



## A Charming Creekside Cabin, Immersed In Nature

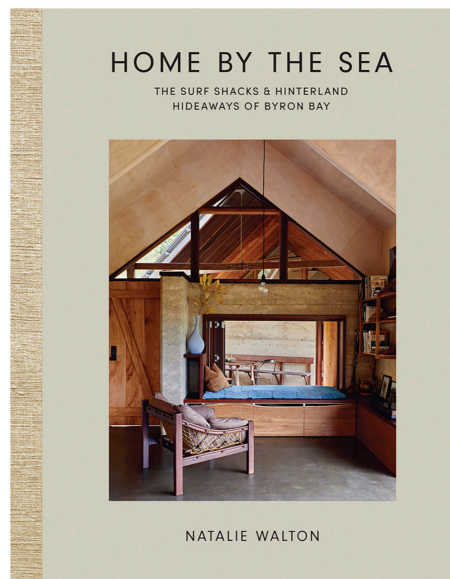
INTERIORS

Stylist and writer [Natalie Walton](#)'s latest book *'Home by the Sea'*, is a love letter to Byron Bay. At its heart, it explores what it means to create a home in the popular beachside area and surrounding hinterland, where Natalie herself lives.

The book celebrates 23 homes, from beach shacks in the seaside suburbs to hinterland hideaways, all with their own character and unique style.

In this extract, we take a look at Jessica Blume's home – a charming cabin in Upper Wilsons Creek. It's a place to slow down and appreciate the majesty of nature.

16th November, 2022









Natalie Walton

Wednesday 16th November 2022

**'I love the creek being right here, and being nestled in between the mountains' – Jessica Blume**

When Jessica Blume was growing up in the Byron area it was fairly common that, after finishing school, young people would leave for worldly adventures in big cities and far-away countries. That was certainly her experience. Jume—the name friends call her, and that she has used for her own fashion label—moved to study in Melbourne, a city known for its European look and feel, as well as its design scene.

During her time in the great southern city, Jume began an apprenticeship of sorts, working in various roles as a design assistant while she was studying. She painted pots, wove lanterns and assisted a ceramicist. 'It gave me the skills to know that I could do it myself and start my little label,' she says. 'In Melbourne I used to live in other people's houses and build other people's businesses. Now I'm doing it for myself.'

Every summer Jume would return to Byron, and more and more she didn't want to leave. 'I got really sad having to go back, because the summers here are so much fun. I had just launched my clothing label and started to realise that I could work from anywhere.' However, a relationship break up was the tipping point for her moving back home in 2017. 'I needed some time to recover and rest, and it was Reuben who made me stay,' she says. 'I would have been somewhere else by now.'

Jume and her partner, Reuben Bryant, who studied conservation science and works in bush regeneration, both grew up in the Northern Rivers region. At one point they lived on the same street in Byron, but didn't know each other until they met one day in the surf. As their relationship blossomed, the couple bonded on trips to Indonesia and Sri Lanka, as well as through a joint love of surfing. In September 2019 they bought this house in Upper Wilsons Creek with Reuben's father.

Jume learnt about the house while she was on a trip to Bali. Reuben called and said he and his dad were buying a run-down place that was going to take years to fix. Did she want to be involved? Jume had always dreamt of having a forest cabin in Wilsons Creek, where she used to visit the swimming holes as a child with her mum. 'I hadn't even seen it, but, without hesitation, I said yes,' she says. 'By the time I got back from Bali, it was happening!'

While the house had a lot of charm from the outside, and sits close to a creek, it required major work.

It had been built of hardwood and cedar in the 1970s as a one-storey cabin and then renovated into the existing house in the late 1980s. The couple later learnt it had been a communal house, the setting for raucous dinner parties, and the haunt of visiting poets and artists from Melbourne. 'He was a healer and she was a writer or musician,' Jume says of the previous owners. 'It was a fun place, a home for parties.' However, in recent years it had been abandoned to squatters and left to fall apart.

'It was just a bare room and a broken piano,' she says. 'There was no kitchen and no bathroom. There were creatures living here. The doors were locked because it was so wild inside. It has come a long way.'

When the couple first moved in, they spent months cooking on a camp stove and taking bucket showers. Fortunately, they have been helped by their fathers—Jume's is a carpenter, while Reuben's is a plumber.

'I had never lived with my father before,' Jume says. 'It was just us and our dads and that made the project so sweet. Every week we were together.'

Since then, they've built a deck and grown a vegetable garden. They also bought a sailing boat, which they've restored. Surfing continues to be a big part of their life, too. While the waves keep them content and connected to the local landscape, having a community of friends has been a huge factor in remaining in the Byron region. When Jume moved back home, she had one good friend who had moved back at the same time. Since then, about forty friends have moved here. Many returned from overseas—from New York, London, Berlin—and from other parts of the country during the pandemic.

'I wouldn't have lived here in the past,' Jume says.

'There weren't enough cultural things to keep me here, instead of the city. Now there are.' She cites great restaurants and bars, as well as the surf culture.

'Byron has everything I loved about the city, in terms of food and events, and yet it's in nature.'

However, unlike her experience of the city, where life can be competitive and judgmental with a feeling of 'tall poppy syndrome', Jume finds the Byron region very freeing. 'Everything feels possible and everyone is super-supportive of what anyone does.'

'We might have left by now,' Jume says. 'But then Covid happened and I don't think I would have wanted to be anywhere else but here. We worked on the garden, surfed every day and built Toko, the shop. That has been really rewarding, because we have brought all the things that we missed from living in cities. We brought it all here.'

When she's home, Jume loves making coffee and pancakes and watching friends swimming in the creek. 'I love the creek being right here, and being nestled in between the mountains.'

'Home for me is somewhere I can feel safe and calm and grounded,' she says. 'I really value the one day a week I spend picking flowers for the vases and slowly making a complete reflection of myself in my home. It's my insides turned outwards.'

***This in an edited extract from 'Home by the Sea: The Surf Shacks & Hinterland Hideaways of Byron Bay' by Natalie Walton, published by Hardie Grant Books, RRP \$60.***