



Set amid lush rainforest, the house floats dreamily above a canopy of trees to create a haven for the owners



TROPICAL LUXE

Nestled in the treetops overlooking the Coral Sea, this contemporary, pavilion-style home is a beguiling mix of Pacific-inspired influences and dazzling details

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■ PHOTOGRAPHY / Rhiannon Slatter



Stepping through the large front doors you again arrive outdoors; a design concept that works beautifully in this tropical location

“At some point in your life you have to give yourself a gift,” Daniel Leipnik says, referring to his and his partner Andrew Preston’s amazing new tropical retreat, which is located on steep terrain in lush rainforest, floating dreamily above a canopy of trees and looking out over the Coral Sea. “It’s visually spectacular and we’re surrounded by a magnificent World Heritage rainforest — it really doesn’t get much better than this.”

The year leading up to the completion of the build was not quite so dream-like for the boys. Both in their late thirties, Daniel and Andrew were at a stage in their lives and careers where they were ready to step into new territory. Living in a suburban pocket of Melbourne and both working at a manufacturing plant owned by Daniel’s family, they wanted a shift in

lifestyle, so decided to shift states, climates and their everyday way of living.

“We went to the Daintree Rainforest for a holiday in December 2007 and fell in love with the warm weather, abundant trees and the extraordinary flowers and animal life,” Andrew remembers. “We both had a life-changing moment where we felt compelled to follow our hearts and move to the area.”

Deciding against the Daintree due to the travel difficulties that living in Melbourne while building posed, they eventually found the right spot of land located at Trinity Beach, just north of Cairns, at the bargain price of \$350,000. “We then set about designing the home with a local building design firm, put the plans out to tender, found a builder and began building our dream home,” Andrew explains.

The home, which is inspired by Balinese and



Taking inspiration from pavilion-style design, the house features wraparound balconies and entertaining decks

■ **HOUSE** Trinity Pole House
 ■ **LOCATION** Trinity Beach, Qld
 ■ **COST** \$1.45 million
 ■ **DATE COMPLETED** December 2011
 ■ **EPISODE** 5 SERIES 2

Japanese styles, exudes elegance combined with an exotic South Pacific feel. Featuring three bedrooms (including the lavish master suite), two-and-half bathrooms, four separate pavilions, an outdoor entertaining pavilion, pool and wraparound balconies and decks, it’s an interwoven artwork that provides the boys with that resort-like ambience they set out to achieve.

“We were inspired by a pavilion-style home that we missed out on and also a resort in Port Douglas called Balé,” Andrew remembers. “We spent two years looking through magazines, visiting stores, researching online and physically drawing shapes and structures on paper to get what we wanted.”

“We wanted to create a masterpiece,” Daniel adds. “A standout, one-of-a-kind art installation that would make us feel as though we’re coming





home to a high-end resort every time we enter the front doors.”

Of course, resorts don't pop up in a day and even with the 10-month build time the journey from empty site to new home was not one without hiccups, with the biggest difficulty being location.

While the property is located 3000km from Melbourne, Daniel and Andrew initially thought the distance between their home in Melbourne and the site was a small hurdle, but

as time went on they found the distance proved to be a major disturbance. “For our next build we'll definitely be located in the same city as the home,” Daniel explains. “It was very disruptive to both the build and our work.”

Aiming to get up there at least every three weeks, the boys spent a lot of time on the phone trying to manage the project. With no project manager (and no architect) it was in their hands to get it right, and with a looming deadline (the home had to be completed prior to the wet

season) their focus on the job was crucial.

The site, located on a steep, curving hill, provides seclusion but also poses a problem. The only access is via a dirt road in dense forest and, being out-of-towners, Daniel and Andrew put their trust in the locals for reasonable quotes and suggestions. The difficulty with the gradient is that the steepness of the hill is a challenge in itself, and for that reason many of the materials needed to be craned up individually — a time-

consuming and expensive process.

The site itself also did not provide enough flat space, so the builders needed to implement columns to hold up the hefty structure. Queensland is full of houses on stilts, as they provide great ventilation and are a godsend during the wet season. Chris Van Dyke Designs suggested the boys use four Y-shaped steel columns to support their hefty-sized dwelling.

Using the elegant Y-shape, the columns provide a sturdier hold when compared with

LEFT Louvre windows allow light to be filtered while providing much-needed cross-flow ventilation for the tropical conditions

RIGHT AND BOTTOM The spacious bathroom is fitted out with luxurious stone bathware, natural timber and a minimal colour palette

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the typical post-and-beam construction. And with eight tonnes of pavilion to support, it was pivotal the locally fabricated steel poles were able to easily hold the mass. Cantilevering the home out into the bush did, however, double the cost for Daniel and Andrew but it provided those million-dollar views.

