

INSIDE: THE OFFICIAL GUIDE TO THE JACKSON HOLE FALL ARTS FESTIVAL

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HOUSE ON A
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COMFORT IN A
SMALL FOOTPRINT





SEEN FROM A DISTANCE, THE 700-SQUARE-FOOT CABIN ON SUMMIT SPRINGS RANCH,

a historic 3,785-acre property in Idaho's Upper Little Lost River Valley, may bring to mind a rustic house-shaped spacecraft set down in a faraway wilderness. And that somewhat fanciful description is, in fact, not too far from its creators' intentions.

"It's a viewing machine," explains Clark Stevens, president of New West Land Company in Topanga, California. Stevens designed the modest residence with 360-degree mountain views on behalf of the ranch's developers, Beartooth Capital, a Bozeman, Montana-based investment company dedicated to restoring and protecting significant western ranch properties.

The home Stevens designed had to be the sort that would "attract the kind of buyer amenable to habitat restoration," he says. "It had to make a minimal impact on the site and become part of the landscape—instead of taking a big lodge-style approach—while providing every basic need in a charming way that fit the local vernacular."

Stevens and his colleagues met these low-impact, landscape-friendly goals by conducting careful studies to identify possible settings that would best capture the beauty of the surroundings without impacting the environment (see sidebar). They chose a spot off to the side of the valley floor, a short stroll from a trout creek. In early autumn, before the cold weather set in, they sank four concrete piers into the ground. Then, the log-and-glass house was fabricated over the winter by Salmon River Log Homes, located just a couple of hours away in the town of Salmon, Idaho. The following spring, the house was trucked in on its steel-frame base and bolted securely to the waiting piers—where it will remain unless a buyer later decides to unbolt it and move it elsewhere on the ranch.

Stevens created the floor plan by combining three typical Western structures: "It's basically an amalgamation of a calving shed and a granary, connected by a dogtrot," he says with a note of amusement. Occupying the "calving-shed" portion of the building—about 40 percent of the total square footage—is a bedroom, enclosed toilet and sink, and an enameled cast-iron bathtub that sits out in the open and makes the house "feel more like a spa or retreat," Stevens says. The long, narrower "dogtrot," a living/sitting area, connects the bedroom to the "granary," a towerlike space that contains the kitchen and, up a ladder, an 8-by-12-foot loft platform where guests can sleep or kids can hang out.

That's a lot of function for such a small space. The design enhances a feeling of spaciousness thanks to sightlines that stretch from one end of the house to the other, few partitions and expansive windows at every turn. "Having less house makes you feel more like you're living on the land," Stevens says. And, in this case, that means calling 3,785 acres home rather than 700 square feet. ○

RIGHT, TOP: The home's roof of naturally patinated corrugated steel hews closely to the Western vernacular. RIGHT, BOTTOM: The bathtub, which occupies part of the passageway between the bedroom and living area, contributes a spa-like ambiance. The wall behind it was built from acoustic plywood panels that appear to match the logs. FACING PAGE: The bedroom wall features squared-off timbers with light gray chinking, which put a clean, contemporary spin on the cabin's rustic style.



ARCHITECTURE BY **NEW WEST LAND COMPANY**



HIGH- AND LOW-TECH APPROACHES TO SITING A HOUSE Modern technology can help architects position their designs with pinpoint precision. For the 700-square-foot cabin he designed at Summit Springs Ranch, architect Clark Stevens paired state-of-the-art digital software with on-site study.

DIGITAL MODELING Stevens and his team began by constructing a 3-D digital model of the house on their computers, which allowed them to manipulate the structure and examine it from all angles.

VIRTUAL EARTH Still at their computers, they then figuratively “dropped the house onto the land using Google Earth,” Stevens says. The website’s satellite imaging allowed them to fully imagine how the house would look on the site and what the views would be, and adjust its orientation and window placement accordingly.

ON-SITE OBSERVATION Knowing that nothing compares to firsthand human experience, Stevens then visited the site with a stepladder in tow. “I carried it around to where the windows would be, climbed it and looked through the rungs at each window’s height,” he says. The result? Views that are “really fine-tuned.”

“OUR AIM WAS TO CONDENSE EVERYTHING THAT IS GREAT ABOUT THIS RANCH INTO A SINGLE SPOT, A SINGLE EXPERIENCE.”

CLARK STEVENS

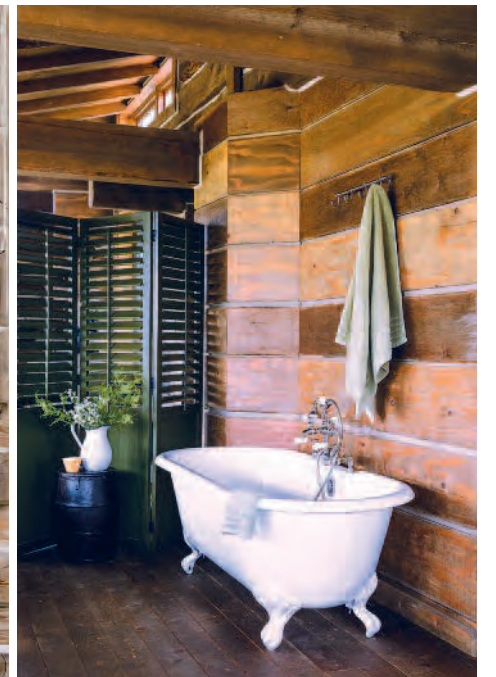


Windows in the cabin’s upper-level loft were placed at mattress height so guests could awaken to mountain views. **FACING PAGE:** The cabin’s window wall juts out four feet to define a seating area, then extends into the kitchen. Tongue-and-groove pine flooring received the same nontoxic finish as the log walls, which darkened the wood to enhance the illusion that the house was built decades ago. Reasonably priced spun-aluminum ceiling fixtures are from IKEA.



“WE TOOK A VERY CONTEMPORARY APPROACH TO PLANNING BY TRYING TO ELIMINATE BARRIERS INSIDE THE HOUSE, AND ALSO THOSE BETWEEN INSIDE AND OUTSIDE.”

CLARK STEVENS



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CLOCKWISE, FROM TOP LEFT: A covered porch runs most of the length of the cabin and faces dramatic mountain views. A folding screen provides bath-time privacy. Viewed from the entry side, the portion of the structure that contains the loft and living area resembles an old granary tower. A stepladder leads to an 8-by-12-foot loft platform that functions as an additional bedroom. In clement weather, the compact living space extends outdoors. FACING PAGE: Seen from the southwest, the cabin makes a minimal visual and physical impact on the landscape.