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The Newlands house was constructed to withstand severe weather.

Modern love

Steve Pendrous is completely smitten with his low-maintenance home and its amazing views. Pictures by **Craig Simcox**.

ANN PACKER

"WHERE else in the world could I buy a plot of land and build a house that has views like this?" asks Steve Pendrous. Just three months out from Britain, he bought a section in the newest developed part of Newlands and 2½ years later it's home. Granted, it took considerably longer than the nine months he thought it would take — blame the weather and the architect's complex plan for delays with permits — but globetrotter Steve, who works in NZ Post's marketing department, is completely smitten with his low-maintenance home and has no intention of moving again.

He's never built before — "you don't in Britain" — and thinks this three-level house is perhaps a bit big for a man on his own, but the views, even on the wildest day, are spectacular from almost every room and his son, Mason, 8, enjoys having not only a room of his own, but a completely empty spare room for his friends to play in when he visits from Tauranga.

Award-winning architect Davor Mikulcic, a Croatian immigrant who now works much of the time in Australia, has designed several other homes in this part of Newlands, on streets that sweep down ridges between bushy reserves toward the harbour. Maximising views while avoiding too many glimpses of neighbouring houses has been done by angling walls and adding windbreaks to the decks on every level, which also protects the house from most winds.

The view from the asymmetric kitchen sinkbench — and Steve's study, next to his bedroom on the floor above — is toward the Petone wharf, while the TV room looks to Lambton Harbour.

Frustration at not seeing a pod of orcas in detail had Steve searching the Internet for a telescope. His Jiehe model has delighted him with close-ups of a pod of 150 dolphins recently, though Mason, who is into the planets and stars, prefers to watch the night sky through the versatile lenses.

"The weather here is quite severe," says Steve. "If you don't build a house to suit the elements it's going to blow away." But this house is stoutly built of concrete and steel, with weatherproofed Titan boards confidently expected to survive at least 10 out of their 15 guaranteed years. Double glazing withstands the most extreme winds and also minimises wind noise.

> **Double glazing withstands the most extreme winds and also minimises wind noise.**

Steve is thrilled with his kitchen, made and fitted by Hamish Noble of Upper Hutt firm Noble Kitchens, who has worked on other Mikulcic houses, including the Blundell house in Silverstream, which won a Resene award last year. Every detail is thought through, particularly where angled walls result in odd corners — including deep triangular drawers slotted in to maximise space on the end of the custom-made granite bench. All the appliances are Bosch — the induction hob, chosen for safety with visiting children in mind, a handsome stainless-steel fridge-freezer, complete with

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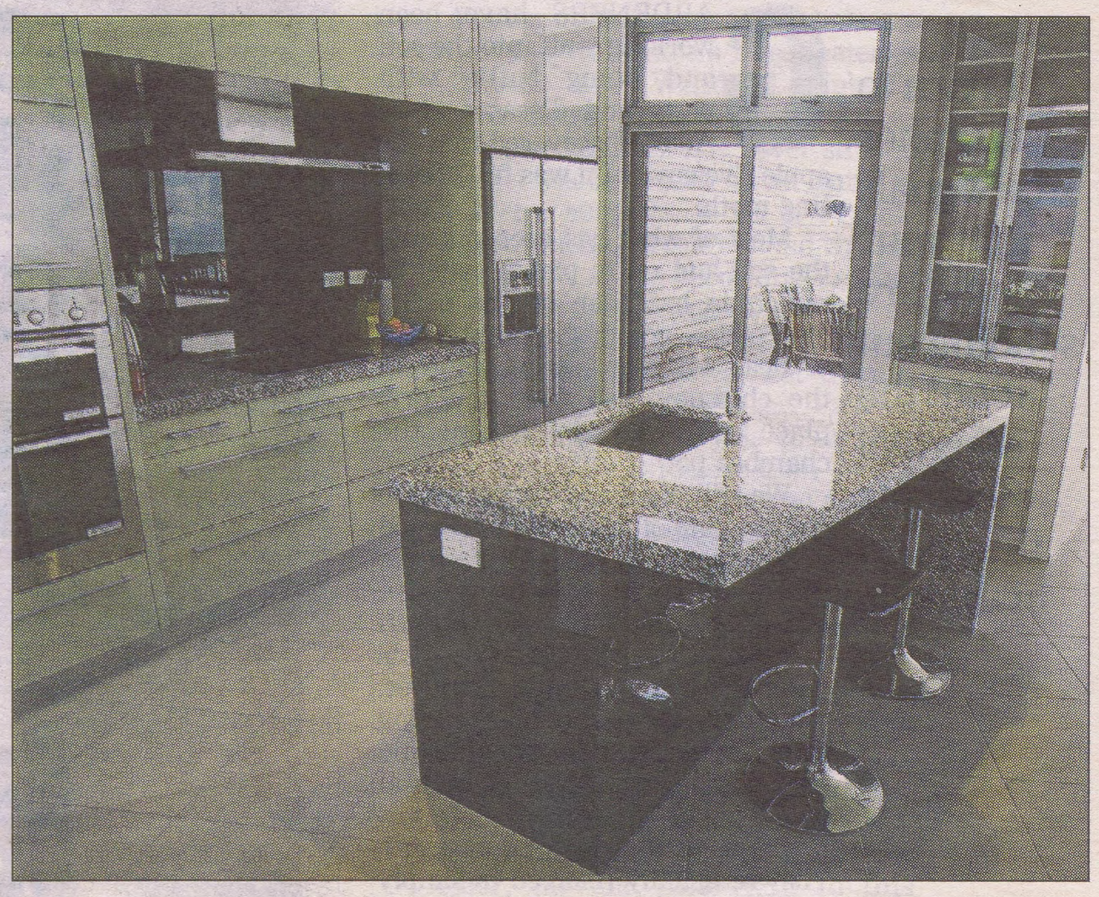
The American oak table and chairs were handcarved by Amish craftspeople in the United States.