A series of pavilions was created and these are intrinsic to the design aesthetic. They link yet differentiate the rooms, prising them apart yet connecting them with a network of

walkways. These networks provide cohesion and bring a certain intimacy to the house.

As you step through the front door you walk straight into a garden. It's an interesting design concept, stepping into the outdoors, but it works remarkably well. As you move through the exposed outdoor space you are met with flower fragrances and the natural beauty of plant life. This innovative design brings a whole new definition to what a house could be and, as Daniel remarks, “it's life in the tropics”.



■ *A series of pavilions was created and these are intrinsic to the design aesthetic. They link yet differentiate the rooms, prising them apart yet connecting them with a network of walkways* ■

ABOVE AND LEFT

Living rooms are formed from a series of pavilions, linked yet separated by a network of walkways and terraces

OPPOSITE

The main pavilion houses the locally made kitchen and dining room that lead out to the entertaining space

A favourite area for both the boys is the outdoor room, which is covered by a high regal ceiling. Andrew and Daniel wanted to use this type of ceiling throughout the house but chose only to feature it in the outdoor room due to budget. This area is the vortex of the house with the pavilions spinning round it. "It's beautiful to just sit here when it's pouring rain," Andrew murmurs. "It's magical". Daniel agrees, "I spend about two hours here each night just pondering. We built this space so we could be immersed in nature and here I really am. I am in my element when I am here."

The main pavilion, which houses the kitchen (a locally made kitchen after a German model did not arrive in time, which the boys refer to as "a blessing in disguise") is powerful in its presence, the sturdy design further accentuated with the wide doors opening to the outdoor space.

Even closer to the canopy of trees is the master bedroom suite, which looks out to the forest and the enticing pool. It's separate from the other pavilions, providing the boys with a truly lavish private retreat. "It's truly resort-like with a huge stone tub and floating double-vanity stone basins," Andrew says.

It's a big change from living in Melbourne, but one the boys are glad they made. Each space is imbued with detail, which encompasses their characters. "We're sticklers for detail," Daniel laughs. The furnishing items and finishes reflect their passion for detailed design.

The boys also focused on creating a green home and implemented a number of design characteristics to capitalise on the environment and location. It's set among rainforest and, thanks to expansive doors and louvre windows, the house takes advantage of the cooler breezes from the forest floor. Ceiling fans in each room mean they don't use the airconditioning much, and a heat pump is used for both the hot water and dryer. Appliances were chosen based on their energy efficiency and low-wattage LED light bulbs are used inside and out.

"The house uses as many natural materials as we could find," Andrew explains, "including wood, stone, rock and lots of water features in the form of ponds and walkway waterfalls." While it does require a lot of maintenance, that's fairly standard given the location. "There's a lot of maintenance in the tropics no matter what you use to build," Daniel adds. "We're going to require annual maintenance to keep the house looking brand new and we've accounted for that."

As for the now, though, Andrew and Daniel could not be happier. They've given themselves that gift that Daniel referred to: a home that represents a tropical lifestyle with a peaceful ambience. Their home is an idyllic Asian-inspired retreat and while the boys think that perhaps in 10 years' time they may just build that "spectacular Daintree Rainforest retreat with cassowary protection area around it", for now they're living their dream. ♡

