

# CHALET

## a new way

PHOTOGRAPHY BY ANDREW FEARMAN



## Turning timberframe design on its head

“There are so many cool places in our chalet, because of the way the architecture works,” says Jim, reflecting on the chalet he and Elske, his wife, recently built. “It’s different from anything ever done before with timberframe.”

In fact, their contemporary chalet was a brand-new design for Normerica Timber Homes & Cottages – the team that worked with the couple and their preferred local builders and trade partners to bring their dream chalet to life.

While Normerica is renowned for their post-and-beam cottage packages, filled with traditional cathedral ceilings and wood-framed windows, Jim and Elske’s chalet flipped the script usually written for timberframe homes. The couple loved working with Normerica on a previous chalet renovation, but this time they wanted to create a timberframe escape that felt uniquely modern.

### Aesthetic diversity

To create their chalet, Jim and Elske pulled inspiration and elements from around the globe. “We saw so many photos online – chalets in Europe and across Canada – with elements that we liked,” says Elske. “And the Normerica team integrated them all.”

While the build still features exposed post-and-beam details, the couple opted to have them white-washed, instead of being sealed with a bright or deep stain – giving the space a brighter, more contemporary feel. Each beam and joist was connected with steel rods, fabricated in-house by Normerica, in lieu of the typical wooden pegs.

“The steel rods give the space an industrial look that’s so different from the traditional,” says Jim.

But their use of alternative materials didn’t stop there. Jim and Elske chose cement tiles sourced from Germany to create a modern entranceway and chimney, along with Canadian-made cement cladding for the fireplace in the great room. Trading in the wood trim on the windows was also easy for the couple, who selected fibreglass windows instead.

“They’re a great insulator – much needed for a winter chalet – and gave us the contemporary look we were going for,” says Elske.

### Shifting lines

Arguably the biggest challenge was the pair’s structural requests, which altered the roof lines that usually allow for large great rooms with cathedral ceilings. Jim and Elske requested a lower roofline in the great

room instead, making the gathering room, kitchen and dining space more intimate.

“Normerica was eager to take on the design challenge,” says Jim. “We worked with their in-house team, who were so fantastic to work with that we never interviewed outside architects at all.”

The result was a clean roof line that created interesting ceiling lines in the bedrooms.

“Each room now has a different roof line, making it really aesthetically pleasing,” says Jim. “And the great room is comfortable, with a good spatial feel... not at all cavernous or cold.”

Today, the bedrooms and great room are two of the pair’s favourite spaces to relax, unwind, and show off to visitors.

### Expedient creativity

Working with the Normerica team on the chalet was a highlight for Jim and Elske, who praised the team’s impressive turn-around times, and ability to bring the couple’s vision to fruition.

“The entire experience was amazing,” says Elske. “We had zero issues. They were open-minded and made sure we got exactly what we wanted, but better than we imagined.”

Perhaps it was the team’s collaborative approach, which included weekly meetings with the couple’s sales representative, chief draftsman and in-house architect. “We’d meet on Friday and have a new iteration the following Tuesday,” says Jim. “It was frankly so impressive, and such an advantage to have every component working so quickly to create and alter the designs.”

And perhaps it was their 3D rendering software, which allowed the couple to see their chalet as they would in real life and walk through each room piece by piece before they ever broke ground.

“It gave us an idea of what it would all look like,” says Elske. “It helped us visualize it all.”

Either way, Normerica’s expedient, detailed approach continued from the drawing, to the permits, to the build itself – allowing the pair to take possession of the property, acquire permits, demolish the previous chalet and construct their own in less than a year.

“We took possession in April and were in by Christmas,” says Jim.

### Build outside the box

Whether your dream timberframe cottage or chalet is timeless and traditional or is a one-of-a-kind contemporary structure, Jim and Elske believe you never have to settle for someone else’s standard design.

“There are no limits on what you can do with timberframe,” says Jim. “We took a risk and there isn’t a single element that didn’t turn out for our chalet.”

While post-and-beam details will always add a level of rugged and natural coziness, the material can be used in any style of build – from homes and cottages to eye-catching modern chalets.

“We’re so happy we trusted Normerica, with helping us bring our timberframe chalet to life.” **DS**

BY SHELANNIE AUGUSTINE



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