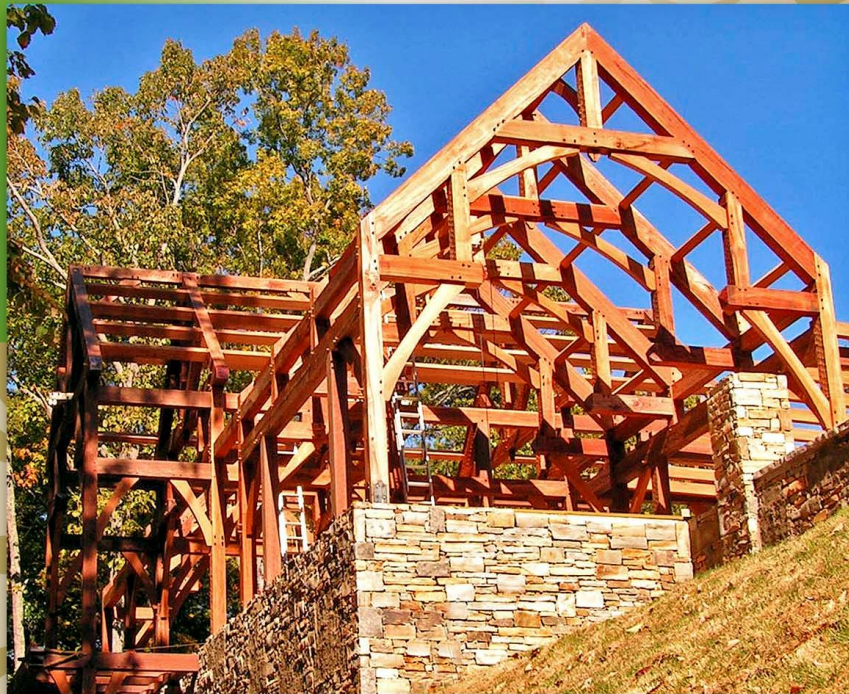




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A "Green" Company Shows it's True Colors

Say the words "exotic woods" and "Brazil" in the same sentence and you're bound to provoke a negative reaction from many people. They have no doubt heard reports of how the rain forest is being systematically razed by short-sighted, profit-hungry outsiders, and they automatically assume that removing any timber products from Brazil will spell environmental disaster.

This misconception is something that Amazon Timber Frames (ATF), a three-year-old Michigan-based company that supplies exotic Brazilian woods for both commercial and residential construction, has to deal with on an almost daily basis. The good news, according to ATF owner Rick Paid, is that it gives him an opportunity to increase awareness of the facts in this controversial issue and to explain that his business is not part of the problem, but rather part of the solution. It involves salvaging already cut and otherwise wasted hardwoods from the Amazon region for use in timber frame homes. Paid spends one in ten days a year in Brazil, and he is very sensitive to concerns about preserving its greatest natural resource. "Our goal is to have as little impact on the environment as possible while still producing wood products," he says.



Historically, the main sources of deforestation in the Amazon Basin have actually been internal, including infrastructure improvements such as roads, clear-cutting for commercial agricultural production and cattle ranching, and unregulated logging. But in recent years, the Brazilian government has established stringent regulations to protect the forests and their delicate ecology. These regulations now require that 80 percent of Brazil's forests be preserved. They also impose minimum size requirements for trees to be cut, and limit which species of trees can be taken. As part of the preservation plan and to encourage self-sufficiency, there are now numerous government-sponsored projects in place to help poor farmers by deeding them generous parcels of forest land. They are allowed to clear and farm 20 percent of that land, preserving the remaining 80 percent.

A little-known fact to many outside Brazil is that many times, even the trees being cut down legally to clear the land for private farming and ranching are subsequently either left on the ground to rot or are burned.

That's where ATF comes in. ATF and its on-site partner, Zero Impact Brazil (ZIB), make arrangements with landowners to buy and remove this unwanted timber. ZIB's open books confirm that the two companies are committed to ecologically sound business practices and are therefore, in essence, what the timber industry calls a "green" operation. Says Paid: "We don't cut any trees. We're not taking raw resources and leaving, but rather salvaging what would otherwise be wasted and whose burning would contribute to air pollution. Our business also helps the country's economy by creating well-paying jobs for local craftsmen, something that is desperately needed in the heart of Brazil's Amazon region."



Amazon Timber Frames – *The Highest Quality Materials in the World*



With its intricate and very specialized mortise-and-tenon joinery, a timber frame structure can cost 15 to 20 percent more than other types of homes, and using exotic woods may increase the price even more. Customers also need to have some flexibility in their building schedule when they choose to have an ATF timber frame. But for those who want only the highest quality and the most beautiful, unique materials in the world, it's all worth it. "Architects can do some amazing things with these woods because of their size, shape and strength," says Paid. "And since the beams in a timber frame are exposed, the incomparable beauty of these woods is a major design element." ATF's timber frames make it easy for architects to design homes with more open interior spaces, because great distances can be spanned with such large timbers. This can be used to dramatic effect – with massive cathedral ceilings, expansive windows, and soaring fireplaces, for example – aside from the obvious practical aspects. In addition, the structures are very energy efficient. The panelized system used for exterior walls and roofs has a very high insulation and safety rating.

