

A RUSTIC CONTEMPORARY RETREAT

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Photography by Mark Boisclair

The favorite area of the homeowners, the east-facing great room is bright, open and airy and frames an incomparable view. Accordion doors open to an expansive covered patio.

A MOUNTAINTOP HOME CELEBRATES PRESCOTT IN 360 DEGREES

Close your eyes and envision your perfect mountaintop vacation home perched at an elevation of nearly 6,000 feet. While some might see a homey cabin accented with knotty pine and cobbled hearths, others may picture something stark and contemporary with expanses of glass and steel. One Paradise Valley couple's vision landed midway within that spectrum.



In-kitchen dining comfortably accommodates six with a built-in banquette and trestle table. The bench seating is upholstered in faux leather, which makes entertaining young grandchildren worry-free.

After selling their Wisconsin lake house and searching for a new home away from home, the husband and wife found themselves returning to a place that held an irresistible small-town allure.

"We kept coming back to Prescott," recalls the wife. "Every time we visited, we thought, this is such a nice town. There's always something going on in the square, there are so many cute coffee houses and shops, and the people are so friendly."

Purchasing two adjacent hilltop lots that abut the Prescott National Forest, the couple wanted their new build to be warm and rustic—apropos of the setting—but also modern, with clean lines, soaring ceilings and expansive, light-filled spaces.

They conceived a welcoming retreat for themselves as well as their children, grandchildren and friends.

"The exterior of this house had to blend in with the northern Arizona locale," stresses the husband. "Inside, we wanted it to be a little more soft-contemporary."

The homeowners enlisted their longtime friend, architect and Phoenix Home & Garden Masters of the Southwest award winner Dale Gardon, who had designed their Paradise Valley home 22 years ago. Expanding upon a design by Prescott architect Joe Webb, Gardon fine-tuned the exteriors, while interior designer and fellow Phoenix Home & Garden Masters of the Southwest recipient Janet Brooks, builder Guy Naus and landscape designer Dane Prator worked hand in hand with the homeowners on every aspect of the construction.

"Having the entire team in place from the get-go definitely made things easier," says the husband. "Because every member was interacting from day one, we could plan and make decisions proactively, avoiding costly changes at the eleventh hour, when it might be too late to do some of the things we wanted to do."

While the homeowners wanted the house to have a lodgelike feeling, they sought to avoid a traditional cabin aesthetic. "You have to be able to look at the lot and see the house that's in it," says Naus. "In the choices the homeowners made, particularly with wood and stone, there is a nod to a mountain cabin, but those materials were used in a contemporary way to achieve a rustic, organic feel."



The home's white oak tongue-and-groove paneling creates a lodgelike aesthetic with a contemporary edge. Hand-forged railings and a custom wrought-iron chandelier add rustic touches.



The home's entryway includes a view of surrounding hills and the San Francisco Peaks in Flagstaff. The stairs at the far end lead to the lower level, which includes the game room, bar, wine cellar and guest bedrooms.

For the interiors, Brooks set the stage with the flooring, using limestone with a brushed finish in the main floor's primary living spaces, such as the great room, kitchen and dining room, and reclaimed carbonized oak in the lower level, which includes a game room and walk-out deck. The homeowners chose to carpet only the bedrooms, adding an element of coziness for chilly winter nights.

One of the essential and distinctive components of the interiors is the brushed white oak that clads the walls. "We must have looked at 50 different options," recalls the wife. "But we loved this the moment we found it." The 10-foot-long by 1-foot-wide panels were designed to be used as flooring, but Brooks was drawn to its subtle warmth and matte finish—and to the fact that the tongue-and-groove planks butted against each other to create a seamless expanse. In all corners, the wood is joined with a 45-degree miter for a razor-sharp edge; to stress the modern aesthetic, the walls are without molding or baseboards.

For the owners, the heart of the home is the kitchen and adjacent great room, which are natural gathering areas for friends and visiting family. "We really enjoy entertaining," says the wife. "That's what people do in Prescott, they have

