

# little miss sunshine

For the Gatland family, an oceanside holiday home at Waihi Beach is where they find true bliss

Text by **Monique Balvert-O'Connor**. Photography by **Angela Keoghan**.



Arriving at the bach to find a crayfish or freshly filleted fish in the fridge is not an unusual experience for the Gatland family. Just as likely is the chance of being hit and soaked by a perfectly aimed water bomb, fired by slingshot from a vantage point across the road. Such are the pros and cons of owning a beach house in a street heavily inhabited by family members, both magnanimous and mischievous.

For Trudi Gatland, Waihi Beach has been the holiday spot of choice ever since she was a little girl. Other family members share the sentiment, borne out by the fact her parents live right next door to the Gatland

bach, and her uncle – he of the fishing and slingshot firing – lives across the road. In fact, there are more uncles and aunties all living within 50 metres of each other on the waterfront road. It's logical, therefore, that if there are family gatherings to be had, they're held at Waihi Beach.

"Sometimes over summer there can be 20 of us having dinner together, especially if someone's caught fish. We get to spend true quality time together, and our bach really is our hub," says Trudi.

Trudi's husband Warren – otherwise known as head coach of the Wales rugby team – also has an affinity

**Opposite page** The beachfront hammock is used for recreation of a more passive kind. **This photo** The Gatlands holiday home is less than 30 metres from the high-tide line. Trudi used to use a cowbell to beckon son Bryn in the from the surf.





## in a nutshell

**Who lives here?** Trudi Gatland (co-owner of de-cluttering business The Monicas), Warren Gatland (British and Irish Lions Coach for the 2013 tour of Australia, and Wales coach 2013), Gabby, 19, and Bryn, 17. **Trudi, what's one of your favourite things about the bach experience?** Rinsing off the salt at the end of the day while looking out of the shower and seeing people still in the surf, then heading to Mooloolebar for a wine. **Are you likely to change anything about the bach in the future?** We may add another bunk room to allow for family expansion when grandchildren come along, plus more storage for surfboards and bikes.

for the Bay of Plenty beach, even though in his younger days this rugby man with strong Waikato roots used to holiday on the opposite coast, at Raglan.

The Gatlands of today – Warren, Trudi, 19-year-old Gabby and her brother Bryn, two years her junior – leave their Hamilton home and head over to the beach every long weekend, and during school and university holidays. Plus, it's Warren's retreat in July and August during his downtime from the British rugby circuit.

Their waterfront bach hasn't always been as stylish and spacious as it is today. They holidayed in their "cute, little, humble" bach for seven years before reconfiguring the ground level, pushing upwards and beautifying.

It isn't their first Waihi Beach property either. Initially they bought a section about 100 metres down on the opposite side of the road, where they built a large holiday home. Warren had the grounds looking immaculate, but they spent just one summer there before he returned to his then job coaching the Irish rugby team. He subsequently received a phonecall from his wife that left him somewhat stunned.

Trudi tells how she'd started thinking about the old bach on the waterfront next to her parents' place, which had been on the market for about three years. She ended up speaking to the owner and negotiating a property deal that involved

## OUTDOORS

Summertime and the living is easy – just ask the Gatland children, Bryn and Gabby. The beach is right on their doorstep – a set-up made in heaven for those who like to swim, surf, paddle and congregate seaside.



"Sometimes over summer there can be 20 of us having dinner together"





## KITCHEN

When he's not coaching rugby on the other side of the world, Warren likes to be in the hub of the home. His family attests to the fact that he's a dab hand in the kitchen.



A lot of the Gatlands' furniture was brought back from Ireland, including the 'Beach' coat hook and the cosy armchair, both of which look right at home.



## decor details

The Gatlands don't need their bach to have all the mod cons, but there are some technological touches they particularly enjoy:

✦ **The big deck** that faces the road has a LouvreTec roof with a weather sensor.

It closes itself if it starts to drizzle, for example, so if the family isn't home and it starts to rain, there's no need to worry about cushions and books getting wet.

✦ **Trudi says the boiling** water tap on the kitchen bench is one of the best things she's had installed. It means there's no longer a need for a jug, which pleases Trudi, who says that while she likes things looking homely, she doesn't like clutter.

✦ **The stereo system** has indoor and outdoor speakers. "We can have music playing loudly outside, quietly inside in some rooms, and not on at all in others," says Trudi. "It's very teenager-friendly."



"It's one of those baches that lends itself to people sitting in wet togs"

money plus a beach house swap. "When I rang Warren, he spluttered down the phone, because it was pretty much a done deal by the time I got hold of him, given the time difference and things."

