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how to spend it interiors edition



From top: Red Bridge House, by Piers Smerin of Smerin Architects, is set amid 22 acres of woodland in East Sussex. The pool room opens out onto the terrace



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it represents a chance to build something original and evocative.

Scandinavian architects have long experience of bringing a true sense of delight to an old and familiar typology. On the northern Norwegian island of Manshausen, polar explorer Børge Ousland commissioned architect Snorre Stinessen to design a striking quartet of cabins (pictured on previous pages) as guest accommodation for his "getting away from it all" resort, which opened two years ago. Here the beauty of the coastal setting is everything, and Stinessen's response was a series of glass-fronted, larch-clad cabins perched upon old stone quays – the only remnant of a fishermen's warehouse that once stood on the site. The cabins cantilever out over the water, with the big windows framing panoramic views of the waterways, and offer the lightest physical touch on an extraordinary place.

"Strictly speaking, there would have been room for more cabins on the quay, but we chose to give priority to the individual qualities of each cabin and emphasise privacy and the individual views from each one," says Stinessen, who has worked on a number of cabin

projects. "The idea of the cantilever enhances the contrast between light and heavy, new and old, but also gives you this feeling of floating above the sea."

For Ousland, the idea of a sequence of individual cabins was far more enticing than the notion of a single large hotel. He compares the cabins to boats, connected to the open vistas of the water. "A larger structure wouldn't do justice to a place such as Manshausen,"

says Ousland. "It's much better to have private space where you can retreat with your own thoughts and experiences. But really it's the natural surroundings that play the main role. There are very few places on earth where you can find such a pristine environment."

The organic character of the modern cabin lends itself to a range of landscapes. In England, architect Piers Smerin of Smerin Architects was partly inspired by the model of barns and agricultural sheds when he was commissioned to design a new home (pictured on this page) among 22 acres of woodland in East Sussex. The woodland setting led Smerin towards a natural palette of materials, although the form of the house – plus a complementary timber building nearby known as the Wood House, which holds a garage, workshop and guest