

When you think of 'baching it', do you picture a rustic cabin filled with mismatched furniture and chipped crockery, with minimal comforts and lukewarm showers? Think again. Angela Pedersen took her family to Omaha, north of Auckland, and spent a weekend in the most luxurious 'bach' we've ever seen

bach at the beach

If magazines could play music, the music playing right now to set the scene would be Groove Armada's "At the River." So press play and imagine waking up in the comforts of 1000-thread-count Egyptian cotton sheets in a luxury home at Omaha Beach, overlooking the sapphire-blue Pacific Ocean and Little Barrier Island. Your husband has just made you the perfect cup of coffee from the barista-quality German coffee maker in the designer, entertainer's kitchen downstairs. You get to sit back, relax, and enjoy a leisurely wake-up, reading *OHbaby! Magazine* while you nibble a croissant, then freshen up in the double-showered ensuite. Then slip on some clothes and make your way downstairs to find your husband and children, who have already had breakfast and are happily playing on the deck.

Sound like a dream morning? Well it was, and that is what I enjoyed while staying at The Dunes (Omaha Lodge) while on a week-long holiday this year. The only catch was that I would be doing the same the next day for my husband, which I didn't mind at all. Taking turns was well worth the relaxation.

The Dunes is a luxury home located right on the beachfront at Omaha Beach – "luxury" being the key word. The Dunes has five bedrooms, three bathrooms featuring L'Occitane toiletries, an entertainment room with a billiard table, TV and entertainment system, a wine cellar, an enormous gourmet kitchen stocked with everything you could possibly need, a laptop and broadband internet access, Sky TV, underfloor heating, an inbuilt indoor and outdoor stereo system, and all of the linen and towels are provided. For recreation outside there is a spa pool, golf clubs and golf cart, kayaks, gas barbeque, outdoor fireplace, three bicycles, and whatever else they could fit into the three-car garage. Basically, you want for nothing.

Each of the five spacious rooms are beautifully decorated, have quality linen, their own TVs and lovely views, either out to the ocean or to the landscaped courtyard at the back of the

house. The two double bedrooms have their own ensuites as well, so if you have friends staying, there are plenty of showers for all.

The house is incredibly spacious and allows the kids plenty of room to play if they need to be indoors. The tiled floors also mean you can rest in the knowledge that sandy feet won't be tracked through the carpet. The other plus side of staying at this beachside home is that when you have to come back from the beach for your little ones to have their day sleeps, you don't feel like you're missing out. You still have the gorgeous views of the beach to enjoy, as well as the sounds of the waves lapping against the shore, a beautiful indoor/outdoor entertaining area, and the ability to mix a few drinks and relax in peace, or have a snooze yourself.

The beauty of having hired the house out ourselves was twofold. Our eldest daughter got to choose which bedroom she would sleep in, an exercise that we think helped her to settle into the new environment better. Also, we were able to invite friends and family to come and stay for the weekend to celebrate my birthday, but reserved the weekdays to enjoy some quality family time.

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While our friends were up for the weekend, the girls enjoyed some time out together and the boys went to the beach with the kids. We headed over to Matakana Village, just five minutes' drive from Omaha, to explore the local farmers' markets and the lovely shops around the village. Matakana Village is nicely designed and landscaped, and has some great interiors, arts, crafts, and



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travel tips

- Book well in advance.
- When hiring a holiday home, check if linen is required and if they have children's amenities such as a high chair, portacot, and safety gates. It'll save on car space when packing.
- Don't forget to pack some basic essentials; Pamol, Purell, wipes and sunscreen.
- If there are rooms to spare, let your child choose his own bed. It may help him to settle in more easily.
- Plan the days around sleep times.
- Bring DVDs, toys, and games for rainy days.
- Holiday homes can be found nationwide at www.bookabach.co.nz.



design stores, as well as a fabulous chocolate shop and bookstore we all very much enjoyed. After the stroll around the village, we stopped for a lovely high tea at the Brookview Tearooms before we made our way back to The Dunes.

Evenings were a highlight. The temperature was cooling down and we enjoyed leisurely walks along the beach with the kids. As the sun went down, it often cast a soft pink and blue glow over the skyline, which blended softly with the white sand on the beach, making for romantic, picture-perfect evenings. By the end of each walk, we were ready to get back to the house and enjoy a low-maintenance meal of BBQ and salad. Then, once the kids were in bed, we could relax in the spa, looking at the stars, enjoying a glass of wine and listening to the waves roll in.

During the days, we went for family walks (either on the beach or around the walkways to look at the other houses), made sandcastles, explored the playgrounds, and went for small trips to the other local bays.

As a holiday location for our family, Omaha is perfect. Omaha Beach is just an hour's drive north of Auckland – so not too far to travel with children – and 15 minutes' drive to any one of the 15 vineyards around Matakana wine country. The attractions of Goat Island marine reserve, Pakiri Beach, and the ARC Tawharanui Regional Park are also at its doorstep.

Omaha Beach is an idyllic coastal playground where you can enjoy waterskiing, sailing, fishing and diving. There are good boat-launching facilities and a protected all-tides harbour that provides safe swimming for children. There is also a championship 18-hole golf course, tennis courts, bowling greens, children's playgrounds, reserves, and walking tracks that give a wide range of choice for family activities. Surfers and windsurfers appreciate Omaha Beach, which has lifeguards on duty over the summer months.

With so much to do at Omaha and the surrounding villages and bays, you have no reason to be bored or not have anything to do with the kids. The trouble is keeping your list short so you don't feel like you've spent the holiday being busy without relaxing and enjoying the simple things.

The Dunes is only available by booking the entire house. This means the property is entirely yours for the duration of your stay. The summer rate is \$650 per night, and there are off-peak rates also. For more information or to book, you can visit their website, www.omahalodge.co.nz.

At this price, you may ask, why not go to a tropical island holiday instead? The answer for me was that I wanted to keep it simple. I wanted to go somewhere we could also invite family and friends to enjoy, that wasn't too far to travel, and that I was familiar with, so I didn't have to worry about language barriers, babysitters, foreign exchange rates, and the like. But most importantly, I love New Zealand and all of its fantastic landscapes and beaches, so I wanted to enjoy what our beautiful country has to offer while my children are young. 🌊



attractions near Omaha

Cafes and Restaurants

- The Art of Cheese Café
- Ascension Vineyard Café
- Brookview Tearooms
- Leigh Sawmill Café
- Heron's Flight Café

Activities

- Brick Bay Sculpture Trail
- Glass Bottom Boat
- Horse Riding Warkworth
- Matakana Country Park
- Matakana Taster Tour
- Pakiri Beach Horse Riding
- Puhoi Historic Village
- Rainbow Valley Farm
- SheepWorld Farm & Nature Park

Wineries

- Ascension Vineyard
- Brick Bay Wines
- Heron's Flight Vineyard & Cafe
- Hyperion Wines
- Omaha Bay Vineyard
- Ransom Wines
- Takatu Vineyard