

This February, the whole world will get a glimpse of Whistler's winter playground as the resort town hosts the **2010 Olympics**. Here's a look at how some of the locals live the rest of the year.

OPEN SEASON

BY MICHAEL HARRIS
PHOTOGRAPHS BY BARRY CALHOUN

Designer Kelly Deck refused to mimic the blockish vernacular of mountain design. She proposed a practical alternative: Whistler Modern. A broad steel hearth (opposite) and cabin-like stairs feel clean and geometric.

HOMES & DESIGN

When Kelly Deck and her team at Kelly Deck Design were charged with designing a modern home that fits into the wilds of Whistler mountain, they thought a lot about why the *château* norm is so revered there. “We wanted to know why people loved those big beams and chunky rocks so much,” says Deck, host of HGTV’s *Take it Outside*. The answer, she figures, is simple: extreme weather and miles of evergreen forest leave residents hungry for homes that give a sense of safety.

Her challenge, then, was to envision a space that created that cocoon-like environment while maintaining the confident lines and refined spirit of modernism.

The marriage is, surprisingly, a happy one. Inside, cedar beams gird several rooms. Ceilings are often painted white to give a sense of airiness; in the team’s design the protecting beams are darkened with an espresso stain to create just the opposite effect: a safe den. In the bathroom, the rawness of those ceiling beams creates an intense juxtaposition with precise cabinetry and mirrors below. There’s an almost post-modern touch to this room; it’s as though its elegance peels back at the top to reveal the sheltering skeleton at work.

But the home’s defining feature must be Deck’s clever use of sandblasted Douglas fir on so many walls. Each hand-selected piece is free of knots, and because fir doesn’t absorb evenly, the semi-opaque stain Deck prescribed resulted in a tantalizing variation of grey-blond tones. At every corner, every doorway, the end of one beam is met by the start of another that perfectly matches its distinct hue; she has delivered, in effect, a wall made of tree-length beams that wrap themselves uninterrupted down hallways.

When she devised her wintry colour scheme, Deck photographed the surrounding landscape and extracted the charcoal greys of rock, the crisp whites of snowbanks and the deep browns of weathered roots. But she also studied photos of Russian fashion models wrapped in furs to pull out something soft, sexy and layered.

Finishing touches were just as important as the overall design. Chandeliers of fine birch veneer and translucent suede were installed for a tender, organic look. Wooden benches by Brent Comber sit at the top of the stairs with a decidedly organic vibe; one of his highly tactile wood sculptures is present, too. “Brent and I both come from craft-based backgrounds,” says Deck, who studied ceramics in Wales. “Brent and I both see the handmade touch as imperative to giving a home its heart.”

That respect for the built quality of things allows Deck to marry her modern aesthetic with the stone-and-mortar surety of a mountain *château*. The feedback has been nothing but encouraging: “Even die-hard traditionalists say this is a modern home they could imagine themselves living in.” *wl*

Turn the page for ideas on how to bring the Whistler



A whimsical oak table, nabbed from Moe’s Home Collection, recalls the elements surrounding the home (top); elsewhere, cedar beams do the same job. In the billiards-and-bar room, a phalanx of glass bottles is cleverly lit from below, through frosted glass, providing an unexpected element of decoration that sticks to the room’s message (above). A crew of stainless steel Viking appliances makes a cool pairing with grey-stained oak cabinets that boast a vertical grain; slabs of white Caesarstone finish the crisp, wintry effect on the countertop and backsplash (right).

Tree House

This mountain-modern home marries the best of traditional Whistler with smart contemporary style. Here's how to bring the look home.

By Michael Harris

① **ROUGH & READY** Cedar beams and slatting form an exposed ceiling that harkens back to the earthy, traditional Whistler cabin; an espresso stain helps tie the historical gesture to finishes in the far more modern room below.

② **ROOM WITH A VIEW** Forests are framed by massive window-walls, creating the effect of a cushioned haven surrounded by the wilds of Whistler.

③ **LOUNGE ACT** The room's framework is robust and red-blooded, so softer, rounded furnishings were selected for balance. From Bensen's Drop-In line, a mohair-covered sofa invites après-ski banter.

④ **KNOCK ON WOOD** Antique European doors made of elm were reclaimed and made into a warm yet structured coffee table, standing on a clean iron base.

⑤ **CUT A RUG** Hand-woven in India, this storm-coloured rug holds together the seating area and centres the gaze in a room where the eye is constantly straying outward.

