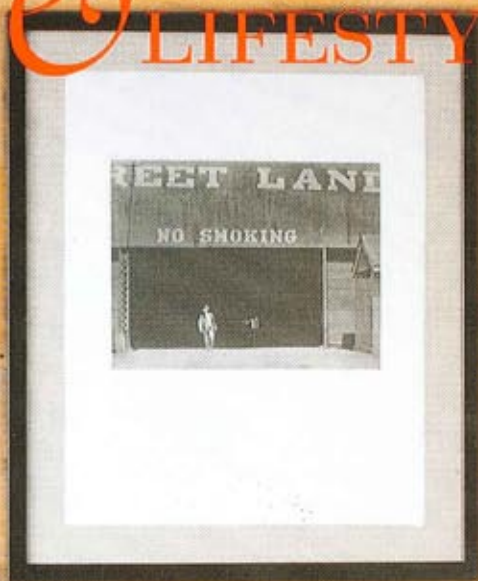


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Nestled high on a mountain, this cabin is entirely off the grid and relies on solar power for electricity and heat. Architect David Barrett and his team stashed the solar batteries inside of a reclaimed shipping container to protect them from heavy snow.

# SMALL BUT MIGHTY

This ski-in, ski-out retreat makes the most of its tiny footprint.

By ELISABETH A. SULLIVAN

PHOTOGRAPHY BY MICHAEL SHOPENN



A bright, minimalist dining room with a wooden table and bench, large windows overlooking a snowy forest, and a yellow wall. The room is filled with natural light from the large windows. The table is set with four place settings, including white bowls, plates, and silverware. A loaf of bread sits on a cutting board in the center. A simple, modern pendant light hangs above the table. The walls are a warm, yellowish-gold color. In the background, a doorway leads to another room with a wooden table and stool. A black jacket hangs on the wall in the background room. A pair of brown boots sits on the floor near the large glass doors on the left.

"There's a beauty about getting down to the essentials and reducing the clutter in our lives," Barrett says.



(left) The dining area is bathed in natural light from a two-story bank of windows. The table serves as extra prep space for ambitious cooks.

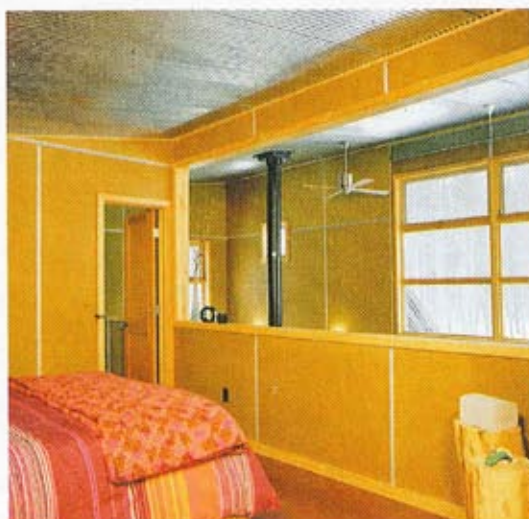
(above) The sleek, stainless-steel kitchen runs along one wall. Extra-deep countertops and translucent cabinets from Ikea are a smart use of space. Notice the counter-height refrigerator that was custom-made and the narrow Viking stove, both snug fits for the tidy design.

HIGH ON A MOUNTAINSIDE, hidden from a ski slope by a thick stand of pines, sits a model of high-country living, clean-lined design and green technology. It's a Zen-like retreat for a young Denver-based family, an escape from the modern world of *stuff*.

So says architect David Barrett, owner and principal of Barrett Studio Architects, an environmental design firm based in Boulder, who worked closely with the homeowners to create a ski cabin that's small on space but big on efficiency. "There's a beauty about getting down to the essentials and reducing the clutter in our lives," Barrett says. "This cabin is beautiful in its frugality."

The homeowners wanted a highly efficient, zero-energy cabin built at high altitude—a cozy contemporary loft with ski-in, ski-out accessibility—and that's just what they got. Dubbed the "wee ski chalet," the cabin holds just 1,103 square feet of living space within its well-insulated walls, but it's all the space the family needs. An airy living room, a cozy reading nook-turned-guest space, a small but well-appointed bathroom, a sleek and functional kitchen, an office, a mud room and two lofted bedrooms fit seamlessly into the small home.





The cabin is green both by design and necessity. No roads, power lines or water pipes mar the scenic mountainside, so Barrett mixed modern technology with "old, time-honored ways of building in a cold climate" to make this off-the-grid home completely self-sufficient. "It's just trying to put the right pieces together for the circumstances," he says.

To generate energy, Barrett erected a large wall of solar panels behind the home and attached them to a reclaimed shipping container, which houses the photovoltaic batteries and a workshop space for the family.

Heat, too, is a green engineering feat. The cabin's walls are made of foot-thick structurally insulated panels covered by HardiePanel cement siding in a sun-absorbing shade of gray. The south-facing corner of the home boasts a two-story wall of high-efficiency windows to catch as much sunlight as possible during the short winter days. The floors are made of polished concrete to soak up the sun's warmth, which lasts well into the evening. And a wood stove sits in the center of the cabin's living space to add extra heat on cold winter nights.

Barrett chose shiny corrugated metal ceilings to bounce sunlight throughout the cabin. And he lined the interior walls with ochre-colored wheatboard—a green, wheat hull-based substitute for medium-density fiberboard—that "warms you psychologically," he says.

Of course, the cabin's green elements are not only practical; they're also charming. The building's HardiePanel exterior echoes the deep grays of the shadows cast by neighboring trees. Its interior presents a roughened frugality in design and furnishings that looks lived-in and accessible. And at night, with soft light reflecting off the cabin's ochre walls, the interior "glows like candlelight in a Japanese lantern," Barrett says. "You can have a quality of life in ways that are responsible and still beautiful." □

*(left)* Built-in couches in this cozy reading nook provide extra sleeping space for guests. Biofiber wheatboard, a sustainable building material made from wheat hulls, lines the cabin's interior walls to warm and unify the space.

*(top, left)* The master bedroom and adjacent children's bedroom occupy a lofted space. Half walls allow natural light to filter into the sleeping areas. They don't afford much privacy, but the family likes it that way. "The family is together in this cabin," Barrett says.

*(top, right)* The bathroom—the only one in the cabin—is tucked behind the kitchen so that the two rooms can share a wall of plumbing.

#### DESIGN DETAILS

Architecture

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