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Title: Hideaway heaven

Lead: Immerse yourself in architectural genius at these 10 retreats, among the most exclusive destinations to be had in the land.

By Stephanie Oley

Film sequences, magazine shoots and jet-set rendezvous: these are the kinds of glamorous goings-on regular to Australia's most exclusive holiday pads. But the architect-designed retreats introduced here are also available to discerning individuals, seeking style-drenched breaks. Iconic furniture, collector artworks and breathtaking vistas complement the award-winning architecture of each. Bring your movie-star makeup, and your platinum Amex.

**Prices range from \$1,400 up to \$30,000 per week; some properties featured are also available for weekend stays.*

Killcare House, Killcare NSW

At once breezy and refined, this house by Tonkin Zulaikha Greer looks as though bits of beach got up and assembled themselves as a graceful coastal castle. There are cantilevered balconies, hardwood pole supports, craggy stone steps and a steep, simple roof. To preserve integrity with the original landscape, the architects have maintained its 45-degree slope, giving each room a different height and ocean aspect. Furnishings echo the beach-chic theme – a custom-made 16-seat kauri dining table, for example, originally a Cockatoo Island workbench and cleverly offset with 1920s cast iron chairs. There's also a fireplace, Smeg kitchen, subtle lighting and fantastic tribal artifacts and textiles throughout.

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The Hutt, Whale Beach NSW

Though architect Alex Popov modestly describes it as a "simple, tough beach house", this house exudes drama. On entering at the third floor, you gaze down a massive concrete wall outside, parallel to the house, which shields it from the street and acts as a breezeway and light-channel to the lower levels. Ahead lies an azure, sparkling ocean. Recycled jarrah wall paneling and polished concrete ceilings make for a serene interior, styled by IDC interiors, which encompasses four enormous bedrooms, floating fireplaces, a seriously industrial kitchen and iconic furniture. Think Womb chairs by Eero Saarinen, a Florence Knoll dining table and fine, contemporary Australian artworks. Outside, a low frontage and walls clad in jarrah make for a subtle beach façade. If only Hitchcock could have cast one of his glamorous heroines here – this residence seems made for the stab of her cool gaze.

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Dickebusch, Patonga NSW

When industrial designer Russell Koskela and partner Sascha Titchkosky considered renovation options for this simple timber cottage, they chose several things aesthetes usually miss on holiday: a warm vibe, eye-catching furniture and generous amenities, from the plentiful kitchen equipment and snazzy electronics to the rowboat, kayaks and romantic vegetable garden. Inside, natural and recycled textures prevail: preloved oregon floorboards and seagrass matting underfoot, timber and ply paneling on the walls and exposed beams above, with deft accents such as Koskela-made pendant lights of cane, and Aboriginal artworks from Kakaku. A bed, dining tables and several other pieces were designed by the couple for this cosy retreat.

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Toumbaal Plains, Toumbaal Plains NSW

Yes, it is possible to go bush in style. This Fergus Scott-designed retreat is a light presence on grassy plains located about 1km inland from the Sandon River and even boasts dreamy, up-close views of wild emus and kangaroos. An open central courtyard separates the three-bedroom sleeping and bathing quarters from the living and cooking quarters (at opposite ends). "You're never really inside – you can spill outside and back in freely, to soak up the weather or the scenery," the owners enthuse. With its red ironbark floors, barely-there sloping roofs and protective sliding shutters in hardwood, the house is unpretentious as a farm-shed – yet slick enough to have won the Wilkinson Award for residential architecture in 2003.

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Onondagas, Minnie Water NSW

This brand-new Neeson Murcutt coastal villa in the unhurried, unspoiled northern rivers district is simple and elegant. On entering the main living area, you're immersed in a captivating sweep of coast and bushland, with an uninterrupted expanse of windows running the length of the building. Warmth is maintained (and glare minimised) by the windows not running floor-to-ceiling; a generous, wind-sheltered verandah similarly shields the house's calm zones from southerly or northwesterly blasts. Throughout, custom-made built-ins hide clutter, and a bespoke lounge even doubles up as extra sleeping space. The house sleeps eight in two double bedrooms and two informal areas, has a slick kitchen and modern bathrooms.

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Ron Roozen's place, Margaret River WA

On approach from the road, you'd hardly notice this celebrated design by architect Dale Jones-Evans. It's half built into the windswept 25-degree cliffs to ensure maximum sympathy with the environment, although viewed from offshore, it looks like a grand, artistic ship was beached there. Inside, the house is all sweeping open-plan proportions with 180-degree views of the Indian Ocean from every room. Finishes and furnishings are simple – terrazzo floors, subtle lighting and abstract art by the owner, Ron Roozen, defines the space. There are three king bedrooms, two bathrooms, high-tech audiovisual equipment and a well-stocked kitchen. The owners can arrange for a massage therapist or personal chef to deliver some extra pampering on-site.

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Cocoon, Wye River Vic

A marvel of intimacy and engineering, this hip little pod perched among the trees of a bushland hillside packs in a lot. There are two curvy, shiplike bedrooms and a spacious living area, all stylishly paneled in lime-washed ply. The cabinetry and platform-like master bed was built-in to save space, and a few retro pieces such as Cassala chairs dot the interior. Kookaburras love to perch on the living room verandah, and you'll very likely also see koalas, sugar gliders and echidnas up close. The beach is a 10-minute walk away, but in chilly weather you may just want to watch the waves from afar, nestling beside the fireplace with a stack of good books.

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Boyd Barker House, Bacchus Marsh Vic

Rough shack or chic hideaway? With its curved walls built of locally quarried stone, this noted example of post-war architecture by Robin Boyd (1919–1971) is astonishingly good at both roles. Its squat exterior belies a light-filled interior, partly the effect of light reflected off golden sandstone, and partly because of the sun-drenched inner courtyard. A change in ownership last year saw the 1964 structure fitted out at last in era-appropriate furnishings. There are Featherstone and Hans Wegner chairs, a Bruce Matheson chaise and George Nelson's Marshmallow sofa; on the walls are artworks by Charles Blackman, John Bracks, Brett Whiteley and others. The house has five bedrooms, four bathrooms and generous living spaces.

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Blake's End, Old Shoreham Vic

Crisp, Scandinavian design themes and rich organic textures come together in this retreat, located on the edge of a coastal nature reserve. Master builder David MacCallum and his wife Maryanne Quealy have designed rammed earth walls to act as the house's central structural spine, and five living zones radiate from this: two master suites, the living area, the kitchen and bathing area and a junior wing. Inside is a mélange of tasteful furnishings: oversized pendant lights in ply by David Trubridge, Ulf Moritz wallpaper, bespoke furniture by different Australian designers, and divine artworks by the likes of Minnie Pwerle and Mitjili Natpurrura.

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Avalon, Great Oyster Bay Tasmania

As you stroll the carapace of private beach on Great Oyster Bay, with the Freycinet Peninsula majestic in the background, this neo-modernist home beckons from a snug clifftop position. Architect Craig Rosevear has created a series of brick and glass boxes interlinked with internal bridges. The interior is subtle: soft grey eucalyptus flooring; Aboriginal art and Cambodian stone Buddhas; careful splashes of colour such as a lichen-orange sofa. The position is magical. "Watching the moon or sun rise over the waters is a truly spiritual experience," attests owner Brett Torossi. The three-bedroom, three-bathroom house pampers guests with luxurious linens, Melle Beauty toiletries, a gourmet kitchen, fireplace, wetsuits, boogie boards and more.

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