

The
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LUXURY LIVING

Northern Retreats

Valley residents escape
to second homes in
Arizona's high country

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Northern Retreats

Valley residents escape to second homes in Arizona's high country

If you listen closely, you can hear it echoing throughout the Valley from late April through the end of October. It's the battle cry of heat-sensitive desert dwellers that typically rises with the mercury in the spring, and falls to a hush again once temperatures return to a more manageable level in late autumn.

There it goes again. Did you hear it? "What the heck are we doing roasting down here? Let's head up to the cabin!"

"The big joke around here, we always say, is that you can't turn left from April through October," says Barbara Bruce, president and chief executive of the Show Low Chamber

of Commerce, who estimates the town's population of 12,000 year-round residents triples with second-home owners and other visitors in the summer months. "Everybody, especially the merchants, live for summer up here."

Cited by EscapeHomes, a San Francisco-based online vacation home portal, as one of the top 10 emerging second-home markets in the nation, it's not tough to see why Valley residents would flock in droves to the White Mountains — and Northern Arizona in general — each summer. One of the largest stands of ponderosa pine forests in the world can be found in Northern

Tim Donmoyer's 7,000-square-foot home at The Rim Club in Payson was custom-built from 18-inch-thick cedar logs hand-crafted by Pioneer Log Homes and imported from Vancouver, British Columbia. A 15-foot-wide, two-sided fireplace serves as a divider between twin great rooms.



Arizona. There's also a mild four-season climate that lends itself to year-round outdoor recreation, especially hiking, fishing and golf. And don't forget those chilly morning and evening temperatures.

Log cabin dreams

But let's address the word "cabin" for a moment, shall we? If we are to believe "Webster's New World Dictionary," a cabin is a "small, crudely or simply built house or hut." That definition seems almost laughable, especially considering the multi-million-dollar homes that have sprouted in the Arizona high country like wildflowers

after a spring rain.

While it's difficult to pinpoint exactly how many luxury residential retreat communities exist throughout Northern Arizona, one thing is for sure: They most certainly are not filled with small or crudely built dwellings.

Take, for example, the "cabin" owned by Tim Donmoyer, 40, of Scottsdale. Unlike some, Donmoyer's vacation home at The Rim Golf Club in Payson, actually is a cabin — a 7,000-square-foot log cabin designed by renowned Scottsdale architect Bing Hu and constructