

LUXURY LIVING



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There's a fervour in the desire to own a piece of the cottage country.

PHIL SOPER,
PRESIDENT
AND CEO
OF ROYAL
LEPAGE, ON
SECOND
HOMES.
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More is more

Condo buyers are looking for larger proportions and separate spaces.

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They're bigger, swankier, and fit for touring pop stars.

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A modern cottage on a private island breaks the boundaries.

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PIED-À-TERRE
What out-of-towners look for when they buy a second home in the city.

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LUXURY LIVING

Nature IS PART OF THE DESIGN AT MODERN *Muskoka* cottage

LINDA WHITE
Special to Postmedia Network

Modernists herald it as the “new Muskoka,” and revel in its ability to meld into the landscape. Traditionalists lambaste it as out of place, with at least one armchair critic labelling it a “hideous, tasteless monstrosity.”

The 8,500-square-foot cottage — or perhaps “mansion” is a more apt name — is located on an 11-acre private island in Lake Muskoka. Love it or hate it: all can agree the property has sparked plenty of debate over the past few years. Its architect takes it all in stride.

“My ambition was to create a modern house that was just structure and 100 per cent opening window walls so that Lake Muskoka itself was an extension of the living space and the key feature of the design,” says James Pitropov, principal architect at Lakeside Architecture Inc., a firm that designs luxury homes, cottages, boathouses and resorts. “When the window walls are open, all you see is the lake.”

The cottage boasts six bedrooms, six bathrooms, a gourmet kitchen with lake views, cold plunge pool, resistance pool, hot tub, Finnish dry sauna, Turkish steam room and wine cellar. Three oversized folding glass wall systems offer panoramic sunset views. It’s also home to four wood-burning fireplaces, including a stainless-steel fireplace on an expansive cedar deck. A 1,200-square-foot, two-bedroom guesthouse features a full kitchen. The property is also home to a boathouse.

Pitropov drew inspiration from late Canadian architect Arthur Erickson. “West coast houses like the Graham House were revolutionary in the way they were sited in difficult locations and had exposed structure. It had parts that were built into the hillside and also parts that appeared to float over the water,” he says. Fallingwater, a house designed by late American architect Frank Lloyd Wright in 1935, was also inspirational. “It used structural engineering to cantilever levels of the house over a natural waterfall. It’s all about the site and nature.”

Still, Pitropov appreciates traditional architecture. “You really have to understand the human qualities of wrap-around porches, old-style dining rooms, Muskoka

rooms, dormers and the cozy corners the classic traditional architecture creates,” he says. “There’s a social aspect to old-style lodges and cottages on Lake Muskoka, Lake Rosseau and Lake Joseph that Scottish and Irish settlers, as well as early American cottagers, really understood and developed. Thousands of memories have been built around this type of humanistic architecture.”

Traditional architecture, however, relies on classic architecture form. Pitropov reminds. “We now have the opportunity with new structural technology to have longer-span beams, enabling larger window areas that open up the structure more to the lake environment and make nature itself part of the design.”

Modern design blends into the landscape much better than traditional design, he maintains. The cottage is built into the landscape in terraces and has subtle roof lines and reflective glass instead numerous walls. “You see big Douglas fir timbers and the trees and lake reflecting in the glass instead of siding, turrets, dormers and giant roofs,” he says.

The original owners hailed from overseas and wanted a very private and spacious retreat where they could entertain international clients.

“They regularly visited truly exotic locations around the globe. They were true modernists and adventurous with ideas,” Pitropov says. “They started importing things from around the world, a lot of which just don’t fit into Lake Muskoka. They brought in marble from the Middle East and tiles from Italy, for example.”

The current owners are passionate about interior design and have been renovating and modifying the property for several years. “They get that Muskoka is a land of rock, water, reflections and light that changes throughout the day, so they don’t want heavily-tinted windows. The stone from the Middle East is out. They want authentic materials that are from Muskoka. They’ve been doing a ton of work to make it truer to its roots.”

