

The Kiwi bach: a thing of the past?

③ “Bach.” Even the word is iconically Kiwi. Mum grew up spending summers in a bach that was little more than a shed, bathing in the river down the back of the section and getting lost in the surf three times a day. Now a trip to the beach seems to be just an opportunity to parade around in too-short shorts, jandals designed by Trelisse Cooper, and cruise around the surf shops drinking iced coffee checking out cute guys. ① Of course, if that begins to bore you then there’s always the wide screen and bean bags to retreat to, complete with SKY HD and microwave popcorn of course. So much for the old days of Monopoly and mussel fritters. The old days when the décor consisted of decrepit, mismatched furniture, just pausing before its final resting place at the tip, and knick knacks made by mum in technicraft classes at ③ intermediate.

These days our coastlines are eclipsed by blocks of towering concrete inset with black cedar features, bi-folding glass doors to create that indoor-outdoor flow, glass balastrades, landscaped terraces of yuccas and carex grasses, double garage, four bedrooms, each with their queen bed and two complete with en-suites. ② But you know, every time we bowl down a nice little bach we’re destroying part of our culture, a culture which can be seen in the simplicity of the Kiwi bach, the picnic umbrella, boiled eggs and burnt sossies with the last of the Wattie’s tomato sauce squeezed over them. ②

And when we lose our baches, we’re also going to lose our stories. There’s that taped up window that Steve put a cricket ball through, the wall in the laundry with everyone’s height measured on it. There’s that wobbly brick where Kathie stubbed her toe when she four, that wonky latch on the downstairs door where Jen broke in after she hitch hiked all the way from Hamilton. There’s the pile of jigsaw puzzles, each with at least three pieces missing after ③ Josh played ‘pickup 2000’ with them all. There are stories in our baches, stories that often ④ don’t have relevance at home in the city. The more we lose our kiwi bach, the more we lose our memories —and the more memories we lose, the more we lose ourselves. We sacrifice memories of ourselves and our families for home theatre systems and Venetian Shutters. For ③ ④ internal access garaging and limited collection prints on the walls. What’s the point? Hasn’t it always been drummed into us by grandparents and nostalgic teachers that we have to know ⑤ our past to build our future? And yet here we are in the twenty first century tearing down our pasts and building boring futures!

And what about little kids today? What about their memories? I don’t know about you but for me, going away to the beach means freedom. But uptight modern baches constrict that, just like uptight modern houses do. So where’s the holiday? There’s not a lot of fun in eating ice blocks over the sink while everyone else plays ‘Go Fish’ because Mum doesn’t want pink fingerprints on the couches. This is why we need old, falling down baches. I mean sure, Mum has a point, but wouldn’t it be easier for everyone if we bunged in old brown polyester couch, already dotted with tomato sauce and Fanta and could just sit back and relax? I don’t know many people who consider scrubbing down white furniture a holiday. ③ It’s a shame because going to the bach used to be a Kiwi kid golden memory. Too bad it’s going to disappear.

Just like our baches.