



LOCATI ARCHITECTS

LAKESIDE IDYLL



Inspired by the great camps of the Adirondacks, a family retreat in northwest Montana proves the surest route to escape is being present. Photography by Roger Wade



“WE STARTED THE PROJECT about four years ago, and it was definitely a unique building situation,” says architect Jerry Locati of Bozeman-based [Locati Architects](#). The owners, also of Bozeman, wanted a vacation home with the feel of a family compound, rather than a single rambling house. For their sloping site on Montana’s Whitefish Lake, the architect developed a plan for nine separate structures, each nestled smartly onto the shore.

“It’s one of the most desirable areas to vacation,” says the architect, whose focus was squarely on the landscape. “You drive onto the property through the woods and are met by an understated front door, by which time you’ve almost forgotten the lake. But once you go through the door, you’re met immediately by a view of the water, and there’s a sense of rediscovery. That’s the way the whole house works. Every step draws you through the rooms. It’s as if the scenery leads you on a tour.”

That feeling of wanderlust is encouraged throughout the 5-acre property, with its main lodge, kids’ cabins, guest cottage, and requisite (though by no means standard) boathouse, as well as its many terraces, decks, and pathways. “You start walking, and you want to just keep exploring,” Locati says. “There are nooks and crannies everywhere.”







“EACH BUILDING FEELS A PART of the setting and really wraps its arms around the lake,” the architect continues, but the lake seems to equally embrace the compound. The landscape is rich with ponds and waterfalls—“It almost feels like a tributary of the lake comes right through the property.”

As for the structures themselves, Locati explains that the owners (with whom he’d worked on numerous other projects) were “very astute” when it came to the design. “They were definitely interested and very much a part of the process. They knew what they wanted: a wood and stone encampment, not unlike the Adirondack camps. We helped with the interiors, but they really did them on their own.” The couple had acquired many antiques, particularly the massive chandeliers and a carved-wood mantelpiece, while traveling abroad. It’s not all seriousness, though. There’s an antique boat-turned-bar, a shuffle board table, and a movie theater.

But life on Whitefish is really all about indulging in the scenery. “You’re part of the landscape here,” Locati concludes. “You’re on a lake. It should feel like it.”







"The couple's Bozeman home is more traditional, so here they could try something new. It's critical to have clients who understand architecture and are open to ideas."

