

A Refuge for Relaxation

Nestled in the woods of Quebec, this chalet offers a getaway for a young family, as well as a fantastic space to entertain guests

BY HATTIE KLOTZ

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Soaring windows that span the front of the chalet offer views through the trees toward Lac Sainte-Marie and Lac Fournier. A three-sided fireplace clad in grey granite dominates the space, setting the tone for the layered rustic textures found throughout the house



■ ABOVE: A pair of triple-burnt teak coffee tables offer the perfect spot to rest tired feet

■ BELOW: The soft lights of the chalet glow like a fire in the hearth in the early evening dusk. The entrance for those with skis, poles, and wet boots is to the left side of the house, while the main entrance is on the right

When design duo Dylan O’Keefe and Haley Fiorenza were asked to plot out a ski chalet at Mont Sainte-Marie, the site was a steep, rocky, forested slope on the side of a mountain.

“We scaled the hill, we climbed, we stood in the trees to get an idea of the site,” says O’Keefe. “Then they blasted the rock and we adjusted the orientation of the house and photoshopped the design onto the site to show the clients.”

After that, very little changed. “They were very trusting clients,” says Fiorenza of Lindsay and Harley*, a young couple who work in the fields of mental health and tech respectively. “They were really nice to work with. They stayed the course and didn’t make any major changes.”

The brief was simple: a comfortable, warm chalet that would be good for entertaining. “Our city home is quite contemporary. We went the opposite direction for the chalet,” says Lindsay. “We really wanted it to feel like a refuge in the mountains. We wanted it to have a rustic look and feel, but didn’t want to compromise on luxury.”

“For the interiors, we wanted the materials to have a raw but warm feeling. For example, we chose wood floors that had a lot of character and grooves; we didn’t want anything to feel too polished. Also, I love to cook, and we love to entertain at home, so the kitchen had to be functional and beautiful while still maintaining the cozy, rustic vibe.”

* first name only at homeowners’ request



■ Cowhide chairs around the dining table, reclaimed barn beams, and a wool carpet maintain the muted colour palette while creating visual interest





■ ABOVE: A slightly secluded seating area off the dining room offers a quiet spot for a game of cards. The open concept space was carefully designed to allow the family to feel connected while doing separate activities

■ BELOW: The soaring steel staircase boasts open risers made from six-inch-thick oak. Vintage wooden skis add a fitting and whimsical touch



The kitchen is at the very centre of the home and is the focus of the living area. It features a stunning black-and-brass La Cornue range, an oversized mid-grey quartz countertop atop a chunky wooden base, and rustic accents such as reclaimed barn beams incorporated into the custom-plaster hood vent. A backsplash of white tile laid in a herringbone pattern, Lee Industries cowhide-and-leather counter stools, and simple white farmhouse-inspired cabinets add further layers to the multitude of textures that make the space feel so warm.

Adjacent to the kitchen, the living room boasts soaring two-storey ceilings but the space maintains that cozy vibe thanks to a Paulig rug — it looks like river pebbles but feels like tiny clouds. A pair of triple-burnt black teak square coffee tables impart a contemporary but natural edge. The soft grey Montauk sofa speaks to the towering wall of grey granite that covers the wall of the three-sided wood-burning fireplace, finished with a reclaimed barn beam mantel.

“A stone fireplace was an absolute must, and for me it had to be one with tons of texture,” says Lindsay. “I had to convince my husband to get a wood-burning fireplace, and now we both agree that it was the right call. The smell, sound, and sight of wood burning is the perfect sensory experience in the chalet.”

The designers made sure to incorporate plenty of glass to take advantage of the elevated vantage point. Oversized windows, framed in wood, look out over the surrounding hills and lakes in the distance. “We wanted to ensure that we were able to enjoy the scenery and landscape even when we were indoors,” says Lindsay. “The topography of the land determined

how we placed the house. It’s all about that view!” That view can also be enjoyed from a glass-fronted balcony (outfitted with heaters for the cold months), an outdoor dining area, and a hot tub. “It was a priority for us to be able to enjoy being outside, even in the cold.”

Family bedrooms are contained upstairs — the couple have two young children — while guests enjoy privacy on the entry level. The master bedroom with ensuite bath is decorated in soothing tones of grey, cream, white, and wood. With heated floors, a double-headed steam shower with a built-in bench, a soaker tub, and slightly sloping ceilings, the space is very cozy. Over the bed, a resin antler chandelier alludes to the surrounding nature, and an alpaca carpet (which came with its own hairbrush) is distinctly luxurious. “We wanted everything to feel very cozy, which is why we chose things like the fluffy white carpet in our bedroom, one of my favourite features,” says Lindsay.

■ TOP RIGHT: With a long harvest table and easy access to the deck area, the dining area is the perfect spot for entertaining a crowd

■ MIDDLE RIGHT AND BELOW: The kitchen features a stove from La Cornue, while the island is topped with a quartz countertop and offers plenty of space for mingling





At the entry level, a floating steel-and-wood staircase with six-inch solid treads leads to the living room, dining room, and kitchen. The ski chalet atmosphere is enhanced by decor elements: a pair of vintage wooden skis, as well as a framed ski patroller's jacket that belonged to Harley's grandfather. In another direction, heated polished concrete floors lead to guest bedrooms, the sauna, the cinema, and a coat room with lockers.

There's also an expansive boot room with a wall-mounted boot-drying machine — a must for any ski chalet, as there is nothing worse than putting your feet into a pair of cold, damp ski boots.

The walls on the ground floor are lined with wainscoting made from used scaffold boards imported from England. The effect is rustic but refined and infinitely practical, preventing knicks and scratches from skis, poles, and boots to drywall or plaster work.

When the world shut down in March 2020, the couple found themselves spending more time at Mont Sainte-Marie. "We certainly didn't expect to be living up there during the beginning of the pandemic — that

■ ABOVE LEFT TO RIGHT: Lower-level guest bedrooms boast views out over the surrounding hills; the main-floor powder room features wallpaper by Cole and Son and a rustic farmhouse sink from Preston Hardware; the office space was put to good use at the beginning of the pandemic when the owners found themselves in lockdown here

■ BELOW: Another view of the steel staircase, which leads from the main entrance to the upper-level bedrooms. The stone wall makes an grand impression



was a surprise! But we were grateful to have that home, and even more grateful that we had an office to work from," says Lindsay. These days, the chalet is less about work and more about family fun, détente, and the great outdoors.

"What I love most about the chalet is how relaxed I feel when I am there," says Lindsay. "My favourite space is the lounge area next to the three-sided fireplace. It's perfect for morning coffee or a cocktail après ski. I also love how the main floor is completely open; we can all be there together, yet we don't feel on top of each other." ●

■ ABOVE: The muted palette in the master bedroom makes for a serene atmosphere. A luxuriously soft alpaca rug underfoot and a resin antler chandelier offer contrasting textures and a nod to nature

■ BELOW: The master bathroom is a great place to relax after a long day playing in the snow; a soaker tub and separate steam shower with dual heads are sure to help with sore muscles