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Island adventure

Rakino Island | Auckland

Creating a holiday haven on a remote island in the Hauraki Gulf is more than a project – it's an adventure. Euan Smith and his team from MBD Builders lived on Rakino Island four nights a week during nine months of construction. "It is completely off-grid with solar power, composting toilets, water tanks... We had to plan for months to get everything over there," says Euan. "You can't just pop down the road to buy a bolt."

Architects Annabel Cropper and JMAC Design converted the owners' concept into detailed plans, creating a bach consisting of four pods. The pods were constructed in New Lynn, trucked to Half Moon Bay, and shifted to a barge. A crane set them on a section with dramatic views of the North Shore and Whangaparaoa Peninsula. "We had to design a system to transport the pods, lift them into place, and remove the support structures in a way that would not interfere with the building long-term," says Euan.

The clients were very involved in the development of their bach. The couple, among many other tasks, managed groundwork and site preparation, created a curved cedar wall for the outdoor shower, and designed and painted the glass splashback in the kitchen. Easy-care oiled beech plywood inside contributes to the home's natural beauty.

The bach feels like a treehouse, thanks to a series of pavilions linked by decks. "We wanted to achieve a truly outdoor living experience with a connection to the native reserve at the front of the bach," says the homeowner. "Covered dining and shower rooms are both outdoors, with tui regularly flying through."

Nearly two decades of camping on the island provided inspiration for the home's design, fit-out, and finishings. "We liked the contrast of city life in town and living outside under the stars on the island. We wanted to recreate that feeling in the new bach," says the owner. "The beauty and utility surpassed our expectations, especially through the test of New Zealand's first lockdown with two of our four teenage daughters present. It proved to be a blissful place to live, with plenty of space and privacy. We all enjoyed being close to the native forest and the thriving birdlife." 🏡

NZCB Member / Euan Smith

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