



UPSTATE FUNK

RHIANNON BATTEN takes a look around *The Barn in Tivoli*, a rustic retreat that's a hit with city dwellers

With its timber floorboards and Huck Finn-style kitchen, *The Barn in Tivoli*, in upstate New York's Hudson Valley, is as far as you can get from the concrete showpieces of Brasilia. Yet Oscar Niemeyer's modernist masterpieces in Brazil's federal capital were the inspiration for this rustic holiday home. Co-owner Bruna De Araujo grew up in the city, and says its architectural landscape instilled in her an appreciation for design.

'I've always loved design,' she says. 'As a child, I used to decorate my shelves with little scenes.' And, although it was a stint at film school that first brought her to New York City, 'my love of film was the image, the telling of a story through visual objects'.

This passion has been put to good use at the Barn, which is Bruna's 'little stage. I'm always changing things around. It's like a playground for me.'

Not least when friends and family visit and Bruna reclaims the Barn. It's an ideal space for gatherings. Upstairs are bedrooms and a bathroom as well as a living area and library. Downstairs is a second bathroom and an open-plan kitchen and dining area with a wood-burning stove, piano and day bed. Next to the kitchen are French windows that open onto a deck and a fire pit. Below that, in a small wooded area, is a creek. 'I call the space from the kitchen to the



BRUNA AND LUCA, SIX, PICK STRAWBERRIES IN THEIR GROUNDS

HERITAGE SITE
Above: while the barn's interiors have been beautifully upgraded, the building's 'bones' are still in place

BACK TO NATURE

Clockwise from top left: one of the tranquil bathrooms; the cosy living room; the deck, with outdoor shower; a rustic bedroom; a skull over the mantelpiece makes a striking focal point; magical fairy lights illuminate the deck



THE LOWDOWN

GETTING THERE

Virgin flies from London to New York from £772 return (virgin-atlantic.com). Rhinecliff, 10 minutes' drive from Tivoli, can be reached by train in 1 hour 40 minutes from New York's Penn Station. Return fares start at £40 (amtrak.com).

HOW MUCH?

From £1,890 per week. Sleeps eight (airbnb.co.uk).

creek the entertaining corridor,' says Bruna. 'The kids can be playing in the yard while the mamas are in the kitchen. The pappas are running the fire pit and watching the children. Everybody is within reach.'

Bruna and her husband, Andrew Personette, first visited the Barn 10 years ago when its previous owner was renting it. 'We met when we were both living in New York,' says Bruna. 'When we started dating, a friend said, "I've found this great place. Let's go upstate for a week." I'd never been upstate, and when we got here it was like, "Wow!" Inside, it was very cluttered and a little too dusty, but it was so different and the land was amazing.'

Andrew returned to spend a winter at the Barn, doing some work for the owner and working out a

career move from fashion to furniture design and interiors (he now runs EcoSystems, which specialises in sustainable design and building). In 2012, when the owner decided to sell the Barn, Andrew and Bruna saw a chance to embrace a different lifestyle and bought it.

By then they had a son, Luca, now six, and were seeking a change of pace. 'I'd made films for a long time but when I got pregnant, I stopped,' says Bruna. 'Everything changes when you have a child. For me, it was such a huge deal, I wanted to pause everything to do it.'

Conveniently, the Barn came with an adjacent house in which the family could live. 'We bought the Barn furnished, so spent the first month de-cluttering,' says Bruna. 'We then fixed the large rolling barn door and installed a front door where it'd been boarded up.

More recently, we added a second bathroom and entrance space and upgraded the kitchen, but the Barn's bones are original.'

Larger structural work – done by Andrew with the help of two local woodworkers, a business partner and his father, a master builder – stretched only so far as levelling the ground floor and switching the plumbing system to one that could cope with the freezing winters.

'We really wanted to enhance the outdoor "rooms" the previous owner had started, so you have different places to hang out. First, we built a 12-person cedar picnic table by the pond, then a deck with a spacious outdoor shower. We upgraded the garden's three fire pits and added benches made from a massive red oak that had fallen on the property,' says Bruna.

'I think of us as DIY thrifters. We hunt for materials and one-offs in barn sales and salvage shops. We don't go to stores or order online. We care about things that will last. That's a big thing for us.'

It's been a fruitful partnership. The Barn has become a popular country retreat among New York's creatives, and many guests have left asking the couple to oversee their own building projects.

It has also been a lifestyle success. 'Luca loves his school and the way of life,' says Bruna. 'We were part of a huge movement of people from the city to Brooklyn and now, as we've all got squished out by price and rowdiness, we've become part of a wave of people moving from Brooklyn to the Hudson Valley. There are lots of other young families here and we're all getting bees and chickens and growing vegetables.'

Rather than child-friendly, Bruna describes the Barn as 'child-amazing'. For the many families who visit from tiny apartments in New York City, it's wonderful to have 4.5 acres of grounds to play in. While some parents will understandably prefer a holiday home with stair-gates and kiddie locks, it's easy to see the appeal of places like the Barn, where children have the freedom to explore and push boundaries.

'We designed with children in mind,' says Bruna. 'There are doors at the top and bottom of the stairs that can be closed when toddlers are in residence. But we have original floorboards that sometimes pop up and there's a wood-burning stove. Many families come with younger children and use it, but it's not a place for the super-sanitised, freaked-out parent. It's for people who want to be in contact with nature.'

It's this simplicity many guests crave. 'I love the Barn's open space, its integration with the environment and the fact we've restored it using high-quality, sustainably sourced materials,' says Bruna. 'I think people see the love that has gone into it. It's in the details and it's palpable.'

THINGS TO DO

TAKE TO THE WATER

Learn to sail on the Hudson River with Captain Jerome of the Tivoli Sailing Company (tivolisailing.com).

STOCK UP ON LOCAL PRODUCE

Montgomery Place Orchards sells everything from corn and peaches to asparagus, honey and apples. Known for its cider, it's also a stop on the Hudson Valley Cider Route (mporchards.com).

ENJOY THE OUTDOORS

Drive 30 minutes east to Lake Taghkanic State Park. In summer, hike, kayak or swim. In winter, go cross-country skiing or sledging (parks.ny.gov).

HAVE A PICNIC

Tuck into a burrito from Bubby's Burrito, a retro trailer café on a farm outside Red Hook (bubbysburritostand.com).

GET A CULTURE FIX

Hire a babysitter and catch a performance at the Fisher Center for Performing Arts in Annandale-on-Hudson (fishcenter.bard.edu).

GET THE LOOK
RECREATE THE BARN AT TIVOLI HOLIDAY VIBE



Catapult, £25, Geoffrey Fisher Design thenewcraftsmen.com



Bench, £395, Psalt Design clippings.com



Mugs, £50, Tivoli Tile Works tivotiltileworks.com



Platter, £108, Gray Works Design etsy.com



Chair, £727, Sawkille sawkille.com



Bison skull wall decoration, £80, Urban Outfitters urbanoutfitters.com/uk



Room spray and pillow mist, £18, Neom neomorganics.com



Bath mat, £250, Catarina Riccabona thenewcraftsmen.com