

Travel

JUSTINE TYERMAN finds a jewel on the New South Wales Central Coast.

I LOVE watching the sunrise at the beach, the light creeping along the sand transforming it from beige to gold. The early morning sun has a luminous effect on the sea and the surf sparkles with phosphorescence. The smudged mauve horizon is edged in gilt as the fiery orb leaps from night hiding. Sun beams flood the house with dazzling light as I sit in the window seat watching the early-bird surfers and swimmers.

Our family of four drove up from Sydney for a long weekend of R&R at Killcare Beach after a hectic week in the big city. We stayed at Killcare Beach House, a beautiful, secluded vacation home overlooking the sea, highly recommended by Luxe Houses. Much thought has gone into the interior design and furnishing of this tranquil retreat. The floor tiles are the colour of sand and the fabrics and textures echo the landscape. All the rooms in the three-storey, five-bedroom home have magnificent ocean vistas and huge balconies.

There's really no such thing as winter in Australia. At home in New Zealand, it's a chilly five degrees with snow on the hills; here it's a mild 23 degrees in the middle of July. By midday, youngsters are surfing and paddle-boarding, a couple of chaps are fishing off the rocks, retirees are walking their dogs, a lone fitness fanatic is jogging up and down the golden sand, and children are splashing and laughing in a sheltered rock pool. We join the locals for lunch at tables outside the surf club kiosk, and manage to devour a couple of their famous seafood baskets. There's all of 25 people on the beach, a far cry from the teeming masses at Bondi, 90 minutes south of this idyllic, peaceful spot on the New South Wales Central Coast.

And getting here is such a breeze. For those in a hurry, there's a seaplane connection from Rose Bay in Sydney to Hardy's Bay just over the hill from Killcare. Otherwise, it's a scenic 100km drive around the deep

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LOFTY: The three-storey Killcare Beach House.

PICTURE BY LUXE HOUSES

inlets of the Brisbane Water National Park to Bouddi Peninsula in the Bouddi National Park.

Being a biased Kiwi in love with our own landscape, I wasn't prepared for the beauty of region. Every day we explored a different stretch of the spectacular coastal and bush walkway linking a necklace of remote, pristine beaches.

The area is rich in wildlife and Aboriginal history. Around 100 Aboriginal sites have been discovered on the peninsula, including middens, rock engravings and rock shelters of the Guringai people.



COOL OFF: The pool at Killcare Beach House. Above, deserted golden sand beach at Killcare.

PICTURE BY LUXE HOUSES

I was fascinated by the geological phenomenon of tessellated pavement where sandstone rock has been fractured into rectangles over millions of years of weathering.

While Killcare has a feeling of seclusion, there's plenty to do with an aquatic playground for all ages on your doorstep — activities include surfing, paddle-boarding,

kayaking, boating, sailing, fishing, diving and whale watching.

At Hardy's Bay, there are restaurants, cafes, a general store, wine shop, art galleries and boat charters. For those looking for sophisticated dining, the award-winning chef Stefano Manfredi at Bells Restaurant is rated so highly, Sydney-siders often catch the seaplane there just for lunch.

FACTBOX

- Justine Tyerman was a guest of Luxe Houses: www.luxehouses.com, at NSW Central Coast property Killcare Beach House: www.luxehouses.com.au/holiday-house/killcare-beach-house/
- Getting there: Air New Zealand flies direct to Sydney from Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch and Queenstown. www.airnewzealand.co.nz
- JUCY Rentals assisted with transport: www.jucy.co.nz
- All reservations with Luxe Houses include access to concierge services who can arrange (at additional cost) private charter jets, helicopter transfers, yachts, launches, jet-boats, private chefs, waiter staff for guest occasions, butlers, drivers, bespoke spa treatments, experienced nannies, guides, personal trainers and anything else to help make your stay flawless. www.luxehouses.com

One day, we decided we should explore the wider region so we drove north to better-known centres such as Avoca Beach, Terrigal and Copacabana, but we soon reached the conclusion that Killcare is the primo spot on the coast. I fell in love with our little beach, a jewel tucked in between a pair of rugged headlands. Putty Beach, so named because it's the colour of fresh putty, is 1.6km long, the perfect walking distance at dawn and dusk.

If you need some chill-out time away from the city but you don't want to spend hours travelling, Killcare is absolutely do-able for a long weekend . . . or a week. Just

pack your clothes and go. The Luxe Houses concierge can organise everything else for you, including a private chef for a special occasion, or you can create a feast in the fabulous kitchen from gourmet provisions restocked daily.

It's a restorative place where jangled nerves are soothed and weary spirits revived.