

# Happy Hideaway

*Half-log construction makes a Rocky Mountain vacation home as snug as it is beautiful*



**B**y the first days of spring, most people don't want to think about snow, certainly not hundreds of inches on the ground. But most people don't have a beautiful log home perched in the Rockies, with dozens of ski trails nearby. Even when the ski season passes, the Bender family has only momentary disappointment because on the heels of spring comes a summer with wildflower meadows and snow-capped mountains surrounding their beloved second home.

Like many people fortunate enough to have a vacation getaway, the Benders worked hard to realize the day they turned the key to it. "About five or six years ago, I started thinking about one," David Bender recalls. "So, the kids and I decided to go on a trip. We started in Phoenix looking at property and made our way up into the Rockies through Idaho and clear up to Kalispell in Montana."

The original lure was to get as far as possible from the

Story by Joyce Standridge • Photos by Roger Wade • Styling by Debra Grahl



**Left:** Winter provides a dramatic setting for David and Deborah Bender's insulated-log home, which is located on 86 acres near Telluride, Colorado. The distinctive roof line, which is intended to protect against the sun and handle the heavy snow loads, gives the house an almost Oriental appearance.

steamy Gulf Coast, where they make their primary home. But the Benders found that land values, especially in Montana, had gone up to a level that rivaled anywhere. No bargains, no can't-live-without-it acreage. Nearly discouraged, the family group pressed on into the heart of Colorado, which was an area they had assumed they couldn't afford.

"We were looking around the mountains there, and they were the prettiest I'd seen," David says. "We also realized that the cost here was no higher than what we'd been looking at."

Using a considerable measure of persistence, David contacted several

real estate agents, who showed him various tracts available in the area. Eventually, an agent introduced him to 86 acres outside Telluride that he recalls he "fell in love with."

Even though the land was picture-postcard breathtaking, David still exhibited the kind of cautious judgment that made him, with his father and family, successful boat builders in Mobile, Alabama. "We questioned every aspect of the process long and hard," David says. "I recognized that the logistics for building here were going to be difficult."

The trade-off for having the perfectly isolated getaway is the very fact of its isolation. The population in the area, discounting vacationers, is only a few thousand scattered over hundreds of square miles. Finding craftspeople to work on the house promised to be particularly challenging.

In fact, David, who has built several homes in Alabama, decided upon



**Right:** The home's porches and covered balconies, such as this one on the second floor, offer cozy nooks to enjoy panoramic views and summer breezes.





The home's half-log construction allows for Sheetrock on interior walls. Log accents add character, particularly surrounding the stone fireplace in the great room. The tile floor has a warm look and amplifies the heat from the in-floor system.







a couple of ideas immediately: Hire a log-home company to provide a package rather than trying to produce the logs himself, and bring in a general contractor from Alabama in order to save money. The first decision proved inspired, the second frustrating.

After checking out several log manufacturers, the Benders settled on Anderson Homes, a local dealer for Town & Country Cedar Homes of Petoskey, Michigan, even though David would be one of Dean Anderson's first clients. But David says he had confidence in Dean, adding, "I really liked the look of the wood, too."

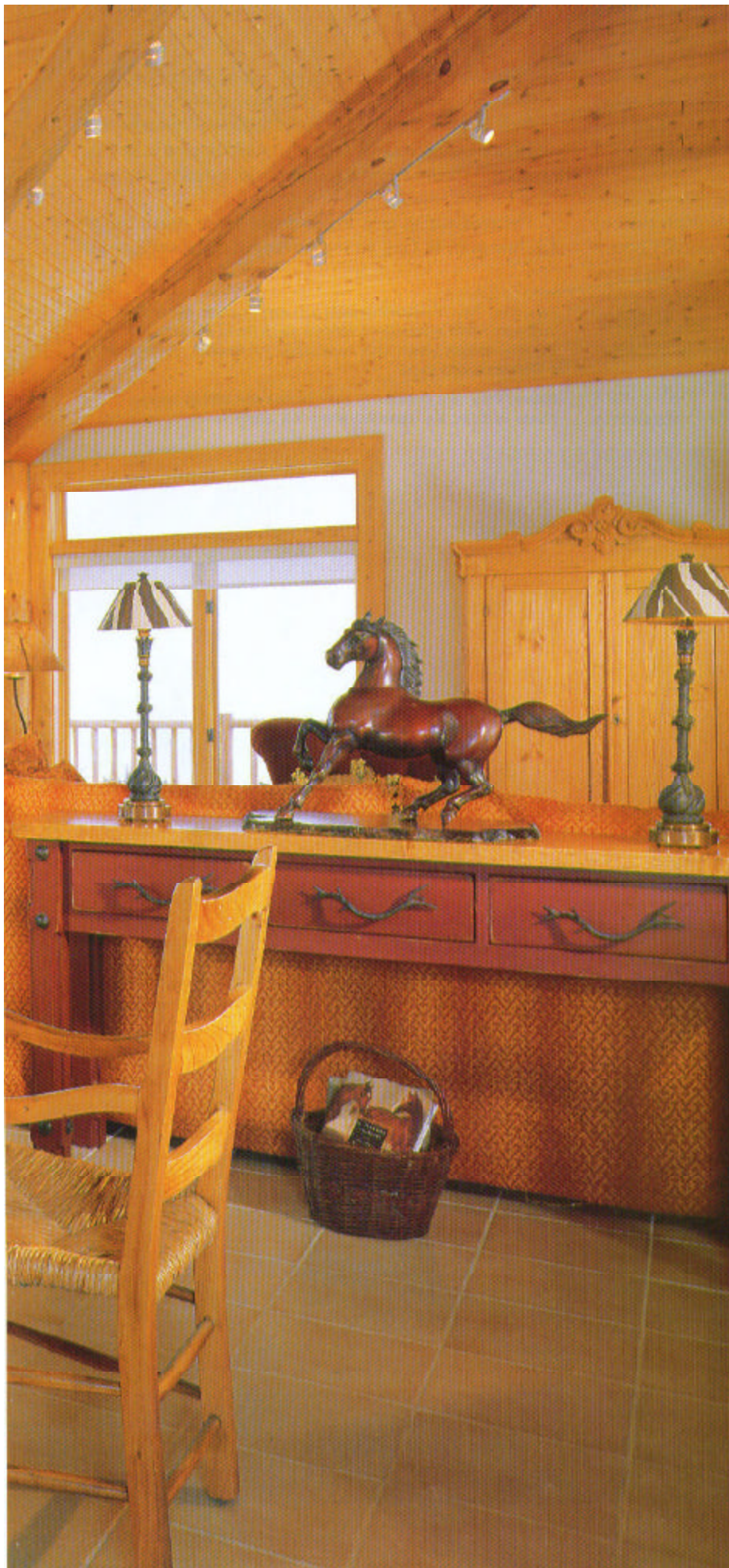
"We use white cedar," Town & Country's Steve Biggs says. "It won't absorb moisture—it acts like cork in a wine bottle—because the wood has a closed-cell property. That means it won't allow rot to develop, and this was a real consideration for David. His site is not nestled in among trees.