Pitropov remains confident there’s room on the lake for more than one style. “Let’s take the best ideas of both architectural worlds,” he says, “and move forward so each generation has fresh architecture on the lake they can live with.”



The cottage was constructed on Bass Island over four years beginning in 2010 and boasts more than 2,700 feet of water frontage. Cottagers see it when cruising off Walkers Point to the main part of Lake Muskoka towards Port Carling. SUPPLIED



Even the indoor pool has a view. SUPPLIED



The large window walls facing the lake are completely non-structural. SUPPLIED

Demand for cottages continues unabated

LINDA WHITE
Special to Postmedia Network



This 3,900-square-foot cottage in Gravenhurst in Lake Muskoka was listed this spring at \$3.495 million. Granite steps lead to the lakefront, which offers deep water off the docks. ROYAL LEPAGE LAKES OF MUSKOKA - CLARKE MUSKOKA REALTY



This property in Oro-Medonte on Kempenfelt Bay was listed at \$12.9 million. It’s located on 17.5 acres and features an infinity pool with a swim-up bar and a hot tub located on 725 feet of pristine waterfront. ROYAL LEPAGE LAKES OF MUSKOKA - CLARKE MUSKOKA REALTY

Last year’s demand for cottages was unprecedented, with buyers scouring cottage country in search of a lakeside haven. This created a seller’s market, and the industry is expecting more of the same this year.

“There’s a fervour in the desire to own a piece of the cottage country,” says Phil Soper, president and CEO of Royal LePage. “It started last summer and has run consistently through the winter and into spring.”

Some realtors showed properties on islands accessible only by snowmobiles or by walking across a frozen lake. Some buyers purchased properties unseen. With demand for recreation properties up across the country, Soper calls it “a national phenomenon.”

Demand is highest in Ontario and that’s reflected in price increases. “Not just in the double digits but in the 20 per cent range,” Soper says, “which is very high and is compounded because we saw that kind of increase in 2020 over 2019.”

PANDEMIC: ACCELERATED DREAMS
Shawn Woof, senior vice president of sales with Sotheby’s International Realty Canada, agrees the Canadian dream of having a cottage is stronger than ever.

“If people can’t travel, they want to know they have somewhere else to go. For most, having a cottage offers a feeling of escape and luxury,” he says. For many, the pandemic accelerated their dream of owning a cottage. Others expect to be able to continue to work from home once the pandemic is over.

“If they find good internet and a year-round opportunity, they’re on the move full time,” Woof says.

The number of cottages and cabins on the market is “relatively low” and agents are accepting multiple offers on properties “both above and below the \$1-million price tag, both lakefront and riverfront, and even off-water properties,” he reports.

Markets like Haliburton, Georgian Bay and the Rideau Lakes close to Ottawa are experiencing “unusually high price appreciation” but demand is “fairly consistent across the board,” says Soper. “There is moderation in recreational condominiums. Prices tend to be rising at a normal rate — in single digits to high single digits.”

Realtors in Atlantic Canada and to a lesser extent in B.C. are reporting significant demand from Ontario. “People have long known the south shore of Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island and parts of Newfoundland are beautiful places to buy inexpensive recreational property and what holds them back is the distance,” Soper says. “The distance seems to have been less crucial over the last couple of

seasons, probably because people think of that kind of recreational property not as a getaway for a week or two on vacation, but as a place they’ll go to work remotely for at least part of the year.”

COMPROMISE IS KEY

If you’re committed to buying a cottage this year, be willing to compromise on the ideal property, which is typically turnkey, located on a lake with southwest exposure on a fairly level lot, and offers year-round access.

“If you’re looking for something like that, chances are you’re going to be competing with a lot of other buyers,” Woof says.

If you’re willing to consider a riverfront property, an island property or an off-the-water property that’s close to a lake, for instance, you open yourself up to opportunities others might not consider. In fact, a growing number of prospective buyers are willing to drive further to achieve their dream of cottage ownership.