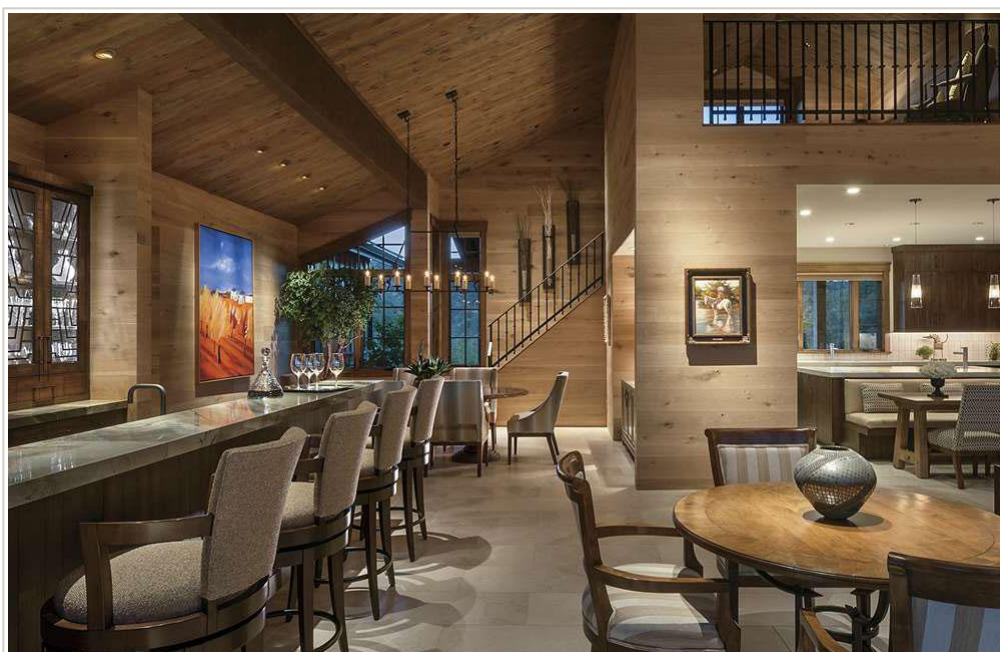
people over. There are a lot of neighborhood get-togethers."

In the design stage, the kitchen's island included a trio of bar stools. "We discovered that we couldn't accommodate more than three stools, no matter what style we went with," says the wife. "Three doesn't work. You can't have another couple over—which we do a lot—because where do four people sit? They don't." Brooks solved the challenge with a built-in banquette and a custom trestle-style dining table with three chairs. The area has become one of homeowners' most used and is especially suited for grandkids. The banquette is covered in a faux leather that is impervious to wear and spills.

The great room includes a peaked ceiling, 8-foot-long horizontal fireplace, glass wall with accordion doors and a large deck that welcomes mountain breezes and celebrates that jaw-dropping view. Whether used for reading, watching TV or simply reveling in the natural splendor just outside, the room is the couple's favorite spot for relaxing or enjoying the company of friends. After sunset, twinkling lights in the valley below present their own dazzling show.



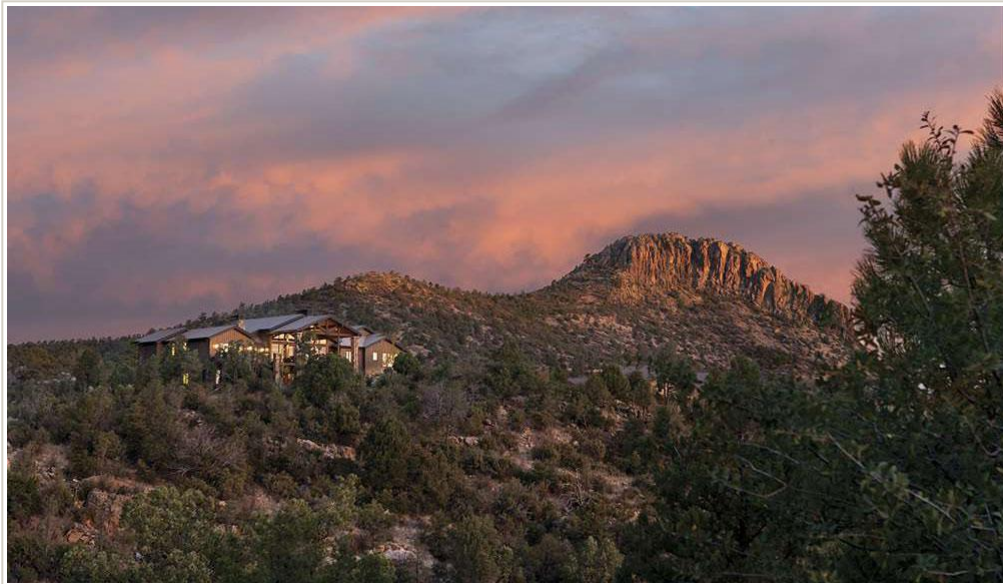
A stately antique bureau resides in a hallway beneath the painting "Sun Altar" by Ron Faner.



