

away from it all/house at the beach



# LOST AND FOUND

A BEREAVED FAMILY SEEKING SOLACE ON AUCKLAND'S  
WAIHEKE ISLAND HAS TRANSFORMED ITS TINY SEASIDE  
BACH INTO A SOUL-RESTORING HOLIDAY HOME

WORDS YVONNE VAN DONGEN PHOTOGRAPHS EMMA BASS

The sea can be seen from everywhere in the house, inside and out. Jane often breakfasts on the rear deck, watching the sunrise, and at sunset enjoys drinks on the front deck. Here Oliver, Jane, Rosie and best friend Sue Jones share breakfast on the morning deck.





WHEN SHE ARRIVES at Waiheke Island on the ferry from Auckland, Jane Ingle is always struck by the peace and soothing spirit of the island. It was a feeling which impressed her when she first came here in 2002, grieving after the death of her beloved husband Tom, and it returns every time she makes the journey now. "The position of the island, protected within the Hauraki Gulf, makes it a very special place with strong spiritual qualities. I think that draws a lot of people here to heal and I believe the community plays a huge part in that too. The community really supports you."

As a widow with two small children, Jane desperately needed that support. Home again after half a lifetime in London, she'd been living and working in the film industry there since she was 18, graduating from production assistant to producing music videos and commercials. Tom, an Englishman, had been a cameraman. "He was the love of my life and had been from the moment I saw him. We met on a film set in Italy and that was that."

When Tom was diagnosed with a brain tumour in 2000, they decided to move the family back to New Zealand. At the time he was 35, she was 31 and the children, Rosie and Oliver, were five and three years old respectively. They settled in the Wanganui district where Jane had grown up. They bought an art-deco house on a rural property but found they missed their London friends. When Tom died, Jane felt utterly alone.

She did have one ace up her sleeve. Her oldest and dearest friend Sue Jones lived on Waiheke Island. Sue and Jane had been best buddies since high school, had travelled around Europe together and flatted with each other in London. It was an easy decision to pack up again and move to Waiheke. ▶



CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE: Rosie, Jane and Oliver; a retro lounge suite is seen to advantage from the mezzanine floor; Oliver (who likes to be called Oli) enjoys the outdoor shower after a swim; Nacho the dog belongs to a visiting friend; huge old beams support the mezzanine floor which houses the television room; Jane never tires of her sea views; wide steps lead from the sitting-room to the kitchen.

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Old square beams supporting the mezzanine floor were found on the island. Retro lounge suites came from Ngaruawahia Traders and the local Red Cross shop while the onion-shaped lamp hails from Raglan.



**CLOCKWISE FROM FAR LEFT:** A glass ceiling and wide windows in the master bathroom make bathing seem like an outdoor experience; ceramic transformers from an old power pole find new life as wall art; the kitchen with its curved concrete bench was designed with help from friend Paul Schwarz, a chef; a Pacific skirt hangs over the bed in the master bedroom; Bella Bertoni, Rosie and Cara Piacun (sitting) rehearse for an end-of-year show; excavations made space for an entrance hall and two bedrooms downstairs.

#### WHAT JANE WILL BE DOING THIS SUMMER

**Eating:** Seared encrusted tuna with fresh coriander and basil; prawn and black rice salad with Vietnamese dressing; baked salmon with olives, green beans, anchovies and tomatoes... enjoyed with fine wine and laughter.  
**Reading:** *Solar* by Ian McEwan; *A New Earth* by Eckhart Tolle (it's great, I need to finish it); *Shantaram* by Gregory David Roberts (if I have lots of time); *Drink, Play, F@#k* by Andrew Gottlieb (for something a bit lighter).  
**Listening to:** TrinityRoots *Music is Choice*; Damian Marley & Nas *Distant Relatives*; Janelle Monae; Tanya Stephens.



Jane felt at home there almost as soon as she set foot on land. But an actual home took more time. Initially the family rented while Jane renovated a bach she'd bought near Oneroa. The bach was tiny but perfectly located high on a peninsula overlooking the beaches of Blackpool on one side and Surfdale on the other. Jane designed the major renovations herself with the input of friends and a draughtsman; the result was so successful she plans to study spatial design next year and turn it into a career.

Jane says her sojourn on Waiheke has been the healing, transformative experience she needed. Her children have loved living there too. Daughter Rosie took up modern dance and, although the family recently relocated to the city for the children's education, she still travels to the island once a week to take part in the Sally-Anne Stone dance group.

Jane also involved herself in Waiheke's performing-arts scene as a dancer with Sally-Anne's adult amateur troupe called Otherworld Productions. Generally they danced at fund-raisers. "Yes, I have done the cancan on stage," she laughs. Swing dancing is another hobby she's taken up in the city. She jogs a bit, does yoga a bit and is currently polishing her drawing skills in preparation for her new career. Jane's also a dab hand at finding a retro bargain, trawling the net or scouring op shops for overlooked 1960s' and '70s' treasures. She's even managed to nab herself a marvellous Russell Withers 1970s' house in Freemans Bay.

Jane returns to Waiheke whenever she can although she currently rents her house there to guests yearning for their own restorative breaks. "Waiheke will always be our home. It's great to be able to go back often, knowing we can enjoy the beaches, go to a café or a bar and always see a friendly familiar face. It's only a 35-minute ferry ride from Auckland but the visual contrast and change of pace from inner city to island paradise never fails to impress me."

It took a long time to renovate the tiny bach and turn it into a luxurious house Jane could finally call home but it was worth it. "It was truly a labour of love and – isn't it typical – as soon as it's finished we move out!" Gone for now, Jane says, but not necessarily for good.

For more information on Jane's house visit [www.360overwaiheke.co.nz](http://www.360overwaiheke.co.nz)

