," says Andrea Wilson of Holiday Shacks on the Mornington Peninsula.

accentuate the positives

First impressions are everything when listing a holiday home on accommodation sites such as Airbnb. "Quality photography that captures the property's best features is key in attracting bookings, and our research shows that having 13 photos or more can drive enquiries," says Anton. "Ensure photos are high quality or, even better, use a photographer to capture the best of what your residence has to offer to holiday-makers." Anton recommends taking shots of the exterior, kitchen, living room, main bedroom, additional bedrooms and the outlook, to paint a complete picture of the location and experiences



CLEAR CLUTTER

If your property is a place for you to holiday as well as guests, keep personal items such as clothes, toiletries and valuables locked away.



CUSTOM SPACES

Guests want to feel at home during their stay, so consider the needs of who you're looking to rent to, such as families or couples.

guests can enjoy. "After photos, the description is the second thing people look at when assessing a listing, so it pays to write an attention-grabbing headline with a clear and succinct overview," he says. "List the number of bedrooms and beds, bathrooms, location, proximity to amenities and nearby attractions, as well as what kind of people it's suited for." Highlighting key features such as a pool, including good reviews and describing an appealing point of difference can all help your property catch the eye, says Sonya. "It might be pet-friendly, offer ocean or mountain views, or be ideal for large groups," she says.

be price wise

Like any business, it's important to consider how much money you hope to make, so determine rental rates and how often your place will be available from the outset. "Setting a minimum length of stay and seasonal rates are beneficial, depending on the popularity of the area and the property, so do your research to plan your booking calendar in advance," Andrea advises. Depending on how often you want to use the home, it may be more profitable to charge less and attract more annual bookings, or rent it selectively at a premium price over peak periods, explains Anton. To secure a booking, Andrea also suggests using an upfront payment system. "A safe and convenient way to collect payments and manage refunds is to use an online credit card-verified system, direct deposit system or Bpay," she says.

key to it all

If you don't live in the area, you might be able to organise a key pick-up and drop-off system with a neighbour or local real-estate agent or, alternatively, you could install a keyless entry or a key-sized safe, allowing you to change the code after every booking. To keep a close eye on the process, advertise the property yourself, or list it with a dedicated online holiday rental site. You could also consider outsourcing management to a real-estate agency, which will organise everything from advertising and bookings through to cleaning. **hb**