Adjacent to the great room, a game table and bar are favored gathering places when the homeowners entertain friends and family.

The home's east-west orientation presented a unique challenge for Brooks.

"This home has 95 percent of the light coming in from one side, so I had to consider what that does to the interior," says the designer. "At certain times of day, the entire east wall is so bright you need to have the shades down. A few hours later the brightness is no longer there. To accommodate that imbalance, I kept the colors lighter on the dark side of the house so you don't feel like you're in a black hole when the light isn't coming in. In the great room, I didn't use a lot of reflective surfaces that would intensify the sunlight."



"When we have time to get away, we want to go where we really feel comfortable—somewhere that makes us feel good." —*The homeowner*

Careful consideration was also given to the retreat's interior lighting. As avid collectors of contemporary artwork, the homeowners see illumination as an essential component. "Planning for the lighting design began when the house was being framed," says the husband. "Once construction was complete, we walked through and discussed the needs for each room, where particular paintings would be hung and how to best light them."

Brooks echoes the importance of well-planned illumination. "If you go to the effort of making a beautiful home, why would you not light it properly?" she posits. "Today, creative lighting is about the feeling that you get from the elements around you so that you feel embraced by the space."

Using overhead lighting, Brooks enhanced the suedelike texture of the oak walls and rugged stacked stone of the fireplace, adding warmth, interest and drama to the room after sundown. "Oftentimes we spend more time in our homes in the evening than we do during the daytime because we're out working or playing," she says. "Why not make your house gorgeous at night?"

Near the main entrance, contemporary-style Adirondack chairs are grouped around an in-ground fire pit.



On the large covered patio beyond the great room, guests can gather around a fire table. An outdoor dining area is the idyllic setting for meals against the mountainous backdrop.

The property boasts a 360-degree, 100-mile view that encompasses both Sedona and the San Francisco Peaks. When landscaping the mountainous exterior, Prator optimized what he

found on-site. "We tried to harvest everything we could from the lot and repurpose it back into the landscape to keep it as organic as possible," he says. For example, rock culled when digging the house's foundation was used to create retaining walls, further emphasizing the structure's harmony with the site.



The property's retaining walls were created by repurposing native stone that was excavated during construction. A gently meandering driveway provides a sense of arrival to this mountaintop home, which has a scenic 360-degree view.

"We went from the original untouched terrain to a torn-up construction site, and then made it look undisturbed, like it's always been that way," says Prator, who augmented the landscape with 130 tons of locally sourced, native lichen-covered granite boulders. "We made it appear as though we had to build around them," he says. "While it looks like the driveway intersects everything that was there before we broke ground, all of that was brought in."

The plant palette includes more than 60 evergreen and deciduous trees including aspen, autumn blaze maple (*Acer x freemanii* 'Jeffersred') and Bradford pear (*Pyrus calleryana* 'Bradford')—which provide drama in the autumn. Ornamental plants, such as English lavender, spirea, germander and vitex, add color in the warmer months.

"At this elevation, the key was to place plants that are a little more domesticated, such as dwarf plum, near the house," explains Prator. "As we moved from the improved area to the native, we added a cushion of cedar mulch bedding that transitions to native soil."

Elegant, calming, organic, rustic, natural. For everyone involved in the creation of this home, these words come easy. For the homeowners, the mountaintop retreat is a welcoming sanctuary.

"I'm fully engaged in my business," says the husband. "When we have time to get away, we want to go where we really feel comfortable—somewhere that makes us feel good."

The wife agrees, adding, "We've found all of that—and so much more—in this house."



The owners' grandkids love to visit the game room, which includes a pool table, poker table and a collection of board games. Among the adjacent bar's amenities are a mini fridge and dishwasher for the convenience of guests staying in lower-level bedrooms.

Located in the game room, the home theater includes an inviting fireplace. Overhead lighting accentuates the texture of the wall's stacked stone.





The lower-level powder room's vanity was the creation of interior designer Janet Brooks. "I wanted it to have an openness because the space is small but still have storage for the essentials," she says.

The crown jewel of the cozy and inviting master suite is its panoramic mountain-vista view.



The master bath's quartz countertop is light and elegant without the vulnerability of a marble. The custom cabinets are contemporary in their simplicity; added texture gives them an organic "mountain" feel.

In lieu of a TV, the master suite's fireplace was a high priority for the homeowners. Stacked stone adds textural interest and is in sync with the home's soft-contemporary vibe.

