



going back
to basics

These cosy cabins in the woods offer
nothing but the bare essentials and
unparalleled tranquillity

Photography Célia Uhalde



OWNER'S BRIEF

The architects were asked to create a series of minimalist cabins that would transport visitors far away from the hustle and bustle of everyday life. Their design needed to embrace the locality of place, including the historic vernacular, as well as limiting its technological features as much as possible.

Although the very thought of a weekend retreat void of both internet and phone reception is enough to strike fear into the heart of more than just your average Millennial (yes Boomer and Gen X, we're looking at you too), sometimes it's exactly what we need. A place with no distractions, notification-free, where all you have is the freedom to reconnect not only with nature, but also with yourself. Enlisted to design a retreat which would do just so, here FRÖHLICH GASSNER ARCHITEKTEN offers its take on the secluded cabin. Promising escape from both the real and digital worlds, this project comprises three builds in total; two cabin structures as well as a timber-framed sauna. Though almost identical in terms of aesthetics with shadowy facades, intermittent glazing and pared-back interiors, the two lodges are conceptually quite different. The first is designed for congregation, the second for solitude. Sleeping four, the larger build has more of an open feel, presenting spaces that illicit conversation and interaction between staying guests as well as with the outdoors. Meanwhile the second build, smaller in terms of floor-space yet taller in terms of stature, utilises a functionality-per-floor approach and accommodates only two. Set upon thick, monolithic concrete foundations, all of the structures bear thoughtful glazing plans that allow visitors to connect to nature as they move through each dwelling. "Sometimes you look out into the distance, sometimes into nature, and sometimes there is just a dialogue with your own terrace." And with much to explore, both within the confines of these charcoal walls and in the green space beyond, we're almost certain you'll find such a tech-free weekend is just what the doctor ordered.





HOME PROFILE

Three blackened timber cabins sit upon monolithic concrete foundations in Germany's countryside. The first of the trio is a house that extends over two levels, designed to sleep up to four across two bedrooms. The second, bearing a smaller footprint, rises up over three floors of pale pine-lined interiors yet accommodates only two guests. The first of its three levels is for cooking and eating, the second is for bathing with a free-standing tub that looks out into the greenery behind the glass and finally, tucked under the roofscape, is a rest space. The third and final cabin is a sauna. Taking things back to basics in a nature-first approach, technology has been limited in each build.

LOCATION
Reckenthal, Germany

PROJECT SIZE
110 sq. m

ARCHITECT'S QUESTIONS

In what ways do the cabins help visitors disconnect? We tried to avoid the use of technology. For example, there is no mobile phone reception in this place. There is also the possibility to switch off Wi-Fi if necessary. Water is boiled with a pot on the cooker instead of a kettle, and washing up is done by hand. There is only lighting, a cooker and a refrigerator. Everything else has been designed to work as analogue as possible.

How do the cabins interact with the surroundings? The rooms in the houses are placed in such a way that there is always something new to discover. The windows have also been placed accordingly. Sometimes you look out into the distance, sometimes into nature, and sometimes there is just a dialogue with your own terrace.

What sustainable elements have been implemented in the design? As little surface area as possible was used for each property. This way, the houses have a small footprint. In addition, all paths were designed as percolation-capable surfaces. Rainwater is collected and used to irrigate the garden. Due to the wooden construction, a lot of CO₂ is bound.

Can you tell us more about the concrete foundations? Because the houses are made of wood, a concrete foundation had to be built so that the wood would not be damaged. The concrete foundations have a very small area and seal little of the land.

What was most important to get right with the interior design? When designing the interior we wanted to make each room special. The windows were aligned in such a way that they offer great views. In addition, all surfaces, except in the bathrooms, are made of wood. This gives the rooms a cosiness. The bathrooms were tiled with mosaics. All fittings, light switches, lights and handrails are made of white coated metal.

What inspired the height of the dwellings? The fact that the houses are built high up has something to do with the small plot of land. The views into the distance were important. Every view from the window is something special.

A pine coating leaves the ceilings, walls and floors acting as a singular cocoon. This creates a cosiness that puts guests instantly at ease and oozes a much-welcomed warmth





Detailed glazing has been designed so that no matter where guests are, they maintain a connection with the natural world. Here, visitors can sit, eat and converse within this built-in nook while views of the greening hills lie unassumingly in the background



To ensure as little harm to the surroundings as possible, the architects have built upwards rather than outwards on compact plots



"WHEN DESIGNING THE INTERIOR, IT WAS IMPORTANT TO MAKE EACH ROOM SPECIAL"

"ALL SURFACES, EXCEPT IN THE BATHROOMS, ARE MADE OF WOOD"



PROJECT NOTES

ARCHITECT & INTERIOR DESIGNER
FRÖHLICH GASSNER ARCHITEKTEN

LANDSCAPER
Pö-a-Pö
Gartenplanung

STRUCTURAL ENGINEER
Ahrens Ingenieure

TIMBER CONSTRUCTION
Lignum hoch 3

WOODWORK
Funke & Späne

FLOORING
Liguori

LIGHTING
Louis Poulsen;
Astro Lighting;
In-lite

FITTINGS
Vola

SAUNA
Sauna nach Maß



Committing to minimising distractions, a pared-back approach to the styling of the cabins includes a restrained material palette, built-in furniture and minimal embellishments