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A vertical photograph showing the interior of a log cabin. The walls are made of stacked logs, and the ceiling features exposed wooden beams. In the foreground, a large, sculptural tree trunk is repurposed as a chair or bench. The room is warmly lit, and a window with a wooden frame is visible on the left.

LUXE LOGS

*Craftmanship and great design
create a mountain home
as spectacular as its setting*

Tucked into the side of a mountain overlooking Lake Tahoe, this spectacular log home stands as testimony to what can be achieved when homeowner, architect, builder, interior designer, and landscape designer share a common vision. The seed for the vision was a simple question. "I had another house in the area," says the homeowner, "but I was always complaining about it. One day my youngest daughter said, 'Why don't you build your own?'"

A sculpture-like tree trunk adds an unexpected dash of drama to the living room of this elegant log home.

WRITTEN BY CASEY ELLIS
PHOTOGRAPHY BY SAM GRAY STYLING BY LAUREN PAYNE

Massive beams run the length of the ceiling in the living room. Large windows and French doors at one end and a skylight above flood the room with light. (opposite) The two-sided fireplace, sheathed in Montana gray rock, serves as a divider between the living room and dining room.





(left) A massive hand-carved wooden mantel crowns the fireplace on an expansive deck that serves as the main outdoor gathering area. A sink and barbecue oven set in a granite countertop provide a convenient area for food preparation. (below) Tall pines frame a casual seating area.



fact, says the homeowner, "you can see the lake from every single room of the house." On the lower level are guest bedrooms, a game room, bar, wine cellar, and home theater. The laundry room even has a dog bath for pampering the owner's Golden retriever and Queensland Mix, beloved rescue dogs who often are joined at their mountain aerie by the English bulldogs and Labrador retriever belonging to the owner's daughters.

"I wanted the house to be beautiful," the owner says, "but I also wanted it to be dog-friendly—tough and durable." ■





A spa room just off the master bathroom features a Jacuzzi tub and folding glass doors that open onto a private deck. In the bathroom, stone steps lead up to an oversized tub sheathed in glossy black-green tiles. The Susan Watson painting was a gift from the artist.

One of the home's great luxuries is its ability to cope with mountain winters. The driveway is heated, as are the roof areas overhanging the decks. "Heat rising from the roof over the interior spaces will melt snow and ice," Richards explains, "but that doesn't help with the porch overhangs, so we installed a hydronic system under all the eaves to prevent ice dams."

The driveway deluxe leads past a man-made waterfall, stream, and 50-ton boulders—all part of an elaborate setting designed by landscape architect Brent Thrans of the Sacramento, California, firm Acanthus.

To decorate the interior, the homeowner turned to designers she'd worked with before, the Carmel, California, mother-daughter team of Jan Gardner and Julie Gardner Chesney. "We'd never done a log home before," Gardner says, "but we were determined to avoid the usual mountain home clichés: no antlers on the walls; no Native American rugs on the floors." Instead, armchairs are upholstered in European-style tapestries, hand-forged light fixtures grace every room, and handsome Turkish rugs add warmth to the Nevada quartzite floors.

"Logs have a decidedly orange hue," Gardner notes, "so we used lots of golds and rusts with celadon greens to calm it all down."

On the lake side of the house, a balcony stretches the entire length of the first floor. In







(above) A corner fireplace creates a cozy reading nook in the master bedroom. (right) French doors open onto a balcony with a sweeping view of Lake Tahoe. The headboard, built on-site, was a surprise gift from the builders.



But before any craftsmanship could be applied to the house, Guzzi had to solve the considerable design problem of creating access to the building site. "Making the driveway work was a major challenge," she says.

Builder Alan Richards of A. Richards Built Home in Incline Village, Nevada, agrees. "We spent four weeks just building the road and had to create a 20-foot retaining wall before we could even start on the house."

"This client was so wonderful to work for," says Richards. "She wanted Vermont slate for the roof, and she realized that bringing in material from that far away would take time. Most of all she allowed me to be creative and even take some aspects—like the bare tree in the living room—pretty close to the limit."

The shell of the house was crafted by Alpine Log Homes of Victor, Montana, a company chosen because of its environmentally correct approach. "No healthy trees were taken down to build this house," the homeowner says.

The house is sited along the hillside to maximize the views. "It was a great luxury to have 16 acres to work with; usually the building sites in this area are so tight," says the architect, Sherry Guzzi of Tahoe City, California. But these are mountainside acres, and fitting the house into the slope was one of Guzzi's biggest design challenges. "One thing the client disliked about her former Tahoe house was that the living area was perched so far above

ground. Giving her and her dogs easy access to the grounds was a design priority," Guzzi says. Because the house faces southwest and most storms come from that direction—as does the hot afternoon sun—the design needed to ensure porches were protected without obstructing the marvelous view.

Inside, Guzzi's challenge was to keep spaces in scale so they'd be visually dramatic yet still feel homey. In fact, one of her favorite spaces is the little breakfast area off the kitchen.

"The contractor did a marvelous job on this house," Guzzi notes. "And the homeowner really appreciates craftsmanship. She knew that good work takes time."

(opposite) Special features of the kitchen's oak cabinetry include a built-in plate holder, tambour doors to hide small appliances, and open shelves to display pottery. (this page) Expansive windows look out onto lush woodland and Lake Tahoe.





The subsequent search for a building site ended when the homeowner, an enthusiastic cyclist, was out riding her bike and found a beautiful bare lot that turned out to be part of an available 16-acre parcel.

Although construction of the 10,000-square-foot house would take nearly three years, none of the grim tales often associated with lengthy and complex construction emerge from anyone involved. Instead, the theme is one of pride in challenges overcome and the resulting creation of a modern-day log cabin that exudes elegance and charm.

(opposite) Elk silhouettes enliven the hand-forged light fixture above the kitchen island. Granite countertops in natural tones of brown, tan, and black provide ample workspace for a kitchen in near-constant use. (below) A round table, hand-painted with an acorn-and-twigs motif, provides a convenient spot for informal meals.