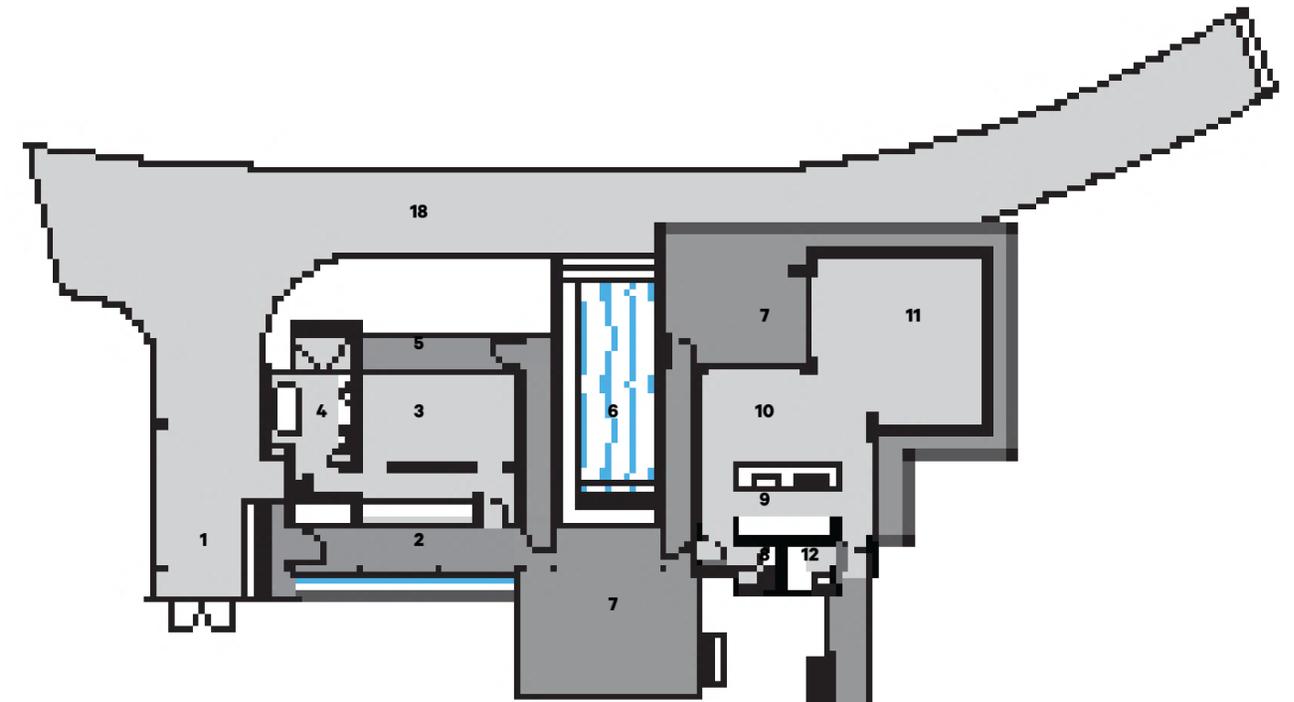




Wood, stone and rock used in construction, along with the addition of numerous water features, create a feeling of being at one with the elements



Lush tropical gardens soften the impact of the house on the environment



FIRST FLOOR PLAN

- 1 Carport
- 2 Entrance
- 3 Master Bedroom
- 4 Ensuite
- 5 Balcony
- 6 Pool
- 7 Deck
- 8 Powder Room
- 9 Kitchen
- 10 Dining Room
- 11 Living Room
- 12 Laundry
- 13 Colonnade
- 14 Bedroom 2
- 15 Bathroom
- 16 W.I.R
- 17 Bedroom 3
- 18 Driveway

PROJECT TEAM

- **DESIGN CONCEPT** Daniel Leipnik, Andrew Preston and Chris Van Dyke Designs (chrisvandyke.com.au)
- **DESIGN CONSULTANTS** Chris Van Dyke Designs (chrisvandyke.com.au)

- **STRUCTURAL TEAM** Builder Reilly Building Services (reillybuildingservices.com.au) **Roof** Gerard Roofs (gerardroofs.co.nz) **Landscaping** Hortulus Landscape Design and Management (hortulus.com.au) **Balustrade and Pool Fencing** Sentrel Australia (sentrel.com.au) **Pool** Placid Pools (placidpools.com.au) **Bathroom** Kohler (07 4053 6688)
- **FITTINGS AND FIXTURES** Lighting and Electrical Clipsal by Schneider Electric (clipsal.com) **Interior and Exterior Doors, Glass and Timber Louvres** Status Plus (statusplus.com.au) **Internal Pool Tiles** Marlin Ceramic Tiles (marlintiles.com.au) **Architectural Bathroom Drains** Stormtech Pty Ltd (stormtech.com.au) **Bathroom Fixtures**

- Tradelink (tradelink.com.au) **Hot Water Heat Pumps** DUX (Dux.com.au) **Custom Joinery** Johnston Joinery (johnstonjoinery.com.au) **Kitchen Inserts** Lincoln Sentry (lincolngroup.com.au)
- **FURNITURE AND ACCESSORIES** Kitchen Appliances V-ZUG Australia Pty Ltd (vzug.com.au) **Kitchen Finishes** Laminex (laminex.com.au) **Kitchen & Laundry Stone Benchtops** essa stone (essastone.com.au) **Interior and Exterior Paint** Dulux (dulux.com.au) **Stone Bathware** Apaiser (apaier.com.au) **Indoor and Outdoor Furniture** Samsara Furniture and Homewares (samsarafurniture.com.au) **Sinks** Stainless-steel Oliveri (oliveri.com.au)
- **SERVICES** Plumbing Paul Owens Plumbing (0408 754 136)