

# OUR OWN PRIVATE IDAHO

An interior designer fulfilled a lifelong dream when she built a bolthole in the Rocky Mountains, and her daughters proved the ideal team for the project. By **Steven Short**. Photographs by **Miguel Flores Vianna**

**Exterior** Although built from the ground up, the retreat is designed to look as if it has been there for a very long time and has been rescued and brought back to life. Forming a U shape around a garden, the connected buildings are, from left to right, a stone farmhouse that contains the kitchen and the master bedroom; the central great barn, which houses the dining and living areas; and a batten-board building that accommodates a games room, two guest rooms and an outdoor terrace.

**'It got to that time in our life when we wanted a mountain retreat of our own. My husband found this piece of land and I fell in love with it instantly'**

It was the raw beauty of Idaho's jagged Sawtooth Range that intoxicated Ernest Hemingway. The writer lived there on and off for more than 20 years and even asked to be buried there. In the late 1930s the area became popular with the Hollywood elite, with the likes of Clark Gable, Marilyn Monroe and Gary Cooper drawn to what came to be known as the American Alps. It's an allure that the interior designer Mary Lynn Turner understands. 'The place is just heavenly,' she says. 'The change in the weather in just one day can be extraordinary, with the clouds and the deep blue skies behind the mountains, and then there's the river...'

Mary Lynn and her husband, Rusty, had been bringing their children to the area for more than 25 years when they decided to put down roots in

Sun Valley (one of the first high-end ski resorts in the United States). 'We had been coming here on vacation, enjoying the mountains and the river in the summer and the skiing in winter,' she recalls. 'And it got to that time in our life when we wanted a mountain retreat of our own. Rusty found this piece of land and said, "You gotta come up here!" I fell in love with it instantly.'

When it came to creating the retreat she had always dreamt of, she had the perfect team. Mary Lynn, who has worked as an interior designer for 35 years, set up M Elle Design with her daughters, Marie Turner Carson and Emily Turner, in 2008. 'Building is in me, it's what I do,' she says. 'But it's such a treat to see that my daughters have become interior designers,



too. And it was exciting to work with them on our very own project.' The trio are based in Southern California, with Mary Lynn in Newport Beach and her daughters in Santa Monica.

Emily and Marie bring to the business some impressive credentials: Emily, 28, the business director, is a graduate of Princeton and the London School of Economics, while Mary Lynn shares the design work with Marie, 29, who did a master's degree in fine and decorative arts at Christie's Education before working with the London interior designer David Collins, who died this year. 'I adored London,' Marie says. 'Christie's gave me a wonderful knowledge of the history of furniture and the opportunity to touch and feel antiques, to see how things are made. Moving on to work with

**'I have always been in love with rustic buildings. I have collected images of old barns for years'**



**The dining room** 'The barn is made entirely from reclaimed materials as we wanted it to look as rustic as possible,' Mary Lynn Turner (pictured above, left, with her daughters, Marie Turner Carson and Emily Turner) says. The reclaimed beams are from an old dairy farm in Wisconsin. 'Some of them are lighter thanks to the residue of the lime wash they were given for sanitary reasons – as designers we loved the chalky whitewash effect, and the minute we saw the beams we knew we had to have them.' The chandelier is from Provence and was purchased at Lucca Antiques in New York ([luccaantiques.com](http://luccaantiques.com)) for its 'scale and volume without heaviness'. The dining table is also from Lucca Antiques, and comes originally from a monastery, also in Provence. 'We love it because it's long and narrow, so really intimate,' Marie says. 'Goose Island is a "more the merrier" kind of place, so we always have lots of people around the table.' The chairs are from Lee Industries ([leeindustries.com](http://leeindustries.com)). A living area at one end of the barn is centred on a stone fireplace.



