

# CHINA BEACH HOUSE

## BARK DESIGN

About 100 kilometres north of Bundaberg on Queensland's seemingly endless east-facing coastline are the townships of Agnes Water and 1770 – the town renamed in 1970 to commemorate 200 years since Captain James Cook and Joseph Banks' visit in the very early days of European occupation. One of the beaches extending south of here is China Beach, which has in recent years allowed a scattering of houses along this remarkable dune landscape that enjoys expansive views out to the ocean.

The further north we are, the more we can live outside throughout the year, and design around this idea. This house is all about getting outdoor living right, shading it properly and bringing plenty of light into indoor living spaces and bedrooms. China Beach House is a large residence, with four bedrooms, plenty of bathrooms and the indoor and outdoor living spaces over a series of stepped levels descending down the site as the land approaches the beach.







‘The house is a series of stepped platforms that enable a contemporary coastal lifestyle to unfold within a very special coastal landscape’

Lindy Atkin

PHOTOGRAPHY: CHRISTOPHER FREDERICK-JONES

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Often north-facing openings have sunshades that are roughly half the height of the glazing. When the spaces face east or west the issue becomes harder – horizontal shading needs to be much deeper to protect from the lower sun. Vertical shading is one option, but can interrupt the view, which, in this case, is stunning. The response here was the make the sunshades a full room deep, completely covering the wide deck that is the outside living space. Most potently it is designed like a living space, with couches and a coffee table, a dining suite, and a kitchen with a two-way sink shared with inside.

Any house that faces predominantly east is about the morning, a sunrise every day and light flooding in over breakfast. By the time the sun has started on its path higher to the north, the amount of light coming into the interior reduces until it only occupies the deck itself. It is generally better to face east rather than west as the eastern sun is cooler, getting warmer as the day progresses. This house is above the natural ground level, sitting on steel poles that create a shaded undercroft for tanks and other bits of servicing. This elevation disconnects the floor of the house and the immediate groundscape, enabling it to flourish as a natural system. Outdoor living is totally contained on the elevated platforms; the deck and the protected courtyard that sits between the block of guest bedrooms and the main living pavilion, space that allows cross-ventilation.



Latitude -24.25°



## A PLACE IN THE SUN

Local hardwood is used extensively on the decks and occasionally wraps up to form sections of external wall. The primary cladding is, however, both steel roof sheeting and simple painted fibre-cement sheet – the vernacular of beach houses. This articulates the walls, as does ‘ins and outs’ of the plan, which are in turn under a series of simple skillion roofs that overhang to help keep the walls cool even when there are no windows.

The house’s entry (below) tells us a lot about the attitude of the design: timber and sheet cladding, an outdoor shower to rinse away the sand, a bench to sit on, a glimpse of the ocean beyond. This informal sensibility is a welcome relief to the over-abundance of houses trying too hard to stand out. From the front door onwards you are in a timber-floored corridor that dissects the house and takes you down the guts into the open living space. The corridor is a compressed space in terms of width, but as a result of the steps and the view to the horizon a seemingly endless path is formed out to sea. Looking back from the beach, the house is visible but effectively draws on the colouration of its surroundings, nestled in the sun.









