

\$4.5m
Buy your own private Caribbean island at Little Eden Cay off Nicaragua. The full-time staff are willing to serve you



\$7.9
Paul Hogan may have long since left the building but his former home maintains its star status. The stunning property is about 15km out of Byron Bay



\$7m
Anileka, with the red bunny outdoor artwork, won an architect's award in 2008 and was named Best Property Australia in an international property award



\$2m
This home is on the Spanish island of Ibiza and just a 10-minute walk from the village of San Juan.



\$2.75m
If a temple is the answer to your prayers, this one on 1.2ha at Byron is on the market and includes a traditional Mongolian yurt, a five-bedroom house, a manager's cottage and a hall that holds 300 people

Keeping quiet is the secret

THEY land in Coolangubra and are heading out of the Gold Coast as fast as they can, bound for Byron Bay and the quiet life that they spend the rest of the year only dreaming about.

There is a rich vein of celebrity gold running through this quiet NSW township, dating back more than 20 years when John 'Strop' Cornell, Paul Hogan's sidekick, lived the Aussie dream and built a pub, the Beach Hotel, just across the road from the surf.

Plenty of famous faces followed, and the close-knit locals protected their illustrious visitors' privacy as fiercely as they protect their parking spaces in the central township.

So the likes of actors Russell Crowe and Hugh Jackman; Olivia Newton-John; business high-flyers Richard Branson and finance wizard Mark Bouris; Pete Murray, Paul Hogan and longtime resident, author Di Morrissey, were able to move freely - almost anonymously - buy property, or just sip champagne at Rat's at Wategos on a Sunday without finding their pictures splashed across the next day's papers.

Many, including Cornell and Hogan, have since moved on but plenty more follow from far and wide.

No wonder.

The annual Trip Adviser Travellers' Choice Awards this year saw Byron win the crown in the European travellers' section and finished a creditable third for the best beach and sun destination in the South Pacific region.

Ironically, while not a town to kiss and tell, it was also rated seventh among romance destinations.

Which is a poetic claim to fame for the most eastern point of mainland Australia, a town named in memory of a man who had circumnavigated the world and was grandfather of English poet, Lord Byron.

\$7.9m
Hoges lived here. The estate at Possum Creek has a 150sq m master suite and a dining room that seats 16.



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THE world is her oyster and if she could, Nicolette van Wijngaarden would probably put a For Sale sign on it.

To say the Byron-based agent has had phenomenal success since getting her real estate agent's licence just a year ago would be an understatement.

The Byron resident has the exclusive listing for Paul Hogan's former home, the \$7.9 million Cedar Creek at Possum Creek; is about to list an \$80 million South Pacific island property and has been asked to co-list Tranquility, a \$100 million Lake Tahoe estate owned by American fashion designer Thomas Jacob, founder of the Tommy Hilffier brand.

This month alone her Unique Estates website recorded one million hits.

Here's career born of necessity.

About 18 months ago, frustrated by the lukewarm efforts of agents to sell her partner's \$7.5 million home in the Byron Hinterland, Nicolette agreed to try her hand at moving the magnificent mansion.

It was a house her partner had lovingly designed and built himself over a period of five years, using recycled timbers from the historic Scots College in Warwick so the challenge was a very personal one for Nicolette.

She took more than 400 photographs and entered the seven-bedroom residence on 40 hectares in an international property award, delighted when it won Best Property Australia.

Four months later, she found herself negotiating her first sale with a Gold Coast businessman, taking instructions from her partner who was away in Fiji.

"They asked me how long I'd been selling houses for and I admitted that this

Among those properties is a rambling \$2 million mansion on the Spanish island of Ibiza. She has another island listing, Little Eden Cay, off Nicaragua

was my first contract," says Nicolette. "They said it had been refreshing to deal with someone 'down to earth'."

Previously Nicolette had marketed everything from wine to lawnmowers and plant biotechnology.

But once the champagne cork popped on that first sale there was no looking back.

In the past year, Nicolette has notched up \$50 million in settled sales and has 70 properties worth a total of \$260 million on her books.

"After that first sale, the phone started ringing. Home owners from all around the Byron region with multi-million dollar homes had seen my campaign and wanted me to do the same for them," she says.

"That's when I decided to get my agent's licence and launch Unique Estates."

"Then it was just me. Now we have a team of six handling luxury properties which appeal to an expanding overseas market."

They are looking for lifestyle properties and the Byron region is rich with them.

But Nicolette is also spreading her talents worldwide.

"Many clients have homes in different locations. We list and sell with them wherever they are," she says.

"It's a matter of linking with the local agent in that market."

Among those properties on the website is a rambling \$2 million mansion on the Spanish island of Ibiza.

She has another island listing, Little Eden Cay, off Nicaragua.

In June Unique Estates will host an Australia property showcase in Hong Kong. She recently travelled to the Bahamas checking out properties, and has just returned from an international luxury properties conference in Miami.

Later this year she heads off to the International Property awards in London

where she will represent Asia Pacific.

Nicolette has set her sights - and sites - on the Asia Pacific market, and over to Europe and the US.

Unique Estates just won Best Real Estate Marketing Australia in the Asia Pacific Property awards and Best Real Estate Agency Marketing, Asia Pacific, beating 21 other countries.

You would expect she might be a great source for celebrity gossip, or at least be prepared to name drop.

But Nicolette puts integrity and good old-fashioned manners over all else.

Asked whether she'd had the chance to show former Miss Universe Jennifer Hawkins a few properties when the supermodel was in Byron shopping for a new house recently, Nicolette says she didn't get the opportunity.

She was overseas and, in any case she says, "Even if I had, I wouldn't tell you."

Selling the rich list