“A lot of people have moved to smaller lakes past Huntsville because they’re not getting in on the lake that they were once able to buy a cottage for \$500,000 — that doesn’t exist,” says Re/Max broker Leah Ambler.

Interest is also growing in small pieces of recreational farmland in areas like Prince Edward County, Belleville and Kingston.

“People are simply seeing it as a way to get a few acres and get away from the city,” Soper says.

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LUXURY LIVING

Four developers discuss impact of COVID-19 on luxury condo builds

PAUL BARKER
Special to Postmedia Network

The pandemic's influence on how luxury high-rise and boutique projects are being built, designed and sold is immense and understandable.

When lockdowns happen, the need for more personal space is intensified, and according to four developers involved in four distinct projects, it's impacting everything from size of units to the type of amenities being offered.

Julie Di Lorenzo, president of Diamante Development Corp., a developer whose latest project is the twin-tower Mirabella Luxury Condominiums at 1920 Lakeshore Blvd. W, says there is no question that COVID-19 has caused everyone in the building business to reconsider design.

"We implemented touchless door sensors in response to COVID, and under LEED and Toronto Green Standards, installed in-suite energy recovery ventilation (ERV) for enhanced indoor air quality and dedicated fresh air quality for each unit," she says, adding, "we anticipated the changes and designed Mirabella with larger proportions. For example, our two bedrooms range from 780 sq. ft. to just under 1,000 sq. ft., where most projects have two bedrooms at 600 sq. ft. and 800 sq. ft. Projects brag about how compact suites are, and we brag about how spacious the rooms and layouts are."

Once built, Mirabella will also contain increased open spaces for outdoor activities and increased amenities for indoor activities.

As for the decision to install ERV systems and touchless door openers, Di Lorenzo adds that even after the design was complete and under construction, they saw how these could improve the client experience.

The insatiable quest for more space is also evident at three luxury boutique projects: 89 Avenue Yorkville by Armour Heights Developments, North Drive Investments' 10 Prince Arthur and Altree Development's Forest Hill Private Residents.

Frank Mazzotta, president of Armour Heights, has modelled 89 Avenue Yorkville after 815 Fifth Ave. in New York City, located directly across from Central Park.

The eventual design will contain what has been described as pre-war New York inspired architecture, and with pricing for the 30-35 units starting at \$4.5 million, opulence will be everywhere.

According to Mazzotta, every unit is fully customizable and aimed at people who want to move from large family homes, but are not prepared to alter their lifestyle.

"The Armour Heights model revolves around a one-on-one discussion with clients and effectively designing their dream home in every detail that is customizable," he says. "And because we've got this small floor plate which is 45 feet in width by almost 300 feet in depth, we can really customize these suites because we don't

have massive sheer walls and columns and everything else. We can span quite a bit."

A two-minute walk west of this location is 10 Prince Arthur, a seven-storey 25-suite project in which the starting price is \$4 million, and the average unit size is expected to be around 2,500 sq. ft.

"At North Drive, we've experienced tremendous pent-up demand from those that are living in large homes in midtown Toronto, raised their families, and are contemplating the next move," says Jordan Morassutti, the firm's co-founder and partner. "And they're not looking to downsize per se. It's more about single-level living and reallocation of space. Rather than being in a five-bedroom home on three levels, they're looking at suites that occupy roughly the same area as their existing homes, but have grand areas to live, work and entertain both indoor and out."

The intent of a project like 10 Prince Arthur, he says, is to provide an opportunity for people to transition to a single-level living environment, while still staying in the neighbourhood they raised their families in.

As for the impact the pandemic has on client requests and their needs, Morassutti says "we've seen a shift away from the open concept plans to plans that more or less mimic the programming that exist in their current homes. We've seen significant demand for dining rooms, separate living family rooms, oftentimes his-and-her offices."

