

URBIS DRIVE

DRIVE

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URBIS GOES GLIDING IN THE NEW BMW 550I SEDAN.





I WONDERED WHEN IT would happen. Despite the speed glowing as a small hologram in your line of sight as part of the Head Up Display, these BMWs are so smooth that whoopsey, you're a few kilometers over the limit before you hastily take your foot off the accelerator. It was unfortunate timing then, as we drove down a wide industrial road in Onehunga, that a policeman was sitting there, obviously waiting for hapless journalists with 4.4 liters underneath them. You would think the engine would grumble more loudly as you notched up the speed or that there would be more of a shake in the structure, but no. This is smooth driving, akin to gliding.

Ticket in hand, we keep on through Onehunga, set on doing some actual gliding – or to be more exact – hovering. We were heading for Auckland Heliport, designed by Bodie Maxcey of Maxcey Architects. The heliport is a rectangular warehouse space custom-built for Advanced Flight with double height for offices on the northern side, and a hanger with space to hold 12 helicopters. The simplicity of the box and the mid-century-esque signage evoke the glamour of flying and travel from another time.

Fitting for this luxury sedan, we've driven to the heliport with the guise to then take a helicopter up to Omaha to see another architectural marvel. But of course, in this car, the drive to Omaha from Auckland is hardly an arduous journey – the solid 600 Nm of torque makes for fun driving, and the potential of hitting 100 kph from 0 in just 5 seconds makes you feel like a bit of a kingpin.

These helicopters are big toys, but their entertainment doesn't take away the sleek beauty of their glossed back hides. We pull the white BMW alongside. The solidness and length of the car differentiates from every other car on the road, but here, while not entirely dwarfed, it is like seeing one of those diagrams of the food chain with bigger and bigger fish arranged alongside each other. This is transport hierarchy, though the helicopters have some obvious disadvantages that the car doesn't, namely, you can take this car most places without needing to find a landing spot.

Up the coast, our journey takes us, in quick time, to Omaha. Beach front at Omaha is more coy than many other places. The dunes set the houses back off the sea, concealing their decks and sliding doors behind rolling mounds. In this bach designed by Daniell Marshall, is a slight moment of introversion in a place that celebrates architectural bombast. With all the competing new homes, and the bare setting, many a good architect has struggled here. It is then extra credit for Marshall who has designed this large but not overwhelming bach on the edge of Omaha beach. With a palette of textural greys – purply-grey stained cedar, concrete with a rough aggregate, backstops of fibre cement board – he has created a cohesive, sheltered and sculptural building.

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1 Advanced Flight Heliport www.advancedflight.co.nz

2 Omaha Bach www.marshall-architect.co.nz

PREVIOUS SPREAD: All luxury creatures great and small: the BMW 550i Sedan sits alongside a French helicopter. FACING PAGE: Huge sliding doors of translucent material allow the helicopters to move in and out. THIS PAGE, TOP: The Daniel Marshall-designed bach peeks out above to the dunes to look over the water. BELOW: An elegant palette of greys makes this house a success.

