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## 3 Rustic Retreats


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Fluted western red cedar logs support the front (below) and rear (right) roof overhangs and create a bold profile equal to the home's Big Sky setting. The overhangs protect the logs from the sun, which is a harsh constant at the home's 8,500-foot elevation.



# SILVER *Linings* Turn to GOLD

*Setbacks result in a Montana home that has everything.*

STORY BY TERESA L. WOLFF | PHOTOS BY ROGER WADE  
STYLING BY DEBRA GRAHL



**H**al and Jan Smith hit a few bumps on the path to owning their log home. But they bounced back to wind up with a place that was better than their dreams.

First, they wanted to build in Jackson Hole, Wyoming, and searched for property there for more than 10 years, only to watch land prices soar out of their price range. Frustrated, they set their sights elsewhere.

Next, they saw an ad for a log cabin near Big Sky, Montana. The price fit their budget, so they took a road trip to check it out. Unfortunately, the cabin was so affordable because it was in deplorable condition.

Despite their disappointment, they fell in love with Big Sky's soaring Gallatin and Madison mountain ranges. As they explored the area further, a log home being built by Blue Ribbon Builders caught their eye. They contacted Blue Ribbon's owners, Doug and JoDean Bing, toured several of the company's custom homes and liked what they saw. The Bings happened to have a 20-acre parcel of land that they were willing to sell. They'd intended building there themselves but decided it wasn't suitable for a year-round residence as it had limited inaccessibility in the winter. All of the geological surveys had been completed,

**OPPOSITE:** A massive American buffalo head graces the faux stone wood-burning fireplace in the great room. A western red cedar log forms the mantel, while a slab of Colorado red stone is the ideal hearth bench. The matching leather chairs and ottomans are not only comfortable, but also big enough to match the scale of the logs and the fireplace.

**ABOVE:** Homeowner Jan Smith admired the handmade inlaid turquoise table with a carved rope edge but was sure it cost too much. When husband Hal saw it, though, he proclaimed it a must-have. Their Hungarian china from Europe2U adds the finishing touch.

and Doug had identified two ideal spots for construction.

A third bump came after viewing the property on the front side of Beehive Basin. Deep snow made the roads impassable, so they stood looking across the expansive basin at a stand of trees the Realtor told them was their land. "When we actually were able to drive into the property that spring, we discovered we hadn't bought the part with the stand of trees," Jan recalls. "We were higher up on the ridge." The silver lining this time was panoramic views of the surrounding mountain ranges.

Facing smooth sailing at last, Jan and Hal set about drawing up plans for their





**LEFT:** Gracefully arching large-diameter logs distinguish the dining room. The hickory chairs weigh 60-plus pounds each, but the Smiths say they're extremely comfortable. The travertine tile floor grounds and complements the logs. Patio doors open to the eating area of the deck.

**OPPOSITE:** The kitchen island, built of distressed pecan, is topped by a slab of log and features the same rough-edged granite countertops used over the perimeter cabinets. The Smiths eliminated some upper cabinets to allow installation of a large picture window with divided-light transom so they could enjoy a view of Wilson Peak in the Madison Range.

The kitchen received special attention. "Hal and our son are in the restaurant business, and so cooking is a family affair," Jan says. "I designed the kitchen so there is a 6-foot walkway between the perimeter cabinets and the island, so everyone who wants to be in the kitchen can do so without feeling cramped." Although they have yet to accomplish this feat at the Big Sky cabin, the Smiths often entertain upwards of 30 people at a time at their Florida home. In planning for this eventuality, they included a six-burner gas stove top, a double oven, a microwave-convection oven and a side-by-side refrigerator-freezer. An appliance garage helps keep the kitchen free of clutter.

Decorating the home fell within Jan's purview. She planned the color schemes of each room around quilts made by family friend Mardell Rogerson, choosing a theme for each of the bedrooms and added accents to develop the motif. She also incorporated antiques wherever they fit. Custom furniture by Big Horn Custom Woodworks and antler lamps and chandeliers by Fish's Antler Art add the finishing touches.

A fifth bump occurred when the time came to attach the light fixtures Hal and Jan had purchased for over the master bathroom vanity. They discovered the log below the wiring port extended too far to allow the light to reach the surface below. Jan took her problem to Fish Fisher and asked him to fashion mirrors with suede-wrapped frames to attach the fixtures to. Jan's design was such a hit that many of Fish's customers saw his creation and asked that he replicate it for their own homes.

An important consideration in furnishing the home was the couple's miniature schnauzers and miniature dachshunds. It is not uncommon for at least



cabin, working with Doug Bing and the designers at Pioneer Log Homes of British Columbia, which would be providing their logs. Jan's first undergraduate degree, before she embarked on a career in nursing, was in interior design, so she eagerly collaborated with Blue Ribbon Builders and Pioneer Log Homes to achieve the room layout she and Hal desired.

A fourth bump occurred when the Smiths decided they wanted their western red cedar logs as large as 3 feet in diameter. Doug informed them that to prevent the home from looking like a tunnel, they would need to increase the home's square footage. The silver lining is a breathtaking home that resembles sculpture.