**Left: The open kitchen is a natural gathering place but is also designed to be an efficient work space. The center island has a handy cooktop, and tile makes the breakfast bar as easy to clean as it is attractive.**

**Below: The corner sink in the kitchen enjoys a commanding view of the outdoors. The twin sink speeds food preparation and clean-up, and the tile backsplash adds a decorative touch.**







Being exposed as they are in such a severe climate, the built-up wall system was what he needed.”

David chose a post-and-beam system that consists of half-log on the exterior to achieve the rugged good looks he found so appealing, while providing a 2-by-6-inch framed wall that features extra insulation against the frigid blasts of wind roaring down from the mountains. “He had been looking at a stacked log,” Dean says,

**The Benders chose Colorado to get as far as possible from their Alabama home.**

“but the winds are ferocious in this region. Our extra insulation is a foam core that more than doubles the R-value.”

Sensible? Yes, but the Benders ultimately made selections based on aesthetics as much as or more than for practical considerations. They began by designing a floor plan, which Town & Country was able to accommodate without any major revisions. From beginning to end, Dean also stayed involved with the project—which turned out to be a valuable asset when unexpected problems arose.

Initially, the foundation didn’t yield any surprises. Everyone involved knew that working on a mountainside would be a challenge, as, indeed, proved to be the case. “They told us that we almost didn’t need a concrete floor,” David recalls. “If we could have gotten a flat area, we’d have just about been set.”

After the foundation was completed and the shell erected, the Alabama builder became homesick. On top of that, he had a car accident and headed back to Alabama even before the roof went on.

David decided against using a local replacement, in part because the labor costs in the area were so high, but also

**In the dining room, the Benders can look out the window and be reminded of what drew them here in the first place. Thanks to the home’s open floor plan, most of the rooms enjoy a south-southwesterly view.**



because he had experience building and supervising crews. He took over the project himself. "I don't suppose I saved any money because of lost time from work at home," he says, "but with Dean's help I took over. He stayed involved and helped us all along the way."

The project proved especially challenging because of the home's distinctive design. The roofline, with multiple covered porches and balconies, took on a look that Town & Country warmly refers to as "The Oriental House"—although that wasn't the original intent. The profile was designed for protection from the high-altitude exposure to the sun, as well as winter snow-loads. Pragmatic decisions in this instance, however, resulted in an unusual—and attractive—look.

Interior aesthetics were important, too. While David worked to make it a livable house, his wife Deborah was

just as intent on making it lovely. On her first flight into Denver, she was still wondering how she was going to make it happen. Coming into an expensive resort area, she anticipated unnecessarily high prices and limited selection. "I thought about having to go from town to town," she said, "and I didn't look forward to it."

The man sitting next to her on the flight proved helpful, however. In fact, he recommended a Denver interior

---

**Opposite:** Pine wainscoting adds a quaint touch to the master bedroom, while a variety of window sizes let in ample light. Beehive opaque blinds tuck away when not needed, but provide a filter on bright days.

**Below:** With two children in college and one still at home, plenty of beds are essential when the whole family is at home.





designer, Liz Temple, who had helped his wife. Upon landing, Deborah contacted Liz, and they immediately impressed each other. The shopping was on. In just three days, they were able to pull together all the furnishings for the house and arrange for delivery.

"We agreed that the pretty colors of the outdoors were right for this house," Deborah says. "I liked the greens and rust and darker colors with textured fabrics. It turned out to be a good idea because it's surprisingly dusty up here."

The Benders also opted for tile floors instead of wood and appreciate the way they hold on to the toasty warmth from the in-floor heating system. Deborah also selected country French styling in much of her furniture and accents.

"We're still working on the house," Deborah notes.

"Every time I'm here, I see things I want to do for the house, but then we go away and I don't get all I want to accomplish completed. It will take us a while to finish up completely and make it as homey as we'd like it to be."

Never doubt that they will succeed in achieving just the right note in time. After climbing over a mountain of odds just to complete the home, it must seem all downhill from here. Meanwhile, things will have to wait until they're through going downhill—literally—on the ski slopes. **LHI**

#### RESOURCE

**Log Producer:** Town & Country Cedar Homes,  
4772 U.S. 131 South, Petoskey MI 49770, (800) 968 3178,  
E-mail: [town@freeway.net](mailto:town@freeway.net). Website: [www.cedarhomes.com](http://www.cedarhomes.com).