The Jiehe telescope is useful not only for star-gazing, but also for spying on pods of orcas and dolphins in the harbour.



The low-maintenance kitchen includes a granite-topped island.

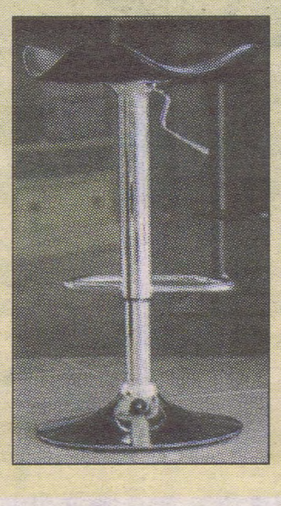
MORE ABOUT

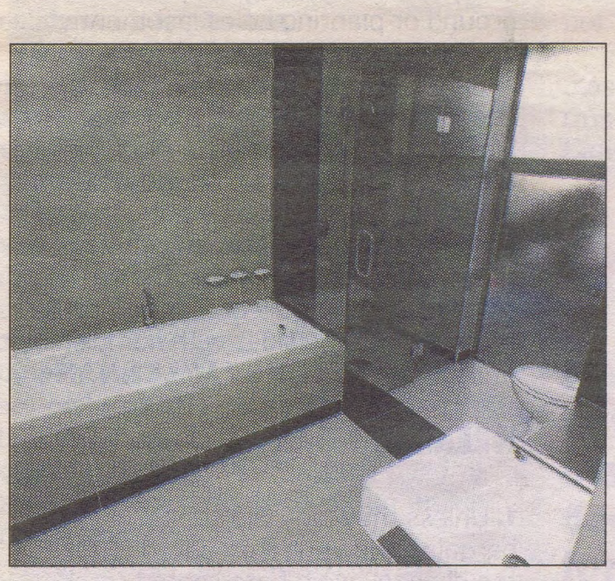
Trethewey Stone, 230 Cambridge Tce, Naenae, Lower Hutt, custom-made Steve's granite bench, (04) 567 5198, trethewey.co.nz.

Leather and chrome bar stools come from Harvey Norman, Wellington store, 77-87 Tory St, (04) 381 4250. harveynorman.co.nz

Steve found his **Jiehe telescope**, which works for landscape as well as astronomical viewing, on-line at Trade Me. trademe.co.nz

Check out other furniture by **Amish Originals** at amishoriginals.net





The bathrooms have double-size showers.

ice-maker, and the dishwasher. The most dramatic element is the central staircase, which has a 1500-kilogram steel core with kwila treads individually "handcarved" by the builder. The angled balustrade is of toughened glass.

A big man himself, Steve made sure the bathrooms were not skimpy. Showers in the master ensuite — on the top floor — and guest bathroom on the lower floor, are double width.

Moving from the other side of the world, Steve brought with him a special dining suite commissioned from Amish Originals in Virginia, in the United States — handcarved in solid oak with distinctive animal claw feet, it had been delivered to him in Britain completely encased in plastic foam. And though he knows it doesn't go with the more contemporary style of his home, it's too precious not to use.

Native planting takes into account the harsh conditions with flaxes, grasses, pittosporums and cabbage trees — but no grass — among judiciously placed rocks from a local quarry ("it cost far more to transport them than buy them"). Below the house, manuka is already springing up through gorse where the second-growth bush was cut back during subdivision.

Though Steve came here initially to be close to his son, his lifestyle now is much more balanced than the one he was leading when working for multinationals, in Britain, the US and South Africa. "I've lived around the world, but I'm settled here after 3½ years. New Zealand's the best country in the world."

Each staircase tread was individually carved to fit.

Angled walls and windbreaks protect the decks on every level.

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