

Carefree in Killcare



Justine Tyerman apologises for praising the Aussie landscape . . . and the weather.

Putty Beach at Killcare, NSW. PICTURES © Justine Tyerman

Like most patriotic Kiwis, I am loath to praise anything remotely Australian and have, until now, maintained a lofty opinion that no Aussie landscape could possibly compete with New Zealand's beaches, lakes, mountains and national parks.

But a recent trip to the New South Wales' Central Coast has made me recant. I feel almost apologetic, even guilty, but I am about to rave about a special place I discovered last week in Australia — so stop reading now if you don't have the stomach for such a spiel.

We spent a long weekend at a beautiful beachfront home at Killcare, a small settlement on the Bouddi Peninsula, 90 minutes' drive from Sydney.

It makes me feel traitorous to my Kiwi roots to utter such words, but the landscape there is simply awesome — necklaces of pristine beaches, separated by rugged headlands with bizarre rock formations, where enormous waves crash against sheer cliffs sending curtains of foamy spray metres into the air.

We hiked along spectacular coastal tracks which took us to remote beaches where the sand is golden and squeaks underfoot like fresh powder snow.

The water, even in July, was still warm enough for swimming and in a sunny pool sheltered from the breakers by giant rocks at the far end of Killcare, children splashed and played as if it was mid-summer. The air temperature was a balmy 23-25 degrees compared with a chilly 8-10 at home.

My only exposure to Australian beaches in the past has been Sydney's Bondi, Tamarama, Bronte and Coogee, tourist hot-spots seething with people year-round. But Killcare and neighbouring Putty, Maitland and Tallow beaches are all but deserted at this time of the year, apart from a few surfers and dog-walkers. Our Sydney-based daughter, Sophie, found the seclusion and lack of people blissful after the stresses of life in the big city . . . and being only 100km away, Killcare is easily doable for a weekend.

The region is part of the Bouddi National Park and is rich in wildlife and history. Around 100 Aboriginal sites have been discovered on the peninsula, including middens, rock engravings and rock shelters of the Guringai people, the traditional custodians of the region.

On our walks, we learned about the fascinating geological phenomenon of tessellated pavement where sandstone rock has been fractured over millions of years of weathering and erosion into shapes resembling a pavement or mosaic floor. I wanted to take them home for my garden.

We stayed right on the beach at Killcare in a stunning Luxe Houses vacation home belonging to a Sydney family. The substantial abode with five bathrooms, four-bedrooms plus a huge, sunny bunkroom, sleeps eight adults and six children with ease and comfort.

The three-level design of the home allows for all age groups to have their own space. Every room has magnificent ocean views and the bedrooms, including the bunkroom, open onto balconies.

The main entrance, living, lounge, kitchen and dining area are on the middle floor.

The kitchen with its long marble bench and island is designed to handle large gatherings. The oval dining table, made from weathered, recycled wood, is forgiving and fuss-free. There's an outside dining option in a semi-enclosed patio beside the pool and a BBQ station which is so well-equipped, it's really a second kitchen.

Plump, comfy couches, recliners, floor cushions, a wall-mounted wood-burner and a 62-inch flat-screen television make for a versatile, cosy, relaxed lounge and living area with a stunning panorama of the beach.

There are also two bedrooms, two bathrooms and a garage on the middle floor.

When in need of peace, the adults can take refuge in their top-floor, two-bedroom, two-bathroom retreat with a spacious lounge and television.

The younger ones have their own sunny,



Leaping for joy . . . Sophie on the deserted Maitland Beach, NSW, Australia.



Waves crashing on the rocks at the far end of Putty Beach, Killcare.