Trudi says it was a "spur of the moment thing" but there have been no regrets.

"It was a little three-bedroom bach that had been well built, so we were able to keep its bones when we did it up in 2008. Living in it for seven years gave us a good sense of how it would look and work when we changed it."

They kept the downstairs footprint and external framework, although the cladding was ripped off and replaced with black-stained weatherboard and board and batten. The framework was strengthened and they added an upper level, which now houses the bach's three bedrooms.

The spaces downstairs that were previously sleeping zones have been opened up to form the main living area, the stairwell and a bathroom. The garage has been reworked into a separate laundry and a guest room. The bach now has beds for 16, plus there's room to sleep another two on the window seats in the lounge.

Trudi can vouch for those window seats. "It's a lovely, sunny spot in the corner."

**Top** Cube shelving painted white stores summer reading material and family heirlooms. **Right** Expanding upwards meant the bedrooms moved to the top level of the bach, allowing a number of the poky rooms downstairs to be remodelled into spacious open-plan living areas.



This photo Gabby's aqua and white room has ample space to share with friends.

HOMES



## ENSUITE

This room overlooks the road, so the inclusion of the screen in front of the window makes the space private, yet light can still filter through. To decide the height of the dividing wall Trudi stood in the shower cubicle. It was important that she could see over it, through the main bedroom to the blue playground beyond.





**This page** There's beauty to be found in the details in this bach – much of it nautical-themed, like the clock within the lifebuoy; the bell hung from a hook is reminiscent of an old ship's bell; the timber clock (top right) is a tide clock, which is used to determine the best time to head out wakeboarding; Trudi has collected the ketes over a period of several years; these jandals were a Christmas present for Gabby; decorative hooks with a sailing theme add interest to the ensuite wall; the skewered fish artwork was made by Bryn using recycled materials; this cross is from art gallery Off The Bench, which is owned by Trudi's friend Jane Jolly.



The kids joke about me having my 4pm nana nap there, with the sun on my feet."

A desire to move as little of the plumbing as possible has led to the kitchen remaining in the same place, which is perfect, given the view. Warren, who's the family's master chef, has only to glance through the kitchen's bifold windows to be inspired by the pounding Pacific just 30 metres away. The same sensational outlook is enjoyed from the main bedroom and Gabby's room.

However, members of this family and their many friends vow that the best place from which to enjoy the beach is their very own "Mooloolebar". Warren and one of the uncles built a large platform at the end of the property. Sitting atop it – loyally sporting Waikato rugby colours – is red, yellow and black furniture made using demolition timber from the old Hamilton Rugby Park. Word on the beach is that Mooloolebar is the place to congregate at the end of a blissful day of sun and surf.

Another touch of rugby paraphernalia has also had pride of place at this bach. For years Trudi had a mooloo bell mounted to the kitchen wall. The clanging cowbell made famous by Waikato rugby supporters was a great way to beckon Bryn home from the water. There's still a large clanger on the wall, this one reminiscent of an old ship's bell.

There's much this family loves about their holiday pad, both in terms of how it looks and how it makes them feel. "It's one of those baches that lends itself to people coming in with sandy feet and sitting in wet togs," says Trudi. "It's nothing precious in itself."

What is invaluable, she says, are the moments shared there. "We brought friends from Ireland over to the bach at night recently. When they woke up in the morning and looked outside they were absolutely stunned. They can now see why, despite the fact that Warren works overseas, we're so very keen to keep New Zealand as our home base, and why this place is a forever bach."

→ Find out how they got the look on **PAGE 136**.

## BEDROOMS

The colours of the bedrooms mirror the stunning vista beyond. The wooden replica of an historic sailing boat was a gift from Trudi to Warren.



"This place is a forever bach"





+ 'ALABASTER',  
FROM RESENE.

CLOSE  
MATCH

+ THROW,  
\$170, FROM  
REPUBLIC.

+ Glass ball with  
rope, \$36, from  
REDCURRENT.

**dream  
weaver**

+ Anna Gedson paper  
kete, \$125, from THE  
POI ROOM.

OFF THE  
HOOK

+ Fish mobile,  
\$39, from  
REPUBLIC.

QUICK TIP Blue and white is a timeless colour combination  
that is right at home at the beach. Ahoy sailor!

# MAKE IT WORK your way

PERFECT THE BACHY LOOK  
WITH NAUTICAL NICENESS  
AND TOUCHES OF BLUE

BAG OF  
BEANS

+ Bean bag,  
\$99.90 unfilled,  
from CITTA DESIGN.

Like what you see? Turn to pages 136 and 138.