



San Juan Island:

A REBUILT CABIN OVER THE WATER

In the early 1990s, Sandra Wilson, a former San Franciscan, was looking for a "quiet place close to water and nature." She found it on San Juan Island. She bought a 1960s-era summer cabin fronting Griffin Bay near the town of Friday Harbor and asked Seattle architect Geoffrey Prentiss to rebuild it. She wanted him to keep it "simple but elegant, in the rustic island style."

True to her wishes, there is nothing flashy about this 517-square-foot house on a 1/2-acre lot.

Extending out from a bank, the house is built on old piers: at high tide, 80 percent of the structure and the three decks that wrap around it stand over the water.

Smooth cedar siding, simple angles, and large exposed beams over the deck give the house a contemporary Northwest look. The roof is covered with sod so that from the road above, the house looks like a patch of grass surrounded by lilacs and shrub roses.

The interior floor plan is basically one large triangular space, which includes the sleeping area, with a bathroom attached. When Wilson looks out the big windows onto the water, she can watch eagles, geese, herons, and kingfishers.

Wilson divides her spare time between kayaking and gardening. She stores her kayak in a detached shed and starts summer annuals in the adjoining greenhouse, then sets the plants out in built-in planters and containers for splashes of color around the deck.

What she likes best about the house is "the way it's integrated into its surroundings. The quail walk across the deck, and an otter lives under it," Wilson says.



Orange-trimmed windows and doors (top) open onto a cedar deck overlooking the water. Fir beams, trim, and floor bring the warmth of wood into the cabin.

San Juan, the second-largest island in the archipelago, covers 55 square miles. ♦ **Access:** Public ferry; 90 minutes from Anacortes. ♦ **Population:** 6,119 full-time residents, many of them retirees. ♦ **Cost:** Real estate prices range from \$85,000 for a simple cabin on an inland site to \$7 million for a grand house on the water. A standard 1/2-acre waterfront lot sells for \$180,000; add a view of the Olympic Mountains and the price goes up to \$250,000. ♦ **Amenities:** The port town of Friday Harbor is the island's commercial center, with restaurants, and grocery, hardware, and garden supply shops. Two-lane country roads crisscross the island, leading to state and national historic parks, including the site where American and British troops clashed during the Pig War of 1859.