









orget mistletoe and sleigh bells. Christmas in this part of the world revolves around two key things: family and the outdoors. It's that time of year when kids can shove their school uniform to the back of the wardrobe, grown-ups switch off the work email, and we all get to spend time with people we love in the beautiful weather.

In many ways, that's what prompted Jennifer and Adrian to invest in a weekend property. "We don't have anywhere for our daughter, Lilah, to run around in inner-city Melbourne," says Jennifer, "and we really wanted that, especially as both my husband and I come from the country."

A beach house on the Mornington Peninsula, just an hour by car, seemed the perfect solution but while Jennifer immediately began dreaming of a Hamptons-style getaway, it took a year of searching before they came across the house in Mount Martha. "Most of what we'd seen was set back from the beach, buried in shrubs, but this place is across from the public beach so there are no trees. It has such an amazing view, we really couldn't go past it."

Still, location aside, the property bore very little resemblance to the breezy bolthole Jennifer had envisaged. "There were olive-green feature walls, rustic-looking tiles, cherry wood floorboards - things I wouldn't associate with the beach. And there were only three bedrooms, which was nearly a deal-breaker because we wanted four."

Fortunately, having renovated before, the couple had an idea of what was possible – and enlisted interior designer Terri Shannon and her team at Bloom, who they'd worked with in the past. The brief was simple. "I wanted the exact opposite of our home in town," says Jennifer. "Terri's seen that, so she knows it's very 'Melbourne'

TOP LEFT: THROW AND CHOPPING BOARD, BLOOM & CO, BLOOMANDCOCCOMAU BOTTOM: CROCKERY AND CUTLERY, BLOOM & C AS BEFORE BONBONS, MY CHRISTMAS, MYCHRISTMAS, COMAU, NARKINS, SHERIDAN, SHERIDAN COMAU, NARKIN RINGS, NORSU INTERIORS, NORSUCOMAU, OPPOSITE: CENTREPIECE DECORATIONS AND CHAMPAGNE GLASSES, MY CHRISTMAS, AS BEFORE



and serious, with dark woods and marble. We love it, but for this, it's important to feel we're getting away from the city."

Collecting the keys on Anzac Day, they had a clear deadline: Christmas, when they'd play host to family from all over Victoria. "We got cracking straightaway," says Jennifer.

Structurally, they stayed within the footprint of the house, converting a large laundry into the fourth bedroom they wanted. Once the room quota was resolved, floors were replaced with white-washed oak, while the walls were given a clever treatment by builder Tim Rodgers-Wilson from TRW Constructions. "They're boards that have been grooved to give the effect of lining boards, which Tim came up with so we could stay within budget," says Jennifer. With the decor, Jennifer was happy to be led by Bloom. "They do the Hamptons look really well and I especially love the blue they've incorporated to tie in with the home's beach feel."

Meanwhile, the outdoor space also needed a major overhaul, as the existing pathways and rose gardens would require far more maintenance than could be managed living there part-time. Nor were they especially child friendly. Cue a pool, landscaped lawn and decking, all of which Lilah adores. "She's constantly outdoors picking flowers, practising gymnastics on the grass or putting on concerts on the deck, which she thinks is a stage," says Jennifer.

Of course, the big question is: was the project done in time for the festive season? "Tim promised we'd be finished on December 1, and we were finished on December 1," beams Jennifer. "He's hands-down the best builder I've ever worked with."

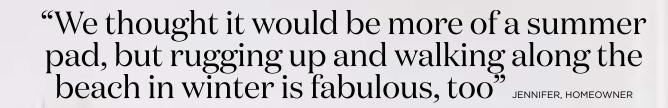
With that, the Christmas tree and decorations went up and the place was ready to welcome family from far and wide - although not everyone's a fan of Jennifer's rule of saving presents until after breakfast. "Adrian can't bear it," she laughs. "He's a big kid at heart and always manages to sneak a couple of early ones to Lilah."

Either way, Christmas last year was such a success that Jennifer is keen to play host again. There's just one problem. "It's not our turn," she says. "But I'll do my best to convince them it is." To see more of Bloom's work, visit bloominteriordesign.com.au. For more details on TRW Constructions, visit truconstructions.com.au.









COMES



MASTER BEDROOM

(opposite) The Gubi lights

from AmbienteDirect.com set

the blue and grey tones in the

room, along with the 'Leila'

bed from Jardan. **LILAH'S BEDROOM** Subtle curves

come to the fore with the

powder-blue Jardan 'Nook' bed

and a table from GlobeWest.

The 'Bay Of Islands' carpet in

Ocean is from Victoria Carpets.



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lessons learnt

What we'd change: "The bathrooms - they were only updated five years ago, so we left them out of the initial reno, but eventually I'd like to redo them. The same goes for the facade of the house, but it's in such good condition that I can't quite con my husband into agreeing with me just yet on that," says Jennifer. **Biggest surprise:** "We thought it would be more of a summer pad, but rugging up and walking along the beach in winter is fabulous, too. And the fireplace - which was there when we bought the home - is beautiful." **Best tip:** "Remember what drew you to the house initially, and make that a focus. For us, that was the view. We realised that the balconies had thick white tubular framing that blocked the outlook when you were sitting down, so we changed those to a more modern frameless style."