The continued need for more space is one reason why the number of units at the upscale Forest Hill Residences, to be located at 2 Forest Hill Rd., have been reduced from the original plans.

President and CEO of Altree Developments Zev Mandelbaum notes that prior to the pandemic, the nine-storey building was scheduled to contain 94 units ranging in size from 700 sq. ft. to just under 2,000 sq. ft. And with pricing starting at \$1.8 million, it was anticipated that the average size would be in the 1,200-1,500 sq. foot range.

Since then, the number of units has been reduced to the mid-80s, with the average unit being sold closing in on the 3,000 sq. ft. mark that carries a \$6 million+ price tag.

Mandelbaum explains that typical clients are looking at downsizing, but not downpricing.

"What they are looking for is a larger condo, way bigger than you think," says Mandelbaum. "They are looking for a 3,000 sq. ft. unit. They can still entertain, have their kids over, feel comfortable, and at the same time have all these amazing amenities. They're willing to pay for it."

In terms of the amenities that will be offered once the structure is built, these include 24-hour valet service, a 20-seat dining room and lounge, fitness studio, heated indoor swimming pool with adjoining wet and dry saunas, as well as an outdoor space with a lounge and dining area.



COURTESY OF NORTH DRIVE INVESTMENTS

At 10 Prince Arthur, expect a shift towards larger separate spaces for living, dining, and working.



PURBLINK AND ARMOUR HEIGHTS DEVELOPMENTS

The 89 Avenue Yorkville project features opulent spaces, and the pool is no exception.



COURTESY OF ALTREE DEVELOPMENTS

Forest Hill Private Residences will include many onsite amenities, including a 20-seat dining room and lounge.



COURTESY OF DIAMANTE DEVELOPMENT CORP.

Waterfront Mirabella will provide large outdoor spaces like this open terrace.

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LUXURY LIVING

How to create a lavish pied-à-terre

PAUL BARKER
Special to Postmedia Network

New York, London, Montreal, or Toronto: the location of a pied-à-terre doesn't matter, but what does matter is creating a unit that oozes with class and fits the individual tastes and needs of each owner.

There's nothing understated about two pied-à-terre projects Hibou Design & Co. is currently working on. One is for parents in Shanghai whose children are attending university in Canada, and another is for a couple based in the Bahamas who plan to spend time in this country.

"They both want to look fantastic," says co-founder Eugenia Triandos. "The clients from Shanghai will not have long stays when they come here — a weekend to see their children, but still, they want it to be a

luxurious and fun escape for when they're on vacation.

"The other couple that is coming in from the Bahamas will likely be retiring at this home and then having a back-and-forth scenario with an extended stay — spending time here over the course of several months in the summer or over the Christmas holidays."

No matter how frequently a second home is used, Triandos says the key is to get a good understanding of what a couple or an individual is looking for and how they intend to use the space.

Questions need to be answered, like how often will they be spending time in it, and for how long? What sort of entertaining will they be doing? Do they have a social life here or is it more of a vacation home?

Typically, she adds, a client wants a minimal but luxurious design, almost akin to living in a five-star

hotel, which is a good thing for an interior designer.

"When there is not so much of a need for storage, which often happens in a second residence, it allows us to have a little bit more fun with lighter nightstands that may not have as many drawers as normal, or furniture that's lighter and feels less bulky because it doesn't have to double as a storage piece," she says. "It does allow us a lot more flexibility in terms of what I can do. As a designer, it gives me a little bit of freedom."

It also helps that money is never an issue.

"Sometimes when they go into a project, a client might think they can get it done for a certain amount," she says, "but then they start talking about all the luxuries that they want to start putting into their unit, it becomes a very different conversation."

Money aside, another key component lies in creating a clear level of trust.

"With a pied-à-terre, it is always starting from scratch, which allows us to take a very creative direction," she explains. "I do feel that most of the pied-à-terres that we do are based on aesthetic and design style versus comfort and function. That is pretty much the common theme. It is their second home that they can have fun with because they already have everything they need in their primary residence."



HIBOU DESIGN & CO

Pied-à-terre design is minimal, like a five-star hotel.



HIBOU DESIGN & CO

Storage isn't a high priority for a second home in the city.



HIBOU DESIGN & CO

Designers factor in how much time people plan to spend at their pied-à-terre.

The RV revolution will be

NICOLE EDWARDS
Special to Postmedia Network

Although wanderlust is common these days, there's truly no place like home. It's the little, everyday things that people often miss while they're away — their favourite coffee, that perfect duvet, or taking the dog for an early morning stroll. With property outside of downtown in higher demand than it's been in years, securing a cottage may be a challenge this summer. However, a little out-of-the-box thinking presents a fantastic option that's overlooked.

Luxury recreational vehicles, or luxury RVs, let vacationers indulge in the comforts of home against different backdrops, whether it's parked near a quiet lakeside, or exploring on the open road. This season, they offer the ideal balance of privacy, a change of scenery, and the chance to create a dreamy home away from home.

Whether you're shopping for a second home on wheels or looking to test one out, A-class RVs come in lots of different shapes and sizes. Treated as a blank canvas, there are myriad ways to take them from rustic to luxe — from stocking the fridge with local gourmet delicacies, to choosing upgraded layouts with large master bedrooms, fitted with your soft linens.

For inspiration, renters need look no further than Forest River Hemisphere, an RV available to be delivered

to a campsite of your choosing. (Explore options in Pictou to take advantage of Prince Edward County's vibrant food and drink options when stocking your fridge.)

This RV is the ideal homestead for someone who's part country mouse, part city mouse. The 42-foot RV's interior boasts a dedicated theatre area, equipped with a big screen television and four reclining seats. Screen movies or TV shows over a meal prepared in the fully functional kitchen, or for a more formal feel, bring along your preferred finishing touches for the table and dine in the RV's four-person dining room. Or set up a patio under the vehicle's retractable awning, where you can barbecue and lounge next to your mobile oasis, rain or shine. To unwind, spend quality time sipping a regional rosé while soaking in a bubble bath on board, or curl up in front of the living room's fireplace with a book. If you like, venture out into nature and get some fresh air, though staying in bed and enjoying the scenery through the master bedroom window is a fine option too.

For those looking to invest in a long-term home away from home this season, RVs on the market come reminiscent of celebrity tour buses. Trade throngs of fans for fronds of flowers, but compromise nothing else. With the 2021 Newmar King Aire model, buyers are able to customize every last detail, from the paint on the outside of the vehicle, to

the countertop, backsplash and floor tiling. Add an in-motion satellite dish to complement the exterior and interior entertainment centres, where vacationers can enjoy 49-inch displays in sun or shade. In the kitchen, house your favourite cookware in European-style cabinetry with soft-closing doors, and cook your summer staples on an induction stovetop. Recline on Italian leather sofas, and take in a panoramic view of the scenery that surrounds through the unit's lengthy, bonded windows.

Long-term stays are entirely possible with elevated RVs, making it hassle-free to be "working from road" instead of WFH. Basics like Wi-Fi re easily installed, and for anyone who needs to have the occasional in-person meeting, there's no reason to double back to freshen up. This model's cedar-panneled wardrobe offers ample space to pack clothes for any occasion, be it a business lunch, outdoor hike, or a day on the golf course. Plus, spa-like bathroom options like a glass-paneled shower with detailed tilework, and an optional skylight, make starting or ending your day a relaxing, refreshing endeavour.

Whether roaming or stationary, RVs can do all the qualities of a high-end hotel, hidden in plain sight. By adding a personal touch to a rental option, or completely customizing a brand-new vehicle, RVs are a creative way to reimagine home.



NEWMAR KING AIRE

Viking Fridge and expandable pantry, kitchen.



NEWMAR KING AIRE

Master bedroom with TV and fireplace.



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