



# Ahead of the wave

Stephanie and Andrew Travers took inspiration from our shores – and beyond them – to put their stamp on this luxury townhouse.

STORY MARK VENDER PHOTOGRAPHY TONY POTTER STYLING CAROLYN FEINBERG & JO FORREST



It's quintessential Eastern Suburbs Sydney – equal measure of beachside nonchalance and metropolis cool, and perfect for this family of four. You'd expect no less since they built the place, but in fact they never anticipated actually living here. "The plan was always to build and sell," explains Stephanie. Then, when another development opportunity popped up that was too good to pass up, they sold their own house – and needed somewhere to stay. "And it just turned out that this one was finished," she recounts, "so the timing was perfect for us to move in."

## FINETUNING

They didn't have to change much. The structure was designed with the proximity to the beach – and the salt air – firmly in mind. That means marine-grade stainless steel for outdoor fittings, as well as a bit of timber salvaged from one of Andrew's professional demolition jobs. Everything else is rendered brick. "And as it's tiled inside," she adds, "there are no problems with floorboards moving, or expanding and contracting with the different seasons."

**PREVIOUS PAGE:** Accents such as the table decoration, cushions and painting artfully placed, draw the refreshing colours of the pool into the living area and kitchen. The Bisanna ceramic tiles and the bi-fold doors also merge indoors with outside to create one large room.

**ABOVE:** "Subdued" doesn't have to equal 'dull', as the grey and silver palette the kitchen shows. Bianco Astuto by Smart Stone was chosen for the benchtops, and the splashbacks are White Sparkle Opaque Monocot on Starfire by Grosvenor Glass. The oven and cooktop are by Smeg.

**LEFT:** The open-tread staircase has 'beachy' stamped all over it, and the timber slats allow light from the stairwell to filter through.

The fireplace and TV make ideal wall-fellows – thanks to the mantel of German bluestone that ties them together.



According to Stephanie, the guestroom affords the best view in the whole house. The bed linen is from India, and includes cushions with handmade antique pieces sewn on silk, and block-printed Resal quilts in 100 per cent cotton.



## "DO WE LIVE NEAR THE BEACH OR IN A HOUSE WITH A BIG BACKYARD? IT'S A DILEMMA!"

With living spaces downstairs and bedrooms above, the layout didn't require major reworking either. The only area that called for some improvisation was the kitchen and the living room adjoining it. "It's really small and there wasn't enough space to have a table and a lounge," Stephanie relates. "So when we finally realised we were moving in, I came up with the idea of attaching a little round table to the bench." They had it custom built and this allowed them to fit the lounge in. "It's fantastic," she exclaims. "The kids sit there doing their homework, and as there are only four of us, we use it for family meals too." The Louis Ghost chairs helped make the small space look perfectly proportioned. They're thin enough to fit around the table and practically invisible, appearing to take up no room at all.

Elsewhere, the Traverses made the place their own purely through the decor and soft furnishings. In the backyard, this meant eschewing the commonplace shade-givers such as awnings or sails in favour of something more suitable – and striking. The dining suite is Belgian and made of marine-grade stainless steel and teak, and they found it at the same time as the umbrella. "We chose it because it was like a work of art – sculptural," remarks Stephanie. "It was expensive," she admits, "but we couldn't find anything else that would fit that space – and it was the perfect colour to go with the walls and the furniture.

We can swing it out over the pool if the kids are in there, and back over the table when they're not. We have it up virtually all summer."

### TRUE-BLUE

Stephanie's background in decorating means she loves the task of furnishing a home and deliberating over colour schemes. "Because we're surrounded by the sea, I wanted to have blue in the house," she explains, "so on the lounge downstairs I've used cushions in the same blue as the swimming pool." Upstairs, the rug from Designer Rugs extends the aquatic theme with its funky texture. "We really liked it because it looks like coral," she adds. They chose the two small tables from Space Furniture so as not to cover it entirely.

A more obvious allusion to the beach can be found in the painting above the lounge downstairs. It's a work by Craig Parnaby, who used to have a studio in nearby Bondi. "We commissioned him to make it a specific size, and told him we wanted people on the beach," Stephanie declares. "First of all he did a sketch and we liked it, then he painted it. It's great for that space." There are original Australian artworks hanging in other parts of the house too, including a lifesaver at the front door and a blue nude (blue in colour, not content) over the stairs.