

2

# ISLAND LIFE

Swapping weekends in the city for ones spent on an isolated island comes with sacrifices – as well as many rewards.

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Photography **Emma-Jane Hetherington**







**ABOVE** The covered outdoor room connecting the two pavilions is a favourite spot to relax and enjoy the sounds of weka, morepork and the occasional kiwi calling out at night. **OPPOSITE** A lower deck with sloping sides like the hull of a boat cantilevers out towards Bon Accord Harbour. **PREVIOUS PAGE** Vertical shiplap cedar and dark joinery has been used to harmonise with the surrounding kanuka forest. The cable car delivers guests from the beach directly to the house.



*THERE WAS A GOOD REASON BEHIND* Lorenzo Canal telling his two pre-teen boys “no more Saturday sport”: freedom. It wasn’t that Lorenzo and his wife Melissa couldn’t bear to stand around a frigid field every weekend, but because they wanted to concentrate family time at their second home on Kawau Island. Lorenzo and his twin brother, Edoardo, bought seven hectares of land on Kawau Island 15 years ago. They imported sand to create a private beach, added a wharf and installed a cable car for easy access. Then they subdivided the property into 10 sites and named it Hideaway Cove. The section Lorenzo kept for himself faces west on a 30-degree slope that bows towards the Kawau Boating Club, a veritable mecca for locals. An engineer by trade, he took on the role of project manager after asking Tim Dorrington of Dorrington Atcheson Architects to design him something bach-like. Tim came up with a plan comprising of a series of small buildings, like a campsite. A duo of pavilions – one for living, the other for sleeping – are loosely connected by two slender spines housing a utility and storage ‘shed’ and a container for a galley kitchen, pantry and wood store. A covered courtyard sits between the forms; a visual connection enhanced by a horizontal line of black flashing thatwraps the buildings as a package. On approach they look like sophisticated cabins with crisp lines, mono-pitched ▷







roofs and a clean materiality of timber and black aluminum. Yet, tucked into a kanuka forest on a hillside, they are barely visible from the water.

But, while the end result looks effortless, getting there was not. In a location where, logistically, it makes sense to erect a pole house, Lorenzo had his heart set on concrete foundations. “We made concrete on site in a diesel-powered mixer,” he says.

The detailing was similarly labour-intensive. “Both of us were committed to being uncompromising with the detail,” says Tim.

Starting with the cladding. Narrow cedar boards make for an elegant exterior but are demanding to construct. “You can buy weatherboards routed with grooves to appear slimmer,” says Tim, “but the colour variation wouldn’t have looked natural. Hand-making them was the right thing to do.”

Internally, there are no architraves or skirtings – and not a sheet of plasterboard to be found. The floors are American oak, the walls are lined with Italian poplar plywood and the tongue-and-groove ceiling emulates the shiplap exterior cladding. This is a composition where transparency and solidity are in optimal balance. Sliding doors disappear seamlessly and carefully placed windows frame the sea and trees.

Although the footprint is small – the two main structures are each 6x8 metres – this is big-picture living, with no room for pretentiousness. Shared facilities in the bathroom operate like an ablution block to ensure a quick turnaround of family and guests. Walls divide the shower from the washbasins and a changing area, with a separate loo. >

**ABOVE** A George Nelson sunburst oak clock hangs above a Sigurd Russell beech Falcon chair. Both are from karakter.co.nz. **RIGHT** The living pavilion showcases a global palette of natural warm timbers: Italian ply walls, an American oak floor and a Canadian tongue-and-groove cedar ceiling. **OPPOSITE** The raw steel splashback and industrial concrete benchtop kitchen by Dockside37.co.nz adds contrast to the timber-heavy interior.







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**RIGHT** A black horizontal 'eyebrow' enhances the visual connection between the covered courtyard and pavilions. The northern wall doors of the living pavilion disappear into the walls, opening the space up.



There is one extravagance, though: an extra WC on the southernmost end of one spine of the home features a stable door which can be thrown open to the view for leisurely loo-stops. “It’s our version of a long-drop and we’ve added some shelving to create a ‘library’,” says Lorenzo.

Simplicity is key here. The family pared back the way they live in the city, in order to be able to afford the good life on Kawau. “We play more games, fish, dive and socialise,” says Lorenzo. “If I fancy some scallops, I head off in the inflatable dive boat and they’ll be on the barbecue within an hour.”