The 4,000-square-foot retreat, di-

vided into the main level and a walkout basement, is laid out to embrace openness. "One of the requirements for this home was that it would have a minimum number of interior walls," Jan explains. "Even in the master bedroom suite, the only door is for the commode. Otherwise we were able to delineate spaces by extending the logs slightly to create demarcation points."

The lower level is smaller than the floor above because it underlies only the great room portion and is devoted to the comfort of guests. Because they initially planned for Jan's parents to live with them, the Smiths included a second master bedroom suite. An additional bedroom-office with an adjoining bath is also located here. Both bedrooms access a covered patio.



**OPPOSITE:** The Smiths were determined to have a carved door to their bedroom, so David Arnold and Brian Odermatt obliged with a mama bear standing in a steam on one door looking up at her cub in a tree on the other door. A bonus was a likeness of Lone Mountain in the background. To create a floor that looked like an area rug in the adjacent foyer, Jan selected a pebble stone border around the travertine tile. David Arnold carved the table from burl spruce, spalted maple and figured mulberry wood where the soaring bronze eagle by Mark Hopkins is perched.

**ABOVE:** This guest bedroom doubles as a home office, thanks to a built-in computer desk and bookshelves. Family friend Mardell Rogerson's quilt sets the red, white and blue color scheme. The room opens to the covered patio. Blue Ribbon Builders trimmed the windows and patio doors in alder wood throughout the home.

**LEFT:** The wraparound Trex deck is divided into an entertainment section, with a wood-burning fireplace accessible from the great room, and the eating area off the dining room. The surrounding large logs and fireplace help the outdoor space seem more like an airy indoor room.



**ABOVE:** The pecan vanity in the master bathroom is visible through the dramatic carved archway. Fish's Antler Art crafted the leather framed mirrors. David Arnold's burl pine base with a redwood top supports another of Fish's creations: an eagle lamp shaped out of moose antlers.

**OPPOSITE:** Alder pocket doors (left) slip away into the wall behind the accent logs added to carry the log feel to the lower level. Six-by-six slate tiles and pecan cabinets contribute to the home's casual elegance. A small carved bear (right) stands guard outside the lower-level sauna.



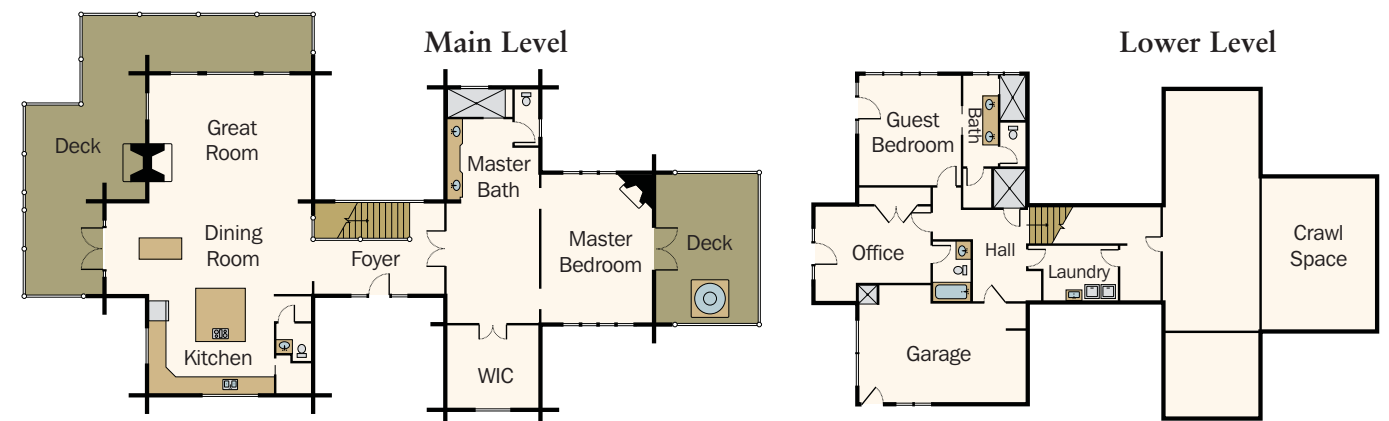
nine of their dogs to travel to Montana with them. "This is as much their home as it is ours, and so it is very casual and canine friendly. When we are at home, they have the run of the house," Hal adds.

Hal and Jan have truly made this their vacation home and take full advantage of the premier trout fishing in the Gallatin and Madison rivers. They each enjoy their respective pastimes; when he's

golfing, she's horseback riding. As supporters of the Grizzly & Wolf Discovery Center in West Yellowstone, Montana, they frequently spend entire days watching these wild animals in their natural habitat. "We love everything about Big Sky: the fishing, the animals, the scenery, the weather and the people," Hal says. "It is such beautiful country, and our home is just magnificent. We are so lucky." 🏡

### *home details*

**SQUARE FOOTAGE:** 4,000  
**LOG COMPANY:** Pioneer Log Homes of British Columbia  
**BUILDER:** Blue Ribbon Builders



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