

BEACH CRUSH

The Grace family love everything about their Mt Maunganui holiday apartment

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THIS PAGE The new kitchen in Jill and Chris Grace's renovated Mt Maunganui apartment; Jill loves the restful colours which include a marble-look kitchen island benchtop and splashback in Statuario Maximus by Caesarstone. **OPPOSITE** How's this for a great front yard - Mt Maunganui beach is just across the road from the Graces' holiday pad.





THESE PAGES The view from the living room sofas over the North coffee table by Tim Webber Design is understandably compelling; the lower portions of the glass balustrade have been frosted to provide privacy from the street below.

Never mind walls being able to talk; imagine if they could listen. If the ones in Jill and Chris Grace's Mt Maunganui beach apartment had that ability, they'd hear plenty of affirmation.

"Hello beautiful house," is what Jill whispers, pretty much every time she enters her newly renovated holiday home. It also gets farewelled when she heads back to their home base in Taupō.

"I know this makes me sound a bit weird, but I just love everything about being here," says Jill.

"Chris and I love waking up, opening the curtains and watching people doing yoga across on the grass in front of the beach, surfing, running up the Mount, kids having fun... And there's a massive pōhutukawa across the road that is glorious when in flower. Where else in the world would you want to be? The beach is magnificent, and we love the busyness."

Jill and Chris' enthusiasm is shared by their children, Rudi, 22, and Jordan, 20. Jill's older children, Jamie and Keri, aren't impartial either and if tail wagging is anything to go by, then Toto the family's shih tzu poodle cross is besotted.

In 2019 the couple not only completed the three-year renovation of this apartment, but also moved from Hamilton to Taupō where they own a business and have built a new home.

Chris and Jill bought the apartment in 2014 after renting it the previous summer. One holiday and they were hooked. Says Jill: "It was original – about 40 years old – and hadn't been touched. It was very dark with a lot of timber, some arches in odd places and an old oven that took some driving. It was old-school but we didn't care. It had charm and of course the position was magnificent."

The initial revamp plan was minimal, involving carpeting and painting upstairs, and adding a

THIS PAGE Jill and Chris with dog Toto; they bought the dining furniture at Hunter Furniture while the Tri light pendant by Resident from Simon James was found by interior designer Kathrine McDonald. **OPPOSITE** The view from the front deck reaches through the main living space to the rear courtyard; the glass-walled staircase leads to the master suite and daughter Jordan's bedroom; the Net side table by Moroso from Matisse and cushions from Ni.ni. Creative add splashes of blue to the room.





THIS PAGE Jill on the bedroom deck; the bedlinen and cushions are from Thread Design, the artwork is from Compose Gallery and the bedside tables are by Citta from Paper Plane. **OPPOSITE** (clockwise from top left) Jill and Chris have been impressed with their interior designer's ability to find the perfect lights - this one in the stairwell is a String Theory wall light from Satelight Design; Jill loves its nautical look. The standing mirror in the main bedroom is from Sunday Homestore, the chair is from Forma and the Halves side table is by Muuto from Bauhaus. Jordan's ensuite has Tetris Dolomite wall tiles from Tile Depot. Jordan's bedroom has a VV Cinquanta wall lamp by Astep from Good Form, the side table is by Muuto from Bauhaus, the sculptures are by Kristina Dam Studio from Capricho (now closed), the artwork is from Paper Plane and the bedlinen and cushions are from Adairs.





bedroom and bathroom for Rudi at the back of the garage. But minimal switched to major when Chris bumped into an old university friend one day. His wife is Kathrine McDonald of Kathrine McDonald Design, whom Jill invited over... and the rest is history. "She had ideas that caught our imagination. Once we started, we couldn't stop."

The first target of Kathrine's assessing eye was the back wall on the middle level where the kitchen and laundry sat and which had a single door and little windows. "Imagine if you turned the kitchen around so it would flow. Imagine if you opened up that wall out the back..." Jill recalls Kathrine speculating.

The view from the kitchen now looks out over an opened-up dining and lounge area, through a wall of glass to the deck and the ocean. The back wall now has stacker glass doors, giving views of the harbour and easy access to an outdoor entertaining area and sunken hot tub. The couple can sit out the back and look through the main living area to the ocean – Jill deliberately chose low couches for the lounge so as not to obstruct the view.

"Opening up that back wall and putting the doors in was top of the list. From there things rolled out – it was an evolving brief." The mostly brown walls were painted over in white for the main living zone and soft grey upstairs. "I didn't want any paint colour as a feature, as we have that," says Jill, pointing to the blue of the sea.

The altered layout for the upper bedroom floor was well considered given Jill and Chris feel this will one day be their main home. "If we are going to live here full-time eventually then it has to work as a home. What was three bedrooms upstairs is now two with a walk-in wardrobe in the master, plus a decent sized wardrobe in the other, and both rooms are ensuited," Jill explains.

Rudi is more than happy at ground level. "He and his mates are here for all that happens over summer and it's easy for them to come and go," says Jill. The garage has been lined to make it comfortable and houses pinball and table tennis tables.

THIS PAGE (from top) A Lavamani basin by Falper from Chesters Plumbing & Bathroom and a Rise & Shine mirror by New Works from Slow make a sculptural pairing in the powder room. Jill and Kathrine by the hot tub; designed by Mark Cashmore Design, a pergola filters the sun and has recessed lighting; the balls are actually outside lights.

The bathrooms are now unabashedly beautiful. Chris and Jill's decision to call on Kathrine's wisdom was further validated when she shared a bathroom tile suggestion. "When she showed us what she was thinking we said 'we love that so much – please put it in all the bathrooms and the laundry too,'" Jill says.

They also adore the bathroom mirrors she sourced and the light fittings throughout. "At one stage Chris and I thought we had found the perfect light shade for over the dining table. But Kathrine pointed out it wouldn't suit the beach chic theme and would have obstructed the view from the kitchen out to the ocean."

Decks off the master bedroom and main living area have also been revamped and the building has been re-roofed, re-clad, cedar accents added, and the joinery replaced. The Graces' apartment is one of three and they're thrilled the other apartment owners decided to follow suit so a "beautiful, uniform look" has resulted.

The refurbished apartment offers many delights... but no lawn or garden. That's a good thing. "We just want to come here and walk up the Mount, around the Mount, and down the road for coffee, or just sit in this glorious place." ■

Q&A

Favourite part of the house: Our bedroom, as from there we wake up to an uninterrupted view of the ocean. It was even better when a cruise ship glided by. *(Chris)*

Best money spent: The beautiful feature lighting. *(Jill)* The steel and glass stairwell. *(Chris)*

Best advice: The best advice we got was, rather than buying on impulse, take time to consider how everything will work together to eliminate potentially expensive mistakes. *(Jill)*

What's great about being at Mt Maunganui: There is always an event of some sort happening – Ironman triathlons, surfing, beach volleyball – and we have a front row grandstand seat for all the action. We love it. *(Chris)*

Best local cafe: We're spoiled for choice in Mt Maunganui but we are literally a two-minute stroll to Sidetrack Cafe for a great morning caffeine fix. *(Jill)*

Best walk: Up the Mount. *(Jill)* Round the Mount. *(Chris)*
Chris and Jill Grace



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