Time to just be, rather than do, is precious too. When a westerly is blowing, a concrete patio with an outdoor fireplace is a sheltered place to hang out. The cantilevered platform with its glass end that hovers in the trees facing the bay is the ideal spot to plop into a beanbag, lean back on the sloping sides of the deck and watch the boating brigade come and go.

The jetty where the boys, Louis (12) and Jules (10), enjoy catching snapper is another favourite spot. “In Auckland, we spent our weekends driving around sports fields and somehow being busy. Here, it’s so wild and anything goes. There are weka and wallabies and, from town, I can be on the island in 90 minutes and yet it feels so remote,” Lorenzo says.

When they aren’t catching fish or diving for scallops, the boys are encouraged to be hands-on in the kitchen. They’re happier, of course, to hop on their paddleboards and make their way over to the boat club for an ice cream. And they still play for their school teams – just not on a Saturday. 🏠



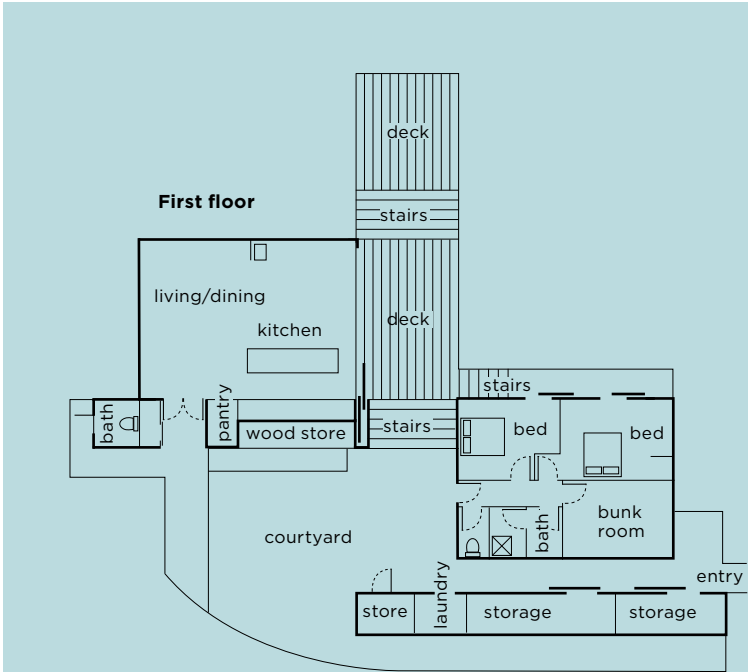
**ABOVE** The outdoor toilet, complete with ‘library’ and cedar stable door, which can be thrown open to admire the view. **LEFT** The bunk room is an essential part of any great bach. **OPPOSITE** The bright guest bedroom features an artwork called *Trekka*, by Michael Stevenson, from the International Art Centre.







**ABOVE** The sleeping pavilion sits separately from the main living space, passed by the cable car on the journey up to the house. Accessed from the covered deck area, the sea-facing rooms each have floor-to-ceiling sliding doors providing uninterrupted views.



**AT A GLANCE**

**The project:** Lorenzo and Melissa Canal created this island getaway for themselves and their boys Louis (12) and Jules (10) with the help of architect Tim Dorrington.

**Did the place turn out as you envisaged it would?** Clear visualisation with all involved was paramount before embarking on this endeavour. And yes, the dream has materialised into reality nicely.

**What is your favourite part of the house?** The lift from the beach brings a smile to my face each and every time. Instant relaxed holiday feeling.

**Do you think you'll ever live here permanently?** Currently our family is enjoying the contrasting balance between the relaxing Kawau weekends and the bustle of urban life back in the city. But my brother has recently made the inspiring move to quit the city to live and breathe his passion of bee-keeping on the island.

**2 DESIGN DETAILS**

Harking back to the simplicity of bach living, the ply-panelled interior features mid-century furniture and bright accents.



**CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE LEFT** Sigurd Ressel beech wood high back Falcon **chair**, \$3400, karakter.co.nz. Neo large **vase**, \$64.90, countryroad.com.au. Rajasthani marble **bowl**, \$89, indiehomecollective.com. E27 halogen socket **lamp**, \$129 each, bauhaus.co.nz. George Nelson sunburst oak **clock**, \$495, karakter.co.nz. Hammamas Bold Stripe cotton beach **towel**, \$45; Forestry wool **blanket**, \$245, collected.co.nz. **BACKGROUND** Blue **wall** in Resene Spray, resene.co.nz. Italian Poplar ply board **walls**, Plywood City, Great South Road, Auckland. American oak **floor**, South Pacific Timber.