

Elegance AT 7,000 FEET

A CABIN IN THE WASATCH RANGE RISES ABOVE
ITS ROUGH-HEWN ROOTS TO BECOME
A REFINED YEAR-ROUND HOME



WRITTEN BY SALLY FINDER WEEPIE PHOTOGRAPHY BY AUDREY HALL





Living large isn't always a good thing. Rooms sprawling as wide as the Western range, ceilings soaring like craggy peaks, and peeled-log posts stretching up like Ponderosa pines once made this Park City, Utah, house feel less like a comfortable home and more like "a log cabin on steroids," homeowner Greg Conroy says.

He and wife Karen bought the place anyway. They saw something in it, something more than its promise of fresh-powder skiing right outside the back door. Underneath the hulking river rock and monotone blond wood, they caught a glimpse of what could be: their own empty-nester Eden. "We had the courage to buy a house we didn't like and turn it into a home we love," Greg says.

To lead their renovation odyssey, the couple brought on Park City/Bozeman, Montana-based JLF Design Build.

"Everything about the house was large," JLF partner Jake Scott says. "While it would feel amazing for a big party, the space just wasn't right for two people. But it didn't make sense to tear down the house. Instead, we looked for ways to make it cozier, to make it feel comfortable for a couple."

The right-sizing mission touched almost everything except the home's roofline and original footprint. JLF added walls to





help cavernous main-floor rooms feel more intimate, swapped ponderous interior log columns for clean-lined steel, and installed steel-frame windows and doors to shower once-cavelike spaces with rays of warm sunlight and views of nature.

In the living room, 1980s-era ceiling timbers got the ax in favor of steel trusses that layer in architectural interest as they visually reduce the volume of the sky-high space. The darkly dramatic beams find their perfect complement in a new plank ceiling that celebrates a classic mountain design element—natural wood—while updating it with an earthy gray stain.

Similarly, the fireplace facelift features another traditional material, stone, as it sheds weighty, dated river rock in favor of a handsome regional fieldstone, Montana moss rock.

Exterior vignettes Steel columns, regional fieldstone, and metal wainscoting replaced the original facade of timber logs and river rock, while bonderized metal—treated to shrug off snow and corrosion—took the place of asphalt shake shingles. A dark gray stain gives live-edge siding a current aesthetic that jibes with steel-frame doors on the front and rear entries. Native plantings bring the beauty of the surrounding landscape poolside. **Previous pages** A front-yard patio outside the glass-walled dining room beckons diners to enjoy dessert beside the fire. In the living room, a Hammerton Studio chandelier crowns a comfortable seating area where rugged meets refined.





Dining room Glass and steel juxtapose tactile textiles in the formal dining space, which now affords enviable views, thanks to walls of fully retractable doors and windows. A fine art photograph of a Berlin firehouse adds to the interplay of color and light.





Kitchen The homeowners spent 24 years in London and wanted their kitchen to reflect a European aesthetic. "It's small enough to feel comfortable but big enough that people can congregate around the islands," Greg Conroy says. "I like the restrained palette and the juxtaposition of raw steel, glass, and leathered stone." **Breakfast area** Tucked outside the work zone, a breakfast nook with a Platner table and Danish rosewood chairs serves up backyard views along with morning coffee.

Primary suite Textural elements converge in the primary bedroom, which keeps its cozy, rustic charm while welcoming elements of modernity. Corten steel, which weathers and forms a beautiful and protective rust patina with age, forms the mantel for the newly restrained fireplace. Quartzite tile and wainscoting ensure soaks in the freestanding tub are worry-free.





The living room, like the homeowners, isn't all rugged and rustic, however. A refined seating area anchored by a pair of Christian Liaigre sofas shows the value of yin and yang.

To compound the home's new outlook, Jake and his team orchestrated perhaps their most ingenious move: a room flip. The original kitchen and dining room swapped places, putting the couple's cooking and hangout space at the heart of the home while giving the dining room idyllic front-yard views and easy access to a new firepit. Both the interior and exterior walls of the dining room are now glass—windows and doors that accordion-fold to open completely—bringing the outside in and allowing sight lines through the entire house and to the outdoor spaces beyond.

"That was the single best architectural trick," Greg says. "If I'm in the pool, I can look through the house, all the way to the mountains and the red sky at sunset. It's pretty special."

Carrying the home's renovation outdoors gave the couple, who initially just dreamed of winter fun, an alfresco oasis of gathering, dining, relaxation, and play spaces that makes even the most avid skier dream of an endless summer.

"My wife really wanted a pool," Greg says. "She swims, and she thought a pool also would be a magnet for our daughter. I was hesitant though. I didn't want to look at a swimming pool cover all winter."

The design team's solution? Cut a pool into the hill behind the house. It's just steps from the home's back door, yet it's hidden by a retaining wall that landscape architect Jim Verdone





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cloaked with eye-appealing wood planks and a row of soothing little waterfalls. “We enjoy hosting dinner parties out there in the backyard during the summer, with a big table set up in the outdoor dining area or just four of us gathered around the firepit,” Greg says. “Uplighting illuminates the aspen trees, and it really is lovely.”

When friends have gone home for the evening—or retired to guest spaces on the home’s upper level—Greg and Karen can relax in their newly cozy primary suite. “It was as voluminous as the other parts of the house,” Jake says. “We dropped the 18-foot ceilings to 10 feet in the bathroom, and we added doors and windows and lightened materials to warm up the space.”

Like the living room, the bedroom got a fireplace redo that replaced river rock with Montana moss rock and shrunk the hearth extension so it no longer impolitely juts into the room. A gray suede wallcovering under a classic tongue-and-groove ceiling works with nubby, organic textiles to complete the cocooning mood.

Taj Mahal quartzite stars in the bathroom, covering the floor in large-format tiles, serving as elegant wainscoting around the freestanding tub, and topping vanity counters in pleasingly chunky slabs.

“Here and throughout the house, we lightened up the massiveness of the architecture and modernized the materials and the finishes,” Jake says. “It’s still a house in the mountain tradition, but now it has timelessness. It’s a classic for today.”

Architecture/design/build: JLF Design Build—JLF Architects + Big-D Signature

Landscape architect: Verdone Landscape Architects

Primary bathroom Thick quartzite gives countertops luxurious heft. **Wine room** The European-style wine cellar really is in the cellar—with storage cleverly cut into unfinished concrete. **Powder room** A powder space tucks into a cubby next to a built-in bench. **Home gym** Greg kept adding to his workout spot during the pandemic—now the space rivals any fitness center.

