

Vacation care

Low maintenance was a high priority when choosing materials for this holiday home

The ideal beach house should have a sea view, right? Sure, on a fine day, when the breeze isn't a gust, and you forget for one minute about having to wash the salt off the outdoor furniture, there's nothing better than an ocean-front property. For the owners of this Sunshine Beach two-storey holiday home, it's a luxury they are happy to do without. Besides, they have a water view and don't have to suffer gale-force winds to enjoy it.

The Melbourne couple, who have been holidaying at the Sunshine Coast for 20 years, found the 539sq m site in 2009 after an unsuccessful search for something they could move straight into. They asked Lindy Atkin and Stephen Guthrie, of Bark Design Architects, to be their designers.

"The whole point to the site is that it has no view," says Lindy. "So our design was about

creating an oasis inside and we concentrated on making a space where, even though you're connected in terms of being able to see one another, you're actually acoustically separated."

At the centre of any oasis is the water and for this house it's a stunning above-ground pool on the eastern boundary of the block. It's the focal point around which the U-shaped house wraps its arms.

"The site is quite narrow. If we went with an in-ground pool a lot of space would be taken up with the clearance zone around it. If we had a clear glass fence it would need cleaning," says Lindy. "By lifting the pool up, we were able to get more of it into sunshine and it connects nicely with the upstairs."

The top floor has three bedrooms, two of which are separated from the main suite by a double-height void that has a bridge overlooking the pool on one side and the downstairs kitchen-



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lounge room on the other. On the ground level, underneath the children's bedrooms, there's a guest suite, while a games room is beneath the main bedroom.

"We knew we wanted a pool table," says one owner. "And I'm more than happy it's in a room that's bigger than the kitchen. My thoughts were that it's my holiday as well, and I don't want to be cooking elaborate meals. Therefore, we don't need to have an elaborate kitchen, it just needs to be functional and have a good connection to the barbecue."

Another no-no for the family: spending precious beach hours on home maintenance.

"In a few projects we've done, we've used a lot of timber externally and just let it weather naturally, like driftwood, but for this house we used fibre cement weatherboard that you only need paint every 15 to 20 years," Steve says. "In the living areas, it's polished concrete, which you just can't wreck."

This house is a true holiday home for relaxation and rejuvenation, but that doesn't mean the doors aren't open to occasional bouts of entertaining.

"During the recent winter school holidays, the owners said there were four other Melbourne families staying at Sunshine Beach and they all visited the house," Lindy says.

"You could have 15 people here at any one time, all doing their own thing in their own area.

"It was important as a holiday place to make sure people could have their own cup of tea separately, outside the guest bedroom, for example, or by the pool."



For the owners, favourite spots to get away include the cabana outside the games room for twilight drinks. But the owners don't have to wait for 5pm for that laid-back feeling.

"I love that when I walk in here I instantly feel removed from the everyday routine and what happens at home," says one of the owners. "I do love that it's so different to our home in Melbourne [an Edwardian house]. I love the openness and the light and the way that all the spaces come together."

ARCHITECTS • Stephen Guthrie and Lindy Atkin, Bark Design Architects, ph: 5471 0340
BUILDER • GV Emanuel Constructions, ph: 5449 7944

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