



# shipshape

Plans for a modest backyard cabin escalate into a full-blown holiday house – with a maritime twist

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THIS PAGE, THROW, CUSHIONS, BOWL, SCOOP; ALL THE WORKS - BED BATH N' TABLE

**OPPOSITE** Guiding light: Aireys Inlet's iconic Split Point Lighthouse can be seen from the house. **THIS PAGE** A rattan sofa and coffee table duo from Fantastic Furniture, combined with nautical odds and ends, brings a homely feel to the living area.



**How's this for nautical?** From the doorstep of this house, you can hear the crashing of the breakers and a mere 400 metres away is a lighthouse that would give Cape Horn's finest a run for its money. Inside, the theme continues – slide open the front door and you're all at sea, but in the nicest possible way.

A two-storey, two-bedroom getaway 90 minutes south-west of Melbourne in Aireys Inlet, near the Great Ocean Road, the house comes complete with a spa, gas 'log' fireplace and a fully equipped kitchen.

"Initially, it was meant to be a basic cheap-and-quick-to-whack-together cabin behind my own house," says owner, designer and builder Bohdan Philippa. "But, as I got more involved in the design process, I realised I could create something quite spectacular."

Previously a jeweller and gemologist, Bohdan was never lacking in the creativity stakes, but the carpentry side of things proved more of a challenge.

"I'd spent a lot of my childhood summers in and around Aireys Inlet, so, after 10 years in the retail trade in Melbourne I moved here permanently. Then I realised I needed a project, and set about designing the cabin with a vague idea that I might be able to rent it out.

"I'd done a short course in carpentry, but there were a few challenges along the way. Probably the biggest was getting the internal pine support posts in place. They were pretty tricky!"

But it didn't seem to bother Bohdan. From the first excavations in November 2001 to the completion of the cottage in December 2003, he was immersed – both in the project and his passion for all things maritime. It's a look that can be well and truly overdone, but he has certainly managed to pull it off.

"I wanted a ship-like feel – we are next to the Shipwreck Coast, after all – but it looks tacky if you're not careful. So I tried to do it subtly and I think >

**ABOVE** All fired up: the log-effect gas Jetmaster fireplace adds to the cottage's sense of sanctuary.

Ships ahoy: stainless-steel wire on the staircase opens up the small dining room, while a ship's wheel adds to the maritime feel. Dining chairs from Fantastic Furniture.





## things we love

### character weatherboards

No seaside cottage is complete without rustic, knotted weatherboards. Bohdan chose radially sawn silvertop ash boards for their environmental credentials and pleasantly irregular appearance. They cost around \$20/square metre. Being a hardwood, these boards also provide good acoustic and thermal insulation. For more information, call Radial Timber Sales Australia, (03) 9558 4111. To protect the timber from splitting, swelling and greying, Bohdan coated the boards in Cellavit, a timber preservative, available from Mabons, 1800 815 477, for about \$125/10-litre can.



**THIS PHOTO** Wild at heart: silvertop ash weatherboards provide a look that's in keeping with the seaside location. **TOP LEFT** Rugged, spectacular scenery is all a short walk from the cottage.



### outdoor shower

This outdoor shower (left) isn't your average splasher. Featuring an antique exposed shower fitting found at a garage sale, it even has hot water (pure luxury in outdoor shower-speak). Complete with a concrete base and a driftwood wall for privacy, it was a must for Bohdan's house. "It's important that guests clean off sand before they go inside, to protect the floorboards," he explains. To protect the weatherboards behind the shower as well as the house footings, Bohdan installed a sheet of Lysaght Custom Orb in Mountain Blue Colorbond, around \$16/square metre – call 1800 641 417 or visit [www.bluescopesteel.com.au](http://www.bluescopesteel.com.au) for more information. If you can't find a secondhand shower fitting like Bohdan's, try the exposed shower set, from \$320, from Reece, [www.reece.com.au](http://www.reece.com.au)



**THIS PHOTO** Sun kissed: yellow tiles add a holiday feel to the bathroom. **RIGHT** Mesh doors hide the washer/dryer.





< it's worked." You can't help but agree. Typical ship-like features (richly hued timbers, distressed wall panelling, off-white roman blinds – like sail cloth – and yes, there's even a ship's wheel) blend seamlessly with the modern kitchen, bathroom and loft-style bedroom.

To lighten the load provided by all that wood, Haymes paint in half-strength Canvas covers the upper part of the walls, while a flat white ceiling paint, which has been applied and then wiped back with a cloth, lends a distressed look to the timber on the lower half. As Bohdan discovered, combining crisp, light-coloured paint and timber was a clever way to open up the 70-square-metre space.

"The high, sloped ceiling also gives the place a more roomy feel," explains Bohdan. To make the most of it, he turned the main bedroom upstairs into a loft that overlooks the living area, but has a cream triangular canvas 'sail' roped to the room's constructional poles to create privacy. The result is a ground floor that doesn't feel too enclosed and a space that feels larger than it is.

And, while a lot of builders choose materials purely for their aesthetics, Bohdan had a much bigger picture in mind. "It was really important to me to choose timbers sourced from local plantations, because of environmental considerations, or pieces with some sort of history."

So, while feature-grade karri floorboards extend through most of the house, the staircase is crafted from Tasmanian oak salvaged from a house renovation in Melbourne. Window frames were recycled finds, the bathroom vanity was hand-made from leftover karri and jarrah timber, and a laminated jarrah benchtop came courtesy of a local restaurant.

"I wanted the cottage to be a real experience for guests, and wherever possible I've tried to bring a little of the outside in. To me, it's those things that make a place special." And Bohdan's cottage is certainly that. ■

*Aireys Overboard Seaside Cottage is available for rent throughout the year. For details, call (03) 5289 7424 or visit [www.aireysoverboard.com.au](http://www.aireysoverboard.com.au)*

**RIGHT** Crow's nest: although the upstairs loft bedroom is small, it opens out to a balcony to give guests room to breathe.



## True confessions

### Who owns this place?

Bohdan Philippa, 43, a self-confessed frustrated artist who is considering a more permanent move into the guesthouse industry.

### Your favourite room?

I'd probably say the bathroom. With the spa and the heated floor, it's pretty luxurious. I only wish my own bathroom looked like that!

### Who does the cleaning?

That would be me. I spend a fair bit of time here keeping everything in shape.

### Is it hard to hand it over to guests?

Not as hard as I thought it would be. It's really satisfying to see people getting enjoyment out of something I've created.

### Your biggest design challenge?

There were a few, but one of them was marrying that rustic nautical feel with some of the modern elements, like the bathroom with its tiling and slick above-bench basin.

### Is heating a problem in winter?

The gas 'log' fire is really efficient, and looks pretty realistic. And there's also reverse-cycle air-conditioning to keep the place toasty in winter and cool in summer. Plus, I've put underfloor heating in the bathroom, which keeps it warm.

### Will Aireys Inlet be home for a while?

I love living here and appreciate the scenery and isolation, although I often travel up to Melbourne or Geelong to visit family and friends.