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## CLASSIC RUSTIC STYLE

COZY UP IN HIGH-COUNTRY CABINS, BARNS AND LODGES

# DIAMOND IN THE ROUGH

IN BIG SKY, MONTANA, A RUSTIC-LUXE VACATION HOME CAPTURES THE DRAMA OF ITS UNFORGIVING MOUNTAIN SITE

The house sits on terraces carved out of the steep slope. "When building on a dramatic landscape, you need to be sensitive to the exposure and how you live," architect Larry Pearson says. "You need to think about where to place a patio or a terrace based on the tracking of the sun and wind." The 3,700-square-foot house appears to be one with its surroundings.

STORY BY **ELISABETH A. SULLIVAN** PHOTOGRAPHY BY **AUDREY HALL**

More than 8,000 feet up a rocky slope in Big Sky, Montana, tucked in among sub-alpine fir and lodgepole pines, sits a rustic retreat, its exterior clad in the very materials that surround it. Rough-hewn timber is stacked atop a foundation of indigenous coarse-grained rock, which anchors the home into the scree-prone hillside. It's a contemporary vacation home that's at one with the windswept mountain, but the weathered façade belies the luxurious living afforded within.

"This is a very dramatic location, with commanding views of the Spanish Peaks, and good architecture is about respecting that landscape and harnessing its energy," says architect Larry Pearson, of Bozeman-based Pearson Design Group. "We took a cue from the backcountry cabins in Glacier National Park and built this house out of natural, regional materials. It needed to feel like it's been here forever, like it's part of the landscape." >>

ARCHITECTURE BY **PEARSON DESIGN GROUP**
INTERIOR DESIGN BY **HAVEN INTERIOR DESIGN**
CONSTRUCTION BY **YELLOWSTONE TRADITIONS**

Interior designer Debra Shull balanced the oversized fireplace with a substantial custom sectional sofa; its velvet upholstery is a cozy counterpoint to the rough stone. The custom coffee table is by Yellowstone Traditions. FACING PAGE: The home's weathered façade offers little hint of the luxurious interiors.

Constructing the 3,700-square-foot, ski-in/ski-out home was an architectural and engineering feat, as it required building atop a rocky ridge, where a scree field meets the forest. To lay the foundation, the contractor's team dug down until they hit bedrock, then carved out terraces to create livable outdoor space. "We had to build temporary construction roads—goat trails, in essence—to access the bottom of the house because off of the back patio, the site literally drops down into never-never land," says contractor Ron Adams, principal of Yellowstone Traditions in Bozeman. "It was intense," he continues. "We had to take special precautions to prevent the building materials from rolling down."

Pearson designed the home so that it would respond to the hillside, with multiple levels stepping into and along the slope. He intentionally left the exterior sun-bleached and rustic. "I didn't want to tame the materials. I wanted to let a rock be a rock and a log be a log," he says. "But when you move into the interior, you don't want to feel like you're living in a barn. I thought the wood should be waxed, oiled and sanded, and soft to the touch."

The building materials used inside the house are just as simple as those used outside, but their application is anything but basic. Organic timbers are >>

The crowd-friendly lower level of the home is primed for après-ski entertaining, with a well-stocked wine cellar, dining area, leather club chairs and a large and inviting custom blue sectional sofa. Reclaimed hardwood floors, structural square beams and stripped logs coexist with more refined wood paneling and hand-carved cabinetry, and all have been given a timeworn patina. FACING PAGE: Anchoring the stairway, Pearson designed a sturdy newel post made from the base of a tree, to look, he says, "as if the house was built up around that tree."

"EACH SURFACE INSIDE THE HOUSE HAS BEEN HAND-POLISHED, MAKING IT SMOOTH TO THE TOUCH. YOU'RE NOT GOING TO GET YOUR CLOTHES HUNG UP ON THEM. THAT'S THE TRICK: IT'S RUSTIC, BUT IT HAS TO BE USER-FRIENDLY."

*Ron Adams*

ABOVE: Pearson took a gentler approach to the home's interior details: The wood is waxed, oiled and sanded, making it soft to the touch and giving the interiors textural interest. A cozy reading nook, nicknamed the "Hemingway Hideaway," features a leather campaign chair. RIGHT: The architect intentionally left the exterior of the house sun-bleached and rustic to help tie the structure into the dramatic landscape. The materials were inspired by backcountry cabins in nearby Glacier National Park.

A traditional copper soaking tub gets pride of place in the master bathroom. FACING PAGE: Shull's choices for the interior complement the architectural elements. In this bedroom, layers of texture from a range of fabrics soften the hard edges of stone and wood. The ample bed and built-in seat are cozy counterpoints to the grand stone fireplace.

## *TAKING IN THE VIEW*

Traditionally, glass would not have been a primary material in a rustic cabin, but the views from this 8,000-foot-high perch called for a generous expanse of windows. "The important thing when building a new house in this style is to make it look structurally sound," Pearson says. "Wherever I have large windows, I have hewn columns coming down to the stone base, so you can feel the structure being anchored in its foundation. The windows appear to be captured within this solid structure."

Those hewn columns offer the added bonus of helping to ground the home in its environs, Pearson says. "When you look through the glass, you perceive those vertical lines much as you would the trees in a forest, with the

"ON A ROCKY SITE LIKE THIS, BUILDING WITH STONE IS ALMOST A REQUIREMENT. IT'S IMPORTANT FOR THE HOUSE TO HONOR ITS SURROUNDINGS."

*Larry Pearson*

juxtaposed with more intricate wood treatments, such as a herringbone pattern on ceiling and doors. Reclaimed hardwood floors, structural square beams and stripped logs coexist with more refined wood paneling and hand-carved cabinetry, and all have been given a timeworn patina. The effect is log cabin chic—as if the home had been lovingly renovated over generations.

Interior designer Debra Shull of Bozeman-based Haven Interior Design balanced the cabin's ample wood and substantial stone with furnishings that run the gamut from "quintessential rustic Western" to more streamlined and contemporary pieces. The style spectrum is evident in Shull's eclectic choices for seating, which include a twig chair, a leather campaign chair and velvet-upholstered sofas. Soft textures of leather and velvet recur throughout the house, as does a serene palette of blue and green hues. "The furnishings are quieter to keep the focus on the architecture," she says, "with just a few choice pieces—albeit big pieces—in each room to balance the size of the timbers and the stone."

While this home's exterior may be as rustic as its spectacular setting, nearly everything within it, from handcrafted finishes to plush furnishings, has been painstakingly refined. The finished house is raw, weathered and organic, yet patinated and polished with care—a pitch-perfect mountaintop retreat.

*more* For a guide to this home's products and pros, visit mountainliving.com/diamondintherough.

In the guest bedroom, a Moroccan rug, twig chair and other ethnic touches mix with traditional drapes on the contemporary four-poster bed. Each of the home's three bedrooms is a suite, complete with a sitting area and private bathroom. FACING PAGE, TOP: The home is clad in cedar shingles, sun-bleached timber and local stone. FACING PAGE, BOTTOM: A guest bathroom features an ebonized vanity hand-carved by Yellowstone Traditions.