



Built from durable sandstone and zinc, the home nestles into a steep south-facing site, protected from the coast's extreme conditions.

"Sydney beaches experience a huge range of weather, from hail and gale to a still summer day, so homes have to be robust and adaptable," Johnston says.

The back of the property meshes with bushland, while the south faces the beach.

The site conditions largely informed the four-storey home's interior layout and steel-clad western facade. On the eastern side, large windows frame ocean views and glass doors open the home's sociable spaces to the outside.

A large cylindrical skylight bathes a mint-green stairwell in sunlight, and above, a kitchen, dining and living room extend onto a terrace equipped with a barbecue, pool and spa.

A significant setback from the north-east boundary opens the south-facing living area to natural light, while a smaller top level – with main bedroom suite, study and private terrace – takes in the beach.

Marble, limestone and American oak may not be typical shack materials, yet they feel right at home here. A serene oceanic palette of grey, mint and kelp is punctuated with pops of peach and green in the form of furnishings and artwork.

Smooth curves and drapes soften sharp angles and architectural lines.

"It's a beautiful and extremely comfortable house," Johnston says.

"Most of all, it performs well as a family home."

Designers Anna Skermer and Jane Kilpatrick from Melbourne's Pipkorn Kilpatrick agree that comfort and functionality are critical when designing the perfect getaway.

"We lost the classic beach shack for a time to more modern ones, but there's a growing appreciation for renovating older homes into humble, functional spaces for growing families," Skermer says.

For a project in Portsea, Victoria, the firm was tasked with rehabilitating a classic Robin Boyd-designed home. Built in 1956, it was one of many small, modern, affordable houses erected in response to postwar housing shortages.

"The owner didn't want a glamorous Melbourne-style home; she wanted an authentic beach house," Skermer says. "This style of home is considered rare and priceless in areas like Portsea and bayside Melbourne, but many have been destroyed. Now they're enjoying a resurgence with buyers re-establishing them rather than replacing them."

Luckily, the property had been well maintained with a considered extension for the main bedroom and en suite. The kitchen, renovated with red cabinetry in the early 1990s, was badly dated and lacked functionality.

Extending its footprint slightly made it spacious and open-plan. Soft belceppo terrazzo was applied to surfaces and suspended shelving and banquette seating was installed for character.

Carpet was pulled back to reveal original Victorian ash floorboards that were sanded back and basted in a water-based oil finish.



Portsea house by Pipkorn Kilpatrick.



CHRIS MCCONVILLE

Boyd's signature lining board was continued in the new spaces, the designers miraculously locating the very same wall panelling at a local hardware store. Fresh white paint throughout bounces sunlight around to imbue a true coastal feel.

The original indoor fireplace, complete with statuesque copper flue, was restored and informed the design of an outdoor fireplace.

"Our weather isn't warm, and this inclusion allows the family to enjoy outdoor entertaining," Skermer says.

The home, she says, feels timeless again. "Old homes become disjointed through their different lives and lose their beach house charm. Hopefully, this one ties into what was originally intended for it." 🏡