

# Kiah Beach House: an eco-friendly getaway

■ Developers at Byron Bay go green to satisfy demand for properties that are water-and-energy-efficient

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THERE'S A bit of a debate raging in Oz about whether kangaroo meat might be a more sustainable choice for meat-eaters than beef or lamb. This is all part of a wider discussion Down Under about green lifestyles and ecological footprints as the country experiences its worst drought for a century.

Dubbed the 'lucky country', Australia doesn't want to run out of luck any time soon. Short of creating new eco-villages, which are not to everyone's taste on a number of levels, an increasing number of developers are building water-and energy-efficient properties to satisfy the demand for sustainable homes.

A good example of this is a new development of beachside properties in Byron Bay — one of Australia's 'in' places where the rich and the artistic enjoy the best Aussie life has to offer.

### Picturesque location

Byron Bay is the eastern-most point of Australia's mainland, around one-and-a-half hours south of Brisbane, and 40 minutes south of the Gold Coast, on New South Wales' north coast. Captain James Cook named the area on May 15, 1770 after John Byron, the grandfather of the poet, Lord Byron.

The A\$35 million Kiah Beach House is a luxury development designed not only



■ The Kiah Beach House eco-friendly villas

**The villas have also been designed to allow for natural cooling and ventilation in this sub-tropical climate**

to have the best possible 'knock-out' effect, but to be as environmentally-friendly as possible.

Set within spectacular rainforest surroundings, a further 300 trees and plants, mostly native to Byron Bay, have been added to the landscape.

The 16 north-facing, two-storey properties on the 8,000 square metre site have been designed by award-winning Michael Hesse, the man behind a number of projects in Sydney, and builders Glenzeil, who won an award for their work on Kiah.

### Contemporary design

Using a mix of materials, including spotted gum floors and silky oak and zinc cladding, the design's aim is to bring the outside to the inside and with a contemporary twist. The two-bedrooms have two bathrooms, a multi-purpose room on the ground level, two secure car spaces and the piece de resistance — direct beach access.

To prove their green credentials, the developers have installed rainwater tanks totalling more than 70,000 litres and low-energy lighting. The villas have also been designed to allow for natural cooling and ventilation in this sub-tropical climate. Chris Litfin of CB Richard Ellis believes



■ Byron Bay is located in the eastern-most point of Australia's mainland

the appeal of Kiah is clear to see, not least on matters of scale. "There are only 15 villas and one free-standing house on the site with plenty of open space — 1500 square metres of the site is devoted to lateral forest," he says.

So, is the development a good example of eco-friendly homes of the future? "Absolutely. The council drives this angle in Bryon and it is a condition of any approval," the official adds.

Five villas have already sold since marketing began just over three months ago. At an entry level price of A\$1.8 million, the properties could be rated expensive, particularly in such a tough financial climate.

"These times are testing everyone, and have taken a few of our buyers out of the market. But luckily we don't have a lot of stock and there is very little that comes onto the market, so we will get through them, but it may take a little longer," says Litfin.

"Byron is a very tightly held market, and only trades about 90 properties each

year — which nearly matches development — and 40 per cent of these are in excess on \$1 million. The price is really good value being so close to town and so close to the beach."

Byron Bay, with its rich collection of artisans and entertainers, local markets, shops, cafes and restaurants selling local seafood and locally-grown organic coffee, is unique. "It's a community with real 'fabric', rich mix with poor but all enjoy the natural environment and the non-pretentious culture."

If you fancy experiencing this laid-back-to-nature lifestyle for which Oz is famous, getting there is relatively easy with journey times from Brisbane and the Gold Coast reduced now that several freeway extensions and by-passes are in place. The Ballina/Byron domestic airport is around 25 minutes away, while the Gold Coast/Coolangatta International Airport is a 40-minute drive, and Brisbane International Airport less than two hours along the freeway.

## ADVENTURE ALL THE WAY

**The lighthouse** atop Cape Byron, a 107-metre high rocky promontory, sends its beam more than 40 kilometres out into the sea to warn sailors to beware of the treacherous coastline.

Others seeking more gentle pursuits can enjoy the wildlife for which the area is famous, including taking in a spot of whale watching in this former whaling station.

Visitors are encouraged to walk and cycle, rather than drive around Byron, and hang-gliding, snorkelling and kayaking are popular pastimes.