



HOME

IS WHERE THE HEART IS

From her old school bus to her heart-shaped artwork, Kim Devcich's Tauranga home is filled with things that matter... and which reflect her love of fun, freedom and adventure

TE PUKE
MANDOEKA
PONGAKAWA
MOUNT
PAEGAROA
TOWN SERVICE

CUSHIONS: The cushions are mostly Trade Me finds, but the map design is from Auckland store Pauanesia.
LOUNGE: The telescope is perfectly positioned to make the most of the estuary views. The bus blind used as artwork is from Kim's old school bus.





KIM DEVCICH HAS parked up her Bedford bus and settled back in at home ready for winter.

Kim and husband Brent have taken to spending a chunk of the summer living in the bus in a seaside Mt Maunganui camping ground. It's all good for their three children – Yasmin, 15, Eden, 11, and nine-year-old Tanner. While it all seems like a world away, when it's back to school time all the family has to do is make the 10-minute journey home over the harbour bridge to Tauranga.

There the bus gets parked up to serve a suburban purpose as a spare bedroom, sleepover zone for the children and their friends, and a man-cave retreat for Brent and Tanner. In terms of family fun, Brent says it's irrefutably the best thing they could ever have bought.

The emotional attachment is huge, as the 1967 Bedford bus was once Kim's rural school bus that they found by chance on Trade Me. Hence, Brent designed the door's logo, which proclaims "Slow Coach Special. Old Skool Bus Company." The old bus blind, listing Kim's former school bus stop and others, now hangs in one of their lounges.

Despite all the good times associated with summer in their bus, returning to their home comforts is always a treat. They live at the end of a peninsula with estuary views, a swimming pool, and a house that's getting



progressively better thanks to various renovation projects over the years. Kim and Brent fell in love with the house the minute they clapped eyes on it, much to the real estate agent's amazement.

"In fact, the agent didn't even want to show us it," Kim remembers. "It was 'special'. It had Huntly brick with baby blue fibrolite and some yellow glass features. Inside it had lots of 1970s brown with timber panelling and painted hessian wallpaper, wagon wheel chandeliers and squeaky shag-pile carpet.

"The main lounge was a snooker room and the other lounge had a stage, maybe for go-go girls – who knows! The house also had a built-in bar and Brent said it reminded him of an RSA.

"Yet, as soon as I saw it I had a feeling this was our home. I had already moved in emotionally," Kim says.

Thankfully the positives were also immediately apparent to Brent – he loved the big pohutukawas outside, the house's proportions, the ever-changing estuary views and the big 1320 square metre private site. Not only was there plenty of play room for the children, but off-road parking for the bus and other assorted vehicles such as Kim's 1969 VW Beetle, her Hula bike and Brent's Balinese Vespa.

They signed a contract that same night.

OPPOSITE: (Clockwise, from left): Tanner on keyboard, dad Brent on ukulele; the 3-D floral hearts are by Kim, they're mixed with other hearts by various Kiwi women; ukuleles are close to Brent's heart, so this little lady made the ideal birthday gift. **KITCHEN:** Kim prepares a healthy snack for Tanner.

That was 10 years ago. Renovations have evolved over time, in no big rush. But some things had to be tackled sooner rather than later. First up, the carport was converted into another bedroom, the stage was removed from the lounge-cum-TV room and the house was painted.

Ensuing projects included a new kitchen, which meant farewell to little gold tiles with brown grouting and brown veneer cupboard doors.

"It was all very brown on brown on brown," Kim recalls. In contrast, the new kitchen is white, with a duck egg blue splashback, and grey has replaced brown on the kitchen's long brick wall.

Where the bar once stood there are doors that beckon you out to an outdoor area Kim and Brent have established adjacent to their five-year-old swimming pool.

Perfectly positioned on the other side of the pool is a creeper-clad garage that is being transformed into a room →



LOUNGE: Kim loves the layout of the living areas: "When we are socialising the adults can be in one lounge and we can see through, over the deck, to the other lounge where the kids are."

ART DISPLAY: The triptych is by Graham Crow; Murano glass; the puppet (top left) is by 11-year-old Eden.

for Kim's new massage business. Once completed it will exude French provincial grandeur. Which is not to say it will blend seamlessly with the decor of the Devcich home.

"When it comes to interiors, I am schizophrenic," Kim says. "We don't follow trends. We liked Pacifica decor before it was trendy, and we have that plus shabby chic and quirky kitsch all going on."

Brent's more than happy with the anything-goes approach – it gives him freedom, for example, to hang his ukulele collection on the wall; kept company by Eden's drum kit and Tanner's keyboard.

Much of what adorns the walls in this abode is the result of Kiwi creativity – some of it the work of the woman of the house. Kim owns a business called Lots of Love and is the creative force behind three-dimensional ceramic wall hearts covered in paper carefully sourced from far and wide. Her hearts sell in galleries and design stores throughout New Zealand.

"Even as a child doodling, I would make love hearts. I love the shape of them and what they symbolise. I tell

BUS: Family times in the bus take precedence even over the house renovations, says Brent. From left: Kim, Yasmin, Eden, Tanner and Brent. **DECK:** Kim enjoys the views over a cuppa with sister Suzie Monk. **WALL ART:** *Love Life* by Raglan artist Hayley Hamilton, who Kim describes as an inspiration.

people you can't have enough love in your home and you should have hearts all around to remind you."

Practising what she preaches, Kim has a lounge wall featuring a display of both her hearts and pottery ones made by Raglan ceramic artist Hayley Hamilton. Hayley's *Love Life* creation hangs in the kitchen, with another piece displayed in the master bedroom.

New Zealand art also includes colourful tiki, framed drawings by the Devcich children and a triptych by Tauranga artist Graham Crow. Kim bought the triptych with inheritance money from her nana and says it was appropriate, as one day her three children will each inherit a piece of art. For the moment the triptych is part of a colourful display, which also includes Kim's much-loved collection of Murano glass.

The Devcich house renovation is not over yet – they haven't touched the bathrooms, for example. Future plans include possibly reconfiguring the existing space. There's no need to create additional rooms, as the home is already a comfortable fit for the Devcich family of five – plus what Brent calls "Kim's hamlet".

The family shares their home with pug dog Lola, labrador-border collie-cross Emma, Angus the cat, Gypsy the kitten, two caged rats and fish.

Brent emphasises that they feel no pressure to finish their house upgrade.

"It has never been a consuming thing – and never at the expense of family time. We have had other things to do, like adventures in the bus – and that is good." ❏

Visit www.kimdevcich.co.nz