**The patio** This porch leads off the games room and overlooks the river. 'We use it all summer and all winter,' Mary Lynn says. 'The fireplace is great for dining après ski. There's a Jacuzzi there, too, and we have heavy wool blankets that we put out so everyone can bundle up. It has amazing views of the river and the mountains. It gets a beautiful afternoon light, which is just lovely after you have been skiing.' The chandelier is from Mecox in the Hamptons ([mecox.com](http://mecox.com)). M Elle Design came up with the concept for the Belgian bluestone 'bashed and hammered' table top.

**The kitchen** The cabinetry in the kitchen is French oak, which complements the grey stone worktops. 'We wanted a monolithic island in the middle,' Marie says. This one is in basaltina lava stone and was made to order. White Delftware tiles bring light into the room, as does the custom-made zinc cooker hood. The range is by Wolf ([subzero-wolf.co.uk](http://subzero-wolf.co.uk)), the bar stools are the work of the furniture company BDDW ([bddw.com](http://bddw.com)). The linen-basket lampshades were picked up from local artisans. 'I love their overscale,' Marie says.



**The main bathroom** The tub in the main bathroom is from Lefroy Brooks ([lefroymore.com](http://lefroymore.com)), and the taps are from Waterworks ([waterworks.com](http://waterworks.com)). The chandelier is a smaller version of the one in the dining room, and also comes from Lucca Antiques. 'We wanted a "collected" feel to the rooms,' Marie says. 'So some things repeat in terms of palette and style. We've got the same drapery as in the bedroom.' The floors are grey fossilised limestone. 'There are lots of neutral greys and creams,' Mary Lynn adds. The bench is Swedish and from a showroom in New York that no longer exists. The large pot is Moroccan.

**The master bedroom** The double-height master bedroom is closest to the river, and a window in the roof means the mountaintops can be seen from the bed. 'There's a closed porch that looks out to the river, where we love to sit,' Mary Lynn says. Reclaimed beams have also been used in this room, and the boards between them and the boards on the walls are painted white to make the room light and airy. The iron bed was custom-designed. The gauze of the windows is echoed around its frame.



David gave me an understanding of how demanding the industry can be, and how high-quality materials and service need to be.'

M Elle Design spent three years building the 'old homestead' of Mary Lynn's fantasies. 'I have always been in love with rustic buildings,' she says. 'I have collected images of old barns for years.'

On the banks of the Big Wood river, five connected buildings form a U shape around a garden. At its heart is the 'great barn', clad in reclaimed wood and housing the living and dining rooms. To one side is a two-storey limestone 'farmhouse' containing the kitchen and a family room, and master bedroom on the upper floor, and to the other side is a dark batten-board building that houses the billiards and television room, two guest bedrooms and an outdoor terrace. There is also a white clapboard farmhouse that is home to a boot room as well as a room of bunk beds, and a carriage house, which serves as the garage.

'We wanted the buildings to feel as if they'd been there for a while and we'd rescued them and brought them back to life,' Marie says. The interior shares the lived-in aesthetic, but with a certain luxurious feel. The furniture has been chosen with comfort in mind, and there are plenty of unusual details to delight the eye. A stone and wood backdrop and a neutral colour palette are livened up with occasional pops of purple and orange. The family call the house Goose Island, after the island that it overlooks. It is an idyllic situation. 'It breaks my heart when I leave,' Mary Lynn says.

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**The bunk room** 'Everybody adores this room,' Mary Lynn says. 'I have a growing family, so the idea is that it's a space for all the grandchildren. We had a room like this when I was growing up. We lived in Los Angeles but had a beach house in Newport Beach, and it had a bunk room, it was such a happy time.' Each of the fir-clad double bunks – which are all built into the wall – has its own window, bookshelf and light. 'We did the drapery so you can have privacy. It's a great way of hosting lots of people. You gotta pack 'em in.' The room also has a built-in queen-sized bed where parents can sleep if they need to be near their children. The paint is Pointing by Farrow & Ball ([farrow-ball.co.uk](http://farrow-ball.co.uk)).

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