

HOME AWAY FROM HOME

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Best known for its folk festival, Port Fairy is a pretty, character-filled fishing town with heritage buildings, picturesque riverside wharves, wild beaches, bracing walks, good restaurants and Drift House, a design-inspired retreat.

The folks at this award-winning boutique hotel are not the type to rest on their laurels. Owners John Watkinson and Colleen Guiney spent last year's lockdown sprucing up their retreat. They remodelled one of the suites and are now tackling another one.

The pair created this beautiful B&B eight years ago, working with Melbourne architects Multiplicity to transform the original 19th-century bluestone house and add a glass and steel extension. Two years ago, they took over the Edwardian cottage next door, crafting another unique sanctuary and adding a glass-walled salon in the garden where people can meet and eat.

For guilt-free relaxation

In contrast to its heritage facade, the great attractions of Drift House are the unexpected and constantly surprising contemporary interiors. Cocooned in a wealth of creative detail, the rooms are a sanctuary from the world outside.

"We wanted to create something that gave everybody an opportunity to stay in a building designed by a leading architect," Watkinson says.

Each of the six suites is different. Using an interesting mix of materials – timber, tiles and steel – the rooms are softened with colourful fabrics

and throws. Suite four is a light-filled, first-floor room in the extension to the main house where perforated metal louvres can be adjusted to suit the light. A strip of the original bluestone refers to the past, and the carpet-covered door and quirky handle make for a complete contrast.

Staying here is fun with clever doors that are like pieces of a puzzle. Splash around in the bright blue-mosaic-tiled open bathroom with an indulgent bath or crash out in front of the giant hidden projection screen.

The urge to touch everything is strong, from the corded light switches to the furry door. A window seat to look into the garden is next on the agenda here, Watkinson says.

Recently refreshed with the guidance of Multiplicity, suite two now has a huge skylight that is perfect for star-gazing. Interestingly, although suite six is an accessible suite (most guests don't notice), no compromise was made on the beauty or design, he says.