



Joined by a second-storey loft, the two wings of Anne Maheux and Greg Hill's cabin in Quebec sits among trees on top of a bluff, giving it the feeling of a tree house.

'NATURAL' WONDERS

Take note, weekend warriors: The hottest cottages right now are extremely comfortable and impeccably designed, but far from ostentatious. On the contrary, retractable walls, expansive windows and rooms that blur the line between inside and out make them one with the landscape. **Alex Bozиковic** profiles three of the most innovative

AN EARTH-BOUND 'TREE HOUSE' IN RURAL QUEBEC

When Anne Maheux and Greg Hill head to the woods – to their cottage on a small lake in Val-des-Monts, an hour outside of Ottawa – they leave it all behind: There is no Internet and no TV. “It’s incredibly peaceful,” Maheux says. “We do a lot of walking, swimming and reading.” Their small three-bedroom retreat is, in many ways, a classic cabin, modest in size and without many frills. “The interior was supposed to be Zen,” Maheux says, “and the contemporary architecture really lends itself to that kind of atmosphere.”

In part, that’s because the design defers to the landscape. The building, by Ottawa designer Paul Kariouk, is

set among the trees on top of a bluff; it has so many large, well-placed windows that it feels, even from the inside, as though it’s part of the forest. “There’s very little barrier between the property and the house,” Maheux explains. “When you walk in, you can’t help noticing that it feels like [you’re] outside.”

Large windows dominate every room – two bedrooms in one wing, a kitchen and living room in the other. The large, enclosed porch, however, is where Maheux spends the most time in the summer, reading with Hill and their daughter, Madeleine.

“The porch doesn’t have glass,”

explains Kariouk, who teaches architecture at Carleton University. “There is a very fine screen for the evenings when you need it. In the mornings, you roll it away and you’re completely outside.”

Another of the building’s inside-out features was driven by the family’s youngest member, who insisted the cabin include a loft, which Kariouk designed as a curvaceous pod, spanning the building’s two wings. Its floor curves up to one side to meet the ceiling, creating an unusual space with broad views of the landscape. It is a favourite Maheux says, among the children who come to visit, a private tree house inside a house in the trees.



The fine screen that surrounds the patio can be fully retracted, transforming the space into an outdoor room. PHOTOS BY CHRISTIAN LALONDE/PHOTOLUX STUDIOS