The highest quality and the most beautiful, unique materials in the world.

Although timber frames have been around for thousands of years, their popularity declined in the U.S. at the beginning of the 20th century, partly due to a demand for quickly-built, low-cost housing. As a national trend toward quality over quantity slowly began to take hold in the 1970s, this type of construction experienced a revival and has been steadily gaining new fans ever since.

As the only company in the world producing exotic wood timber frames, ATF has set a high standard for itself, providing start-to-finish logistics for every project, whether commercial or residential. If needed, the company can provide design services or a design referral. It is also possible to convert a conventional home plan to a timber frame. After the customer has chosen which wood or woods will be used, the next step is preparation of the timbers in Brazil. ATF's entire skilled workforce in Brazil consists of former boat builders, who are experts in handcrafting timbers. Using adzes, chisels, wooden mallets and planes, they produce results unmatched by any machine. "Boat builders make the best timber framers. Boat building requires highly evolved precision joinery not often seen in timber framing," says Rick Paid. "Our people are simply the best craftsmen on earth. They are truly artists. Brazil has a proud history of boat builders that dates all the way back to 1690, when the Portuguese settled the country. With the resources available and these talented native craftsmen, even difficult effects, such as curves, can be achieved. We're also proud that we are helping to preserve this traditional trade."



When the complete timber package is ready, it is shipped down the Amazon and across the ocean to a major coastal port, where it is transferred to a truck and continues its journey to the building site. So far, all of ATF's customers have been in the U.S. – some recent project locations have included Alabama, Pennsylvania, Texas, Hawaii, Michigan and Missouri – but delivery to other countries is also possible. The head of ATF's operation in Brazil, Bruce Korson, personally travels to each building site to supervise the "raising" (an industry term for putting up a timber frame), and the same skilled workers who craft the timbers in Brazil are sent to the job site to maintain the quality through the final assembly of the frame.

Exotic Hardwood Timber Frames



The forests of Brazil contain hundreds of different species of trees, and those that are being salvaged by ATF and ZIB represent the finest hardwoods on earth. ATF is the first company in the world to offer exotic hardwood timber frames to the construction industry. Rick Paid recognized the potential of these incredibly beautiful, strong and rot-resistant hardwoods early on. Using this great, otherwise wasted resource eventually resulted in the birth of ATF.

An “average” tree in the Amazon can be over 200 feet tall. The logs cut from these trees range from 18 inches to over 6 feet in diameter, and they are often free of any knots to 120 feet in length, so every inch is usable. “They lend themselves particularly well to commercial projects,” notes Paid. “Commercial requirements often call for timbers that are stronger and can span greater distances.” Massaranduba, a common native species of the Amazon region, is two-and-a-half times as hard as white oak, the American hardwood most commonly used in timber frame construction. Simply stated we use the world's finest hardwoods to produce the world's finest handcrafted timber frame homes.

Over 100 Brazilian Species to Choose From

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Brazilian woods are less prone to twisting, splitting or warping than many domestic woods. When incorporated into the interlock timber frame design (sometimes called post-and-beam), the result is an incredibly strong, aesthetically pleasing structure. In addition, the woods that ATF employs in its structures are rot, insect and fire resistant. And while there are only three or four types of domestic woods suitable for this type of construction, ATF offers over 100 Brazilian species to choose from in an amazing variety of natural colors and exotic grain patterns. This allows for a great deal of creativity and customization, ensuring that the end product will be a one-of-a-kind home.



ATF & Rare Earth Hardwoods, Inc.



Amazon Timber Frames and Rare Earth Hardwoods can put the finishing touches on your custom exotic timber frame home with our extensive selection of domestic and foreign hardwood flooring, paneling and siding. Since 1982 Rare Earth Hardwoods, Inc. has been supplying the North American market with the finest of domestic and imported lumber and wood products.

As an importer and manufacturer, Rare Earth Hardwoods, Inc. endeavors to accommodate a wide variety of customer needs for wood materials and associated services. Our product line includes high quality exotic and domestic flooring, flooring accessories, inlays, specialty woods and plywood.

A continuous revolving inventory of over one-half million board feet of lumber provides material to our 60,000 sq. ft. production facility situated on a 9-acre site near Traverse City, Michigan.

Specialty wide plank T&G flooring and paneling properly dried and milled, matching stair treads, risers, reducers and nosing are all available. A wide variety of exotic lumber is most often in stock for immediate shipment.

The forests of Brazil contain hundreds of different species of trees, and those that are being salvaged by Rare Earth Hardwoods, Inc., Amazon Timber Frames and Zero Impact Brazil represent the finest hardwoods on earth.

Amazon Timber Frames and Rare Earth Hardwoods, Inc. are committed to the responsible harvesting of timber used in our products. Through continued education pertaining to the natural resource along with innovative non-impact forestry practices, REH continues a tradition of developing methods for producing hardwood products with less impact on the environment.



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