

SERENITY

on a tidal estuary

ISLAND HOMES
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Fifteen minutes to downtown and an eternity from anywhere. The upper patio of this Japanese-meets-West Coast Contemporary Parsons Cove home has the sort of view you'd expect at your cottage – or a resort. Porcelain tiles are smooth underfoot and wrap-around engineered glass railings make it feel like you're floating on air over a private estuary.



▲ Clad in inviting cedar that captures the light of the setting sun, the house sits comfortably in a steep embankment offering a low profile from the roadside entrance and two full floors of living. The retaining wall and stonework boulders (carefully placed so they become flat-topped stairs) are now overgrown with greenery.

◀ Looking in from that main patio, there's an eight-foot overhang of vertical grain cedar with an oil finish to keep you dry on a misty winter's day. The two-sided gas fireplace (the other side faces into the living room) ensures you'll be warm as well. "I wanted to create a space where you can be sitting outdoors in the shoulder season," says builder Chris Walker. "That fireplace is more than aesthetic."

There's a secluded tidal estuary in View Royal, where the fresh water of Millstream Creek feeds into the brine of Esquimalt Harbour. Heron and eagle glide in above the intense greenery of what is, essentially, a private bay. In winter, you can watch salmon skimming through the water being chased by hungry seals. A Zen-like serenity hangs over the hushed seclusion of the place like a Shaolin temple — an apt allusion to that precious Japanese quietude. Developer/builder/designer Chris Walker of Christopher Developments constructs homes for his clients, but slyly admits when he was finished this two-level, 3,400-square-foot Parsons Cove property, he wanted to move in himself.

"I fell in love with it. I just live around the corner."

His idea was to blend with the setting without having the three-bedroom, three-bath house overpower the sloping lot, while marrying a sense of the Asian aesthetic to a West Coast contemporary design. Working with Lorin Turner of Zebra Interiors, Walker established a look of timeless sophistication. Simple organic intentions with linear dynamics, a sense of balance, abundant light, wide doorways, sliding screens, and the incorporation of flowing water near the front entrance, providing its gentle sound of calm and setting the mood right away.

One feature that you wouldn't find in a Japanese mountainside temple, however, is the amazing soundproofed home theatre, with its recessed 52-inch Pioneer Elite flat screen, 110-inch projector screen, staged seating, and wet bar/galley kitchen.

Walker designed the house for the homeowners, who he says were dream clients. "They said to me, 'We've seen what you do. We trust your work. Just design us a home and here are a few parameters.' They were trusting and that gave me a lot of freedom of expression."



▲ Rack 'em up. Believe it or not, this is what the basement looks like when you come down the stairs from the main floor. But with 10-foot ceilings and a full walk-out patio that transitions into the front yard, it isn't lacking for natural light. With LED pot lighting, the warmth of all that fir, and radiant-heated porcelain-tile floors, it's "game on" year round.

◀ Walker is particularly proud of the magnificent kitchen island he designed using a product called G-ROC, composed of 85 per cent recycled materials. It's concrete mixed with glass poured into a mould, so it sparkles and it's finished with a layer of stainless steel, which plays off the stainless steel appliances. The island weighs nearly one metric ton and took 10 men to move into place. The eye-catching backsplash is made from fine pieces of linear slate called fiddlesticks.

▲ The indoor/outdoor gas fireplace, set in a wall of glass and fir, and framed by five-foot-wide doors with off-centre pivots, invites the outdoors in to the living room. The ceiling slopes up to a 14-foot height, enhancing the stellar view of the estuary.

▼ The ensuite bath is light and bright, featuring double vanities, a soaker tub, and walk-in shower. Marble and porcelain tiles create the look of a waterfall inside the shower. A stunning touch is his-and-hers built-in wardrobes in birdseye maple. Walker added custom doors that pull out and slide back into the walls so they're completely out of the way.



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