

AT HOME tennessee

TWO SISTERS
CAMP

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COVER PHOTOGRAPHY BY BEN FINCH

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A WORLD AWAY

With design influenced by its natural surroundings, this East Tennessee escape radiates rustic elegance. Affectionately dubbed Two Sister's Camp by owners Tom and Jo Zarger, the weekend retreat was inspired by family history as well as the couple's love of the outdoors.

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IF WALLS COULD TALK

On the outside, this Nashville home appears to fit right in with the historic neighborhood in which it is located. But in reality, the structure recently underwent a 10-month overhaul, expanding it by 1,400 square feet and achieving green certification, all while staying within the historic district's requirements.

A World Away

When Tom and Josephine Zarger decided to build a weekend getaway in the Smoky Mountains, the focus was on the family in every possible way, from the design—done by their daughter, Knoxville's Adrienne Z. King—to the home décor, a blend of inherited family pieces and carefully selected antiques. Even the home's name, Two Sisters Camp, is a nod to the couple's children. All the attention to detail paid off, creating the ultimate rustic retreat great for family vacations or a quick escape for two.

TEXT Lindsey Phillips | PHOTOGRAPHY Ben Finch

Warm red cabinets, an antique pressed tin backsplash and flamed granite countertops give this kitchen a rustic elegance.



The Adirondack-style exterior of Two Sisters Camp features river rock, board and batten siding, cedar shakes and a bronze standing seam metal roof.



Interior designer Adrienne Z. King, ASID, first realized her true calling as a five-year-old—an extra-opinionated five-year-old, that is, when it came to her parents’ home renovation projects. (She was even known to draw furniture and space plans at a young age.)

So it was only natural when, upon graduation from Vanderbilt University and Watkins College of Art and Design some years later, the Knoxville native’s first large-scale turn-key project was to oversee the design and construction of her parents’ Smoky Mountain weekend getaway. “I had done other projects, but this was the first large-scale,” Adrienne says. “In this case, I was pretty much involved from day one to move-in day.”

While Adrienne’s parents, Tom and Josephine Zarger, considered multiple options for their second home, it was ultimately the Smokies’ proximity to Knoxville that won out—the couple wanted a location that only felt a world away but was actually easily accessible to most members of the family. “We’ve always enjoyed the beach with our family, but it’s so far from Knoxville that a beach place just wouldn’t make sense,” Jo says. “When it came down to it, we said, ‘Let’s do a mountain house.’”

This decision was also largely influenced by Tom and Jo’s histories: Tom’s aunt and uncle owned an Ad-

irondack cabin (which eventually became the inspiration for their new mountain home’s sleeping porch) and both sets of Jo’s grandparents had cabins. “[The project] was influenced from family vacations and other family members that have had a second home,” Adrienne says. “[My parents] wanted to build a house not only for our generation but for future generations to come and be together. It was really important to have a gathering place for everyone.”

Construction on the project began in 2005, with Adrienne working with residential designer Bart Carey, builders Elliot Walker and Bill LaRowe and structural engineers Bender and Associates on the three-story, Adirondack-style retreat. Affectionately named Two Sisters Camp by Tom and Jo in honor of their two daughters, Adrienne and Becky, the mountain home quickly became a go-to place for inexpensive hiking dates, family get-togethers and quick weekend trips for Tom and Jo. And while Two Sisters Camp was only completed in 2007, materials like board and batten siding, cedar shakes, river rock and a bronze standing seam metal roof make the home seem as though it has been nestled in the East Tennessee mountains forever, a design goal from the beginning. “We wanted it to look old,” Tom says. “We wanted it to look like it had been there for a long, long time.”

And it wasn’t just the look of the home that the



The natural atmosphere of this retreat continues in the bathrooms, which feature countertops constructed of solid planks of black walnut, chestnut and mahogany.



The stacked river rock fireplace is double-sided and can be enjoyed from the screened in porch or family room.

feature

location of Two Sisters Camp influenced.

"All materials were selected to allow the structure to have minimal impact on the surrounding environment and natural habitat," Adrienne says. "A good portion of the lumber and support beams came directly from the property and were milled locally to lessen the environmental impact."

The home is extremely energy efficient, she says, and uses a blown cellulose/blue jean insulation product. Designed with group vacations in mind, the 3,000-square-foot Two Sisters Camp has plenty of sleeping space between

its three bedrooms, sleeping porch and the "Bunkaroo"—a bunkroom tucked away in the corner with cedar shakes and a locally handcrafted ladder. "I designed this area for kids and adults alike," Adrienne says. "It's literally the playroom of the house."

The sleeping porch is a favorite room as well, with headboards made from antique English garden gates and cedar shakes on the interior walls to

give the effect that it was actually a porch closed in at some point, Adrienne says. A photograph of Tom's aunt and uncle's sleeping porch hangs in this room, paying homage to the inspiration. The other bedrooms feature custom built beds with upholstered headboards accented by nail heads, with the upstairs bedrooms outfitted in antique walnut pieces that Tom inherited from his grandparents. The house's three full baths and two half baths boast counters constructed from solid planks of black walnut, chestnut and mahogany. "We wanted it [Two Sisters Camp] to feel comfortable most of all, inviting," Adrienne says. "We wanted it to blend in not only with the natural surroundings but to blend in with our family as well."

Functionality also played a key role in the home's design. Jo wanted a practical kitchen, but didn't wish to see the appliances—Adrienne was able to fit a full range with a warming drawer into the space as well as a second oven and microwave in the island. The kitchen's warm red cabinets have a subtle "Z" design. Adrienne chose an antiqued pressed tin backsplash and flamed granite countertops, since a glossy finish might make the space feel too new, she explains. A double-

sided, stacked river rock fireplace adds a rustic element to the family room and the screened-in porch, an extension of the house with a large farmhouse table and comfortable seating area. The living room is also ideal for large gatherings, with a huge sofa ("one of the largest I could find," Adrienne says) that Tom cites as one of his favorite spots to relax. This space also includes two large scale red houndstooth chairs and a pair of antique hand-painted trunks from France that Adrienne found on a buying trip. She couldn't decide between the pair so she just incorporated both into the house.

History abounds in Two Sister's Camp, from the master bedroom's ceiling fixture—a fourth generation converted oil lamp from Tom's Pennsylvania relatives—to antique reflector sconces from Jo's grandparents' cabin in Wisconsin. Many of the pieces that weren't purchased new or inherited are ones that were once displayed prominently in Tom and Jo's home, but

had since gone by the wayside, like the antique stained glass window Adrienne installed in the master bedroom of Two Sisters Camp; Tom and Jo had purchased it nearly 40 years ago in Massachusetts as newlyweds. "We were just no longer using a lot of the pieces in our home in prime space," Jo says. "[Using them in Two Sisters Camp] was a way to really get to enjoy the pieces."

With so many unique qualities in each room, how does the family possibly choose who sleeps where? Adrienne thought of that as well, creating small wooden chips featuring each of the rooms' names—the Bunkaroo, Sleeping Porch, Hillside and Creekside—so guests can simply draw their sleeping arrangements at random. And although the family has been traveling to Two Sisters Camp for three years now, the excitement of their rustic retreat hasn't worn off, especially with Adrienne's careful attention to detail and the serene, mountain surroundings. "Even now, when you haven't been there in a few weeks and you open the door you think, 'Ah, it's great to be here,'" Jo says.

See Sources for Details



Clockwise from left: the Sleeping Porch, Bunkaroo, Hillside and master bedroom.

