HIGHLAND ROMANCE

Rebecca Pattinson built her peaceful hideaway from scratch, with a mountain landscape as a backdrop and a loch on her doorstep.

FEATURE SARA SARRE | PHOTOGRAPHY ALEXANDER JAMES

R ebecca Pattinson saw the site of her new home while out walking in the Scottish Highlands with her boyfriend Anthony. “We looked down from the top of a mountain and thought, ‘Wouldn’t it be wonderful to live here?’” she recalls. Her family already owned the land, so it was just a matter of getting planning permission. “My childhood holidays were in this neck of the woods, but I chose to live far away in Monaco, where I’m a yacht broker. As I grew older I started to fantasise about the possibility of owning a home here.”

There was, however, a drawback to the spectacular location — a complete absence of an electricity supply or telecommunications. “We had to dig several trenches,” says Rebecca, “which cost a lot more than was originally quoted.” A borehole, meanwhile, gives access to a natural spring to provide a water supply.

Rebecca chose to build a traditional house in keeping with the area and, to counteract any impact on the natural environment, she also planted 180 trees. “The local people are very accommodating and I didn’t want to put something up that was out of place,” she explains. Beyond that, her first priority was the views. “I asked myself what I wanted to wake up to, or to see while I work,” explains Rebecca. When the foundations were put down, she realised that the study wasn’t in quite the right place. “The builders shifted everything by two metres — they were very patient,” she laughs.

Light was an important factor in the design, too. In the summer it rarely gets dark, but in winter there...
SITTING ROOM

Rebecca was keen that this space was homely but at the same time had the air of a luxury hotel. The bookcases give a lived-in feeling, as does the natural oak flooring. Barrington woodburning stove, £1,464, Chesney’s. Walls in Shaded White emulsion, £32.50 for 2.5 litres, Farrow & Ball. Natural oak floorboards, from £36.50/sq m, Natural Wood Floor Co.

KITCHEN-DINER

'I wanted this part of the house to work as both a cooking and eating area,' says Rebecca. Hand-painted kitchen, around £35,000, Smallbone of Devizes. The Dorchester, £175.50, The Cotswold Company, has a similar look to this pine dining table.

Get inspiration at housetohome.co.uk/25beautifulhomes
MASTER BEDROOM
A white, grey and beige palette, clever lighting and simple accessories make for a dream scheme.
Richmond ottoman, £795, The White Company.
Classic bedlinen, £350 for a complete set, Josephine Home.
Cashmere rug, £69.99, Heritage of Scotland.

are just four hours of daylight. Windows have been positioned all around the house, while in the bedroom sliding doors make it easy to black out.

For the furnishings, Rebecca worked closely with designer Alan McVitty. 'I had no idea what my taste was until I had this place,' she says. To lend character, Alan suggested putting in bookshelves, but Rebecca didn't have any books. 'I'm always on the move so I don't collect things,' she explains. Instead, she bought someone's entire library on eBay. 'It will take a lifetime to read them all,' she smiles.

Happily, the project itself didn't take that long and was completed in only six months. 'I used all of my savings,' says Rebecca, 'but I always knew it would be a house for life. It was worth every penny.'

LESSONS LEARNT
'I could write a book on this, but one of the most important things is to always be prepared to double your budget.'

MARTER BATHROOM
The marble tops and handmade units lend understated luxury.
Bespoke cabinets, McVitty, price on request. For similar wall lights with silk shades, try Library, £615, Porta Romana.

GUEST BEDROOM
Florals, tartans and plains give a classic country feel.
Curtains in Roslyn Embroidery in Emerald and Rose, £78m, Sanderson.
Building a traditional house

Want to create a home that fits in with the local landscape and architecture as effortlessly as Rebecca Pattinson’s? Consider these points before making a start...

Choosing to build a new home in a vernacular style can have several advantages: your property will be constructed using locally sourced materials, which supports nearby businesses and reduces your carbon footprint; it will also reflect the surrounding architecture and blend with the landscape, preserving the location’s authenticity. And with the right architect and builder on board, you can employ modern methods to maximise your home’s energy efficiency, while respecting the area’s heritage in the building’s exterior and creating a design-led, contemporary interior.

LOOK AT LOCAL ARCHITECTURE

Before commissioning an architect, it pays to undertake some research to help formulate your ideas. Look at the building materials used in the area and bear in mind that these can change dramatically within just a few miles. Most traditional buildings are built from locally quarried stone or brick specific to the region – from the red sandstone buildings of Edinburgh to the yellow stone of Bath and the mellow browns and yellows of London stock brick. And in areas where the stone belt declines, the quantity of timber-framed properties generally increases. Taking these variations as a starting point, think about how you can combine these materials and architecture with a modern layout that suits your needs. Take photos of inspiring buildings, making a note of their location, and collate a scrapbook that will help you identify the most appropriate style and finish.

BEAR IN MIND...

- Make a list of your requirements – you may wish to balance modern concerns, such as energy efficiency and the use of insulation, with traditional methods of building. A good architect and builder will help you unify your approach.
- Building in the local vernacular need not be a restraint; it is what’s on the inside that matters. Make the most of your internal layout – open-plan living areas, en-suite bathrooms and large, central kitchens can all work well with a traditional exterior.
- When it comes to setting your budget, creating a period style can be expensive because materials such as stone are more costly, while traditional building methods can be labour-intensive. Be prepared to compromise on some points.
- Closely survey your intended plot. Think about how you intend to make the most of its natural advantages, such as far-reaching views and sunlight, through windows and room positions.
- You will have to achieve the balance between what you want, what local planning requires and what you can afford. A successful build fulfils all of these criteria.

MEET THE EXPERTS

Get on board with your local planning officials early on in the project. Planning departments often offer useful advice on traditional building materials in the area and can give an insight into recently approved new-builds in terms of their style and design to ensure that you are on the right track. Try enlisting the help of the area’s conservation officers, too, who can offer a wealth of knowledge on building styles. If, for example, you are recreating a Georgian-style design to blend sympathetically with other properties nearby, your local conservation department may be able to recommend suppliers and craftsmen who have the skills and materials required to build in the correct vernacular. And don’t forget that local museums and libraries offer valuable photographic evidence of buildings in the area. Finally, appoint an architect with a thorough understanding of the style in which you wish to build. Ask to see a portfolio of similar projects.

ADDRESS BOOK

- THE INSTITUTE OF HISTORIC BUILDING CONSERVATION 01747 873333, ihbc.org.uk
  Represents conservation professionals in the UK with links to the Republic of Ireland, too.
- ROYAL TOWN PLANNING INSTITUTE 0330 123 9244, rtpi.org.uk
  The Planning Aid Advice line of RTPI offers up to 15 minutes of free planning guidance to callers.
- ROYAL INSTITUTE OF BRITISH ARCHITECTS 020 7580 5533, architecture.com
  The UK’s professional body of architects, offering extensive information to homeowners and self-builders.
- BUILD STORE 0845 223 4888, buildstore.co.uk
  Useful advice for those taking on their own project, including information on budget planning and buying materials.