



Though beautifully landscaped, the main entry is almost unassuming. Log trusses and stone pillars support the home's deep overhang and low, varied roofline.

The great room's huge panes of glass, some weighing more than 700 pounds and sandwiched between slits cut into solid cedar columns, offer uninterrupted, panoramic views.





Imagine experiencing the most beautiful, relaxing wilderness of the West—a pristine cobalt-blue lake framed by stately trees and snowcapped peaks that give way to an endless azure sky. Though a bone-chilling wind blows outside, you're warm and content next to a roaring fire enjoying the scene.

You've just described a typical January day at Lazy Bay, a 4,800-square-foot timber home built by High Country Builders in north-west Montana.

Named for the serene area of Whitefish Lake where it's located, Lazy Bay is a hybrid—a construction method that combines conventional stick framing with the majesty of

ABOVE: A parallel-cord truss visually lowers the ceiling height while supporting the weight of the roof. The huge stone above the firebox is so heavy, it took a crane to hoist it into place. In lieu of a traditional mantel, it's the focal point of the hearth.

timbers. The structural beams are larch finished with a dark stain to provide a warm feel. The vertical posts in the great room are the entire trunks of mature cedar trees. "We left the base on the trees," says Walt Landi, owner of High Country Builders. "The trusses are so massive, they would have made standard posts look inconsequential."

The kitchen is a gourmet's dream come true, complete with professional-grade stainless steel appliances, glossy granite countertops and compartmentalized cabinetry that makes excellent use of space.





The tile backsplash's varying color palette pulls together the tones found in the granite and copper countertops and the cabinetry.

The home's timber trusses are supported by massive columns comprised of entire tree trunks with the natural taper left intact.





Lazy Bay takes its name from the still, glassy inlet of Whitefish Lake on which it's located.

Serving as designer and builder, the multitalented Walt planned the house so that every room had views of the lake and mountains. "I put stakes in the ground to orient the house toward the view, and then drew the floorplan that way," he explains. He designed the fireplace to sit off to one side so it wouldn't interfere with the scenery. Once the plans were finalized in a computer program, a 270-degree panorama was revealed.

The construction schedule was aggressive, taking only seven months to build, because

High Country Builders erected the home without a buyer in mind. With everything pre-selected, they were able to stay on their tight timetable. However, there were doubters. "I thought there was no way it would be done on time," confesses Hunter Dominick, owner of Hunter & Co., an interior design firm in Whitefish, Montana. Her firm made the furniture selections and coordinated all of the structural decor inside Lazy Bay, including the hardwood and tile floors, light fixtures, cabinets and stonework.

Success by Design

If pressed to single out one thing that makes this home so spectacular, Walt says it would have to be the great room's windows. The expanses of fixed clear glass tucked between the naturally tapered cedar posts give the illusion of being outdoors. "It was the first time we'd ever done windows like this," Walt says. "People ask me how we did it, but I won't tell!"

The windows bring the outdoors in by their sheer size alone. At a massive 14 by 14 feet and separated by a mullion bar, a lot of engineering

went into the project. Though he's tight-lipped about most of the details, Walt will share one secret: "The mullion bar had to have a curvature built into it so that when we added all 700-pounds of glass on top, it would flatten out and keep the right amount of spacing between the two panes. You can't just throw it up there and say, 'That looks nice.' It takes planning."

Pane-staking Process

Setting the glass was every bit

The dark hues of the master bath's mottled marble countertops and the richly grained cabinetry is brightened by pale gray marble-and-slate tile flooring and brushed nickel hardware.



as complicated as its design. Two cranes were required, and eight men on a scaffold slid it into place. "It was quite a challenge," Walt recalls.

The glass must withstand 100 mph winds and keep the house warm when the mercury dips below zero during typical Montana winters. The glass is an inch thick and is insulated with high-density foam, silicone and chinking, but it's set so deeply within its frame that the sealant is hidden. "There's no visible framework, so it gives the illusion that there are no windows," Walt says. "All you see are the timbers, the stone and the amazing lake view."

Practicality Meets Panache

Lazy Bay uses both radiant heating beneath floors, as well as forced-air heat. "When you have that much glass, you need to stave off the cold air," Walt says. "You won't feel a chill in this house." Once a constant temperature is reached, the furnace doesn't have to work very hard to maintain it. One reason is that the wood and stone

absorb the sun's heat and radiate it back into the home, making it energy efficient as well as gorgeous.

The home's stonework also serves another purpose: Large amounts of glass usually lend a contemporary feel, so the team used a variety of stone to make it feel grounded and homey.

The hearth is a blend of different local stone. "The huge rock above the fireplace must weigh a ton," Walt says. "It had to be craned into place." The colossal freestanding chimney is a towering 45 feet high.

Other materials were selected as much for their durability as for their beauty. The solid alder-wood cabinets were distressed by hand. The countertops and sink are hardy granite or marble, and the kitchen boasts a Wolf range and a Sub-Zero refrigerator—items that aren't merely stylish, but are

among the best, most reliable choices on the market.

Contemporarily Rustic

Walt and his company designed and built Lazy Bay, but Hunter Dominick accentuated its natural beauty—with Walt's help, of course—through its decor. "We presented him with some options," recalls Hunter, "and he went with most of the furnishings we suggested."

For the home's flooring, Hunter's firm used only top-shelf options. The bathrooms' floors are a combination of marble and slate in varying shades of gray laid on the diagonal. The western larch and fir wood floors were circle sawn and left rough, then they were stained black, sanded and stained brown. "They have an antique look, but the

best part is that you don't have to take off your shoes for fear of getting it dirty," Walt explains. "I wanted people to enjoy the house and the lake, not worry about messing up the floor."

When it came to making the final decorative choices for the home, Hunter had another "silent" partner: the windows. "Those windows and the view just outside them had a big say in the decorating process," says Hunter. "It's a major focal point, and it had a lot of impact on what we did." The combination of slate and glass gives the house a contemporary edge while the timber posts and trusses maintain its rustic feel.

Lazy Bay was conceived and built not only as a vacation home, but as an escape from the ordinary. "I wanted whomever bought this place to know they are on a Montana mountainside lake," Walt says. "And I designed character into the house so anyone who comes here would feel that they're someplace special."

Did he succeed? One look through the majestic windows will tell you everything you need to know. ■

Home Details

SQUARE FOOTAGE: 4,800

BUILDER: High Country Builders

TIMBER PRODUCER: Edgewood Log Structures

FOR MORE INFORMATION, SEE FIND IT HERE

ON PAGE 75

