



For one couple, seclusion is what high-country living is all about

BACKCOUNTRY

≈ *Amazing Views* “With an elevation of 10,000 feet-plus, the family compound is an exercise in minimalism designed with durability and low maintenance in mind. “There was nothing to harvest here,” says architect Paul Bertelli, who relied on building materials from Montana and Colorado.



ABODE

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Living in a remote location at 10,000 feet where howling is an accurate descriptor for the wind and snow depths routinely reach house-size heights isn't for everyone. But for a couple with two grown children who split their time between Maine and Colorado, a small family compound set amid hundreds of acres outside of Telluride was their version of heaven. "My husband and I have been 300 miles north of the Arctic Circle and are very comfortable being in the backcountry," the homeowner says. "Beautiful land in the San Juan Mountains was what we were looking for. We were very fortunate to find this property."

Staunch conservationists, the couple purchased two adjacent parcels, kept 11 acres for their personal building envelope, and donated approximately 500 acres to a local land trust. Their piece of the wilderness secured, the search for an architect led to Bozeman, Montana-based Paul Bertelli of JLF Architects. "We saw one of his houses here and liked how it fit into the surroundings, and we loved his design sensibilities," says the homeowner.

Bertelli spent months studying snow and wind patterns before settling on the optimal site for the main residence, bunkhouse and garage. "It's a very harsh environment, and there were only a few spots where we could place the buildings," he explains. "We tucked them into the edge of a forest where they would be protected and still have great views."

Fashioned from reclaimed timber and siding, stone and steel, the elements were selected to withstand the extreme weather. "The walls look like stacked log, but behind the scenes they are heavily insulated," says Bertelli. "It's a very tight building envelope that can handle being buried under 10 feet of snow."

High-performance windows further control heat loss while introducing a contemporary material into the classic cabin. "The juxtaposition of historic elements with all that gray steel is very powerful,"



≈ *Living Room* A pair of matching chairs upholstered in Edelman sueded buffalo, and a sofa wearing textured chenille, all by Hancock and Moore, supply much of the seating. The fireplace screen and andirons are from Bennett Forgeworks.



≈ *Side View* A stand of old growth aspens provides protection and steel windows supply a level of insulation. "In 200 years, the wood might rot but those windows will still be there," says Bertelli.

≈ *Garage* Even the high-functioning car parking and sports equipment storage space boasts a view. Corrugated metal walls and concrete floors, not shown, are the perfect backdrop materials for wet skis, snowshoes and muddy tires.



A rustic kitchen and dining area with a large window overlooking a snowy mountain range. The kitchen features a wood-burning stove, a sink, and wooden cabinets. The dining table is made of wood and surrounded by black chairs. A large, ornate metal light fixture hangs from the ceiling. The ceiling is made of wood with exposed beams. The floor is made of wood. A patterned rug is on the floor. The window is large and multi-paned, showing a view of snow-capped mountains and a forest.

“WE CAN HIKE RIGHT OUT THE FRONT GATE AND INTO

» *Kitchen* A refurbished wood-burning stove warms an array of antique furnishings and accessories. Everything from the light fixture to the 1890s table and chairs to the authentic Native American runner are from the homeowner's collection.



THE WILDERNESS.”

—THE HOMEOWNER

says Bertelli, noting that throughout the process the homeowner was very hands-on. “The texture, tonality and materials—she picked everything.”

The homeowners also came to the project with a treasure trove of items for outfitting the interiors of the main residence and bunkhouse. “We have an old farmhouse in Maine, and I either had the furniture or found it there,” the homeowner says. “I’ve been collecting Navajo rugs forever, and my mom collected antiques.”

A second set of design skills was added when Stephanie Malsed of Designs West joined the team. With a stated goal of “creating an authentic-looking turn-of-the-century hunting cabin,” Malsed started in the living room with a 1940s hooked rug before adding a twig rocker and vintage chairs with reupholstered cushions. Past and present collide in the kitchen, where a refurbished wood-burning stove and a state-of-the-art Lacanche range face off across an expanse of windows framing views of the Wilson Range. Elsewhere, an old dresser retrofitted with a zinc basin for the powder/guest bathroom and a restored cherrywood four-poster bed in the primary bedroom contribute to the additive decorating concept.

In the bunkhouse, which gets heavy use during hunting season, a combination of traditional and bunk beds reside in a welcoming Americana setting. “The use of red, white and blue is whimsical and understated,” says Malsed, who mixed quilts and vintage furnishings to continue the collected feel.

Looking at the big picture, there’s no question that location was an important consideration—“We can hike right out the front gate and into the wilderness,” enthuses the homeowner—but the architect surmises there is something else going on with the homeowner’s choice of place. “The best architects recognize the personalities of the people they are working for, and this residence is like a comfortable old coat she has had her whole life,” says Bertelli. “It suits her and her family perfectly. ❖



⌘ **Primary Bath** Faucets by Sonoma Forge and metal sinks are set in a vanity with custom painted cabinets. “The idea was to keep things as simple as possible while working with a rustic theme so the top is wood instead of stone,” explains interior designer Stephanie Malsed.

⌘ **Primary Bedroom** A separate entrance provides privacy, and embroidered Pollack fabric brings a pop of color. A custom linen duvetfashioned from Pierre Frey fabric is a luxurious touch in the homespun surroundings. A Native American rug resting on an antique trunk, both from the homeowner’s collection, adds to the room’s layering effect.





» *Primary Bedroom*

An antique flag, plaid curtains by Clarence House and sconces by Wild West Designs enhance the Americana charm. “We wanted it to be fun, and the red, white and blue theme emerged over time,” says Malsed noting the homeowner had several quilts and most of the furnishings.

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