

# The New York Times

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SE Great Homes and Destinations  
HD **House Hunting in ... Byron Bay, Australia**  
BY By ALISON GREGOR  
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LP

AN ECO-FRIENDLY MODERN HOME ON AUSTRALIA'S EAST COAST

\$5.6 MILLION (6,000,000 AUSTRALIAN DOLLARS)

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Designed by the Australian architect [Peter Stutchbury](#), this four-bedroom home, completed in 2013 in Byron Bay, Australia, is called the Wing House for a sweeping 90-foot overhanging roof. The 4,600-square-foot home, a contemporary design of steel, timber, concrete and glass on four levels that nestles into a verdant hill overlooking the ocean, has a 72-foot lap pool and about 1,600 square feet of outdoor space, including decks and terraces.

The entire structure, designed to be eco-friendly with solar panels and minimally intrusive on the approximately 8,700-square-foot lot, has elements considered groundbreaking in **residential** architecture, said Robert Wild, who owns the house with his wife, Deborah Wild. These elements include the dramatic, winglike roof, made of Danpalon, a synthetic material that filters light and protects a fern garden and an outdoor bath. Several rooms have walls of blackbutt timber paneling, which can be completely opened to the elements, on the eastern side of the home, he said.

A series of exterior steps ascend past the ground-level two-car garage and terraced gardens to the home's second level, which has an open dining and living area and a bedroom with bathroom. There is also a laundry room, gym and outdoor bath and shower, along with a spacious deck and terrace. The third level has an open kitchen, dining and living area, as well as the master bedroom with a bathroom and a third bedroom or study with a built-in daybed. There are also several decks and a lap pool at this level. Ascending from the kitchen area is a set of steps to a loft bedroom with a built-in daybed.

The core of the home is a thick wall of concrete, but most walls are either floor-to-ceiling sliding glass doors or blackbutt paneling that can be propped open. "We wanted to use materials that could stand the test of time and have an organic feel to them," Mr. Wild said. "And basically when you're inside the living space, it feels like you're actually outside, because there is so much glass."

The home, which requires no air-conditioning, is kept warm with a hydronic heating system in the concrete slab. Most flooring is concrete or blackbutt timber, while tallowwood is used for decks. A Finnish plywood called Wisa provides durable aubergine countertops in the kitchen and complements the blackbutt throughout the house, Mr. Wild said. Appliances are by the German appliance maker Miele, while bathrooms and the lap pool are tiled in a natural gray stone quarried in Bedonia, Italy. The furniture, which is Danish, is not included in the asking price, but is negotiable, he added.

With about 5,600 residents, Byron Bay, about two hours south of Brisbane and about a 10-hour drive north from Sydney, is a popular tourist destination in eastern Australia and a haven for surfers. The town, the most easterly on Australia's coast, draws tourists and celebrities with its subtropical climate, natural attractions, festivals and restaurants. Wing House abuts parkland in a wealthy community on Wategos Beach near the Cape Byron Lighthouse. Arakwal National **Park** and Cape Byron Marine **Park** are steps away. Byron Bay is about 45 minutes to Gold Coast International Airport.

MARKET OVERVIEW

Throughout Australia, home prices are up from a year ago, particularly in cities such as Sydney and Melbourne, according to a March report compiled by [Propell National Valuers](#). Home prices were up 15 percent in Sydney and 10.3 percent in Melbourne, while most of the rest of the country saw more modest gains, averaging closer to 4 or 4.5 percent, according to the report.

The Byron Bay area's luxury home market, which suffered from the global real **estate** crisis with price drops of as much as 30 percent around 2009, is currently enjoying the highest sales volume it has seen in the past five years, said Nicolette van Wijngaarden, a managing director with Unique Estates, based in Byron Bay, which has this listing.

"Everything that is within 20 to 30 minutes of Byron Bay, in the Byron Bay hinterland, on the beach, is in demand," she said. "Prices are starting to come back."

Almost 500 miles north of Sydney in northern New South Wales, Byron Bay is geographically closer to Brisbane in Queensland, which saw much more modest home price gains over the last year at 3.2 percent. Home prices in Byron Bay can vary widely based on location and quality, but a good guide is 3,000 to 10,000 Australian dollars per square meter, or about \$260 to \$860 per square foot, Ms. Wijngaarden said.

#### WHO BUYS IN BYRON BAY

Byron Bay sees foreign home buyers from around the globe, including the United States, England and Germany, Ms. Wijngaarden said. **Hong Kong**-based expatriates from countries such as the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom and other European countries have been in the market in large numbers of late, she said.

#### BUYING BASICS

To discourage **residential** real **estate** speculation, foreign buyers in Australia require permission from the Foreign Investment Review **Board** for all **property purchases**, agents said. Foreigners without a residency permit are prohibited from buying resale homes, though they can **buy** new-development properties, properties off-plan or vacant land with **board** approval.

A lawyer is generally hired for home sales, which typically costs 2,000 to 3,000 Australian dollars per **transaction**, though that can be more expensive for more complex **transactions**, Ms. Wijngaarden said. Stamp duty varies by state and is based on a sliding scale depending on the **purchase** price. The stamp duty on the Wing House, which is seeking sales offers of more than 6 million Australian dollars, will be about 5 percent, she said.

#### WEB SITES

Foreign Investment Review **Board**: [firb.gov.au](http://firb.gov.au)

Official Australian tourism website: [australia.com](http://australia.com)

Byron Bay Visitor Center **site**: [visitbyronbay.com](http://visitbyronbay.com)

Byron Shire Council: [byron.nsw.gov.au](http://byron.nsw.gov.au)

#### LANGUAGES AND CURRENCY

English; Australian dollar (1 Australian dollar = \$0.93)

#### TAXES AND FEES

Council taxes, paid to the local government, are 7,544 Australian dollars a year. Water and sewer rates are about 362 Australian dollars a year.

#### CONTACT

Nicolette van Wijngaarden, Unique Estates, 011-61-2-6684-8266, [Uniqueestates.com.au](http://Uniqueestates.com.au)

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