

Cordillera Ranch captures spectacular views from every room

Richard A. Marini | Nov. 13, 2020



Large windows in front and back of the Cordillera Ranch home give visitors a see-through glimpse of the view off in the distance.

Photo: Robin Jerstad /Contributor

Perched high on a bluff overlooking wide expanses of wooded Texas Hill Country, a new home in Cordillera Ranch has taken the classic Country house and turned it on its head.

With walls of glass framed by thick black metal, sharp-cut limestone stacked more like bricks than a patchwork quilt and minimal, modern, 7,300-square-foot, four-bedroom home keeps it simple so that nothing interrupts the views captured in every room. And in sight.

Working with architect Jim Terrian of J. Terrian Designs, the homeowners, who requested their names not be used in this story, oriented rooms to follow the curve the bluff, capturing views of more than 180 degrees of the surrounding countryside through the house in the County resort community north of San Antonio.

The home was just completed in September after 12 months of planning and 18 months of actual building.

Perhaps the most obvious difference between the home and more traditional Hill Country dwellings is the use of limestone from the north of Abilene.

“Lueders limestone is more gray than brown like traditional limestone,” said Trey Garner, owner of Garner Homes, which built the home. The undertone makes the stones appear more white than their yellowy Hill Country cousins. “So it’s more up-to-date. You don’t see a lot of it’s a great color for a modern scheme.”

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Also, the large limestone bricks used for the home’s exterior, the interior foyer and the fireplace, are all coursed, meaning they’re the same height, so there’s a straight line along the mortar joints. This, Garner explained, means they can be stacked more like bricks, instead of together in a jumble like in a lot of limestone building.

“It has a much cleaner look,” Garner said. Adding to that clean, modern feeling are the light-colored floors throughout the house, which rise anywhere from 12 to 18 feet high.

But it’s all about the views. The entryway and living room are basically an all-glass box, meaning that visitors have an immediate view all the way through to the woods on the other side as they approach the house.

Inside, virtually every room — including the three guest rooms and the two home offices — has large windows and has been oriented to capture Hill Country views.

At the center of the house, the great room has the living room, dining room and kitchen in a single, large open space. But there’s an entry located outside the kitchen instead of the more typical location off the living room to keep the views from the living and dining rooms.

“We had a lot of discussion about this,” Garner said. “We set the patio outside the kitchen and left the area outside the living and dining rooms open so you can see the full sky. The view’s not limited by a porch ceiling.”

The large, airy kitchen has dark cabinets echoing the black metal framing of the nearby walls of windows and a large, marble-topped island with plenty of space around it. According to Garner, the owners, who split their time between Texas and Southern California, wanted the kitchen so that one person could easily pass another without having to squeeze by.

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The butler’s pantry behind the kitchen, fairly hidden but accessible by open doorways on both sides, also impresses. This “back kitchen” has open shelving for small appliances and a small library’s worth of cookbooks and cabinets for china and tableware. It has an island providing additional prep space perfect for entertaining.

Project manager Jennie Briggs said the owners wanted the open shelving for easy access and so things wouldn’t get lost or forgotten behind closed cabinet doors. But while everything is accessible from the back kitchen, none of it is visible from the living areas of the house.

The covered patio includes two facing porch swings, a seating area with a couch and chairs, and a well-appointed kitchen with sink and pizza oven. There’s a handsome infinity pool in the middle area with a combination of large concrete stepping stones and an ipe wood deck.

“The site is elevated, so there’s always a nice breeze to keep the bugs away,” Garner said. “And if not, there are motorized screens that make this a fully screened-in porch.”

In the master suite on one side of the house, the homeowners' bedroom is surprisingly small and spartan, measuring 16 feet by 19 feet. It features a linear fireplace and a television. But this is very on-trend, according to Briggs.

"We're seeing many more clients tell us they only want enough space to sleep," she said. "Instead of a separate seating area, they want square footage where the entire family can use it."

Some of that extra space went to the master bath, where there are two large, separate vanities and two show-stopping, walk-in closets. The space seems to disappear in the distance, marble topped islands and windows to let in plenty of natural light.

Extra space was also given to the two long hallways that radiate out from the front foyer, the hallway walls serving as galleries for the homeowners' and extensive collection of photographs. Some are photos they've taken themselves while others are works from masters of the art world.

The artwork collection goes beyond the hallway galleries. In one bedroom, for example, is a print of Marilyn Monroe signed and numbered by photographer Alfred Eisenstaedt.

Cordillera Ranch has a strict architectural approval process for homes that can be built there. Yet this Modern Hill Country house still feels like a hill country home while still adhering to the rules, according to Terrian, the architect.

"We used materials that are similar, but with slight differences to those used in other homes in the area," he said. "The Lueders limestone, the lime-to-ceiling windows and the metal components together give it a more modern, almost resort-style look."

Together they make the home the perfect area to sit back, relax and enjoy that view.

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