



Building a Log Home on the

Water



An interview with Ehren Graf,
National Home Consultant at Wisconsin Log Homes.

What changes when you decide to build a log home on water? What are some of the first, key considerations that consumers should be thinking about?

When working with waterfront property, the water becomes a priority focus while designing the home. First and foremost, you should take advantage of the views. Careful placement of rooms the homeowners want to enjoy the views from should be taken into consideration right from the start. Major spaces like the great room, kitchen and dining area, master bedroom, and screen porch or four-season room are generally placed on the waterside of the home and usually feature large expanses of glass.

Another thing to consider is outdoor accessibility. Entrances to and from the water should be convenient for guests and homeowners alike. Think about providing an outside door to a bathroom or laundry/mudroom area. This space should make it easy for people to shower or clean-up in for minimal messes. Patio doors or nana walls provide great indoor/outdoor access

from the main living area to the outdoors.

Of course, outdoor living space is another key factor. At Wisconsin Log Homes, we've designed everything from simple quaint patios to luxurious outdoor sanctuaries featuring amenities such as outdoor grilling stations, kitchens, dining areas, cocktail bars, fireplaces, hot tubs, pools, gazebos, pergolas, pavilions and so forth. Private balconies or patios off a master suite or other area are also frequently implemented into our designs. If you live in a buggy area, a screened porch or four-season room might be a good idea as well.

Most homeowners who live on the water also need storage space for boats and other water equipment or toys. Building a boat house near the water to coordinate with the main home usually makes for great storage space. Otherwise, many homeowners opt to put an additional garage door on the water side of their home to accommodate their storage needs.

Last but not least, you and your designer should also take into consideration what your neighbors have done or will be forced to do in the future. Design your house accordingly so you do not have unwanted views from certain areas throughout your home. In many cases, the slope or shape of your neighbor's property will effect what you design.

What design challenges does a log home on a lake, river or ocean present?

Sometimes, building your home on the water means working around very steep slopes or contending with bluffs. Many areas also have very stringent setbacks and building requirements you have to work around.

You might also have tree lines to contend with while situating the house to achieve the best views and most functional floor plan.

It's crucial that you choose a designer who is experienced and knowledgeable when it comes to designing a home for these types of locations.

How can a homeowner and his/her designer work around these issues?

As with building a home in any location, a homeowner should work closely with their designer to achieve a floor plan that will fit their unique needs, style, location and budget. Communicate openly with your designers - prioritize your needs and verbalize your budget right from the start. As with every piece of property, there are always going to be factors to work around. You might be forced to have a walk-out basement because of the steep slope, or you may have to place your home in a specific location because of local building codes and setbacks. The important thing is that you are able to create a floor plan that accommodates the lifestyle of its homeowners, while also blending in naturally with its surroundings.



What issues should be taken into consideration during the construction process?

On steep properties, it can be difficult for construction crews to get access to the property and it can sometimes be a challenge to work on. In some cases, a crew may need a crane to help set walls and other machinery to help expedite the construction of the home. For example, we are currently working on a waterfront project with an extreme 45 degree slope. The foundation and site work needed to be engineered and approved. Excavation and installation of the foundation is much more involved and complicated than it would be on a flat building site. You will also have to consider the design of the septic system layout, how it's going to impact where the home can be placed, setbacks and local codes.

Be sure that the company you are dealing with does more than just provide a log home materials package. It is imperative that you work with someone who can properly design and construct your home, and help you throughout the entire process and all that is involved. The process is fairly easy if you are working with the right people.

What ongoing maintenance issues are of utmost importance for log homeowners whose abodes are situated on the water? What advice can you give the owner who has to manage these maintenance issues?

Wisconsin Log Homes' energy efficient Thermal-Log™ Building System is the most easily maintained log home system you'll find in the industry. Based on the design of our building system, these homes don't require any maintenance other than exterior staining every few years, no matter where the home is located. Any home, especially homes located on the water, are meant to be a place to relax and enjoy, not a place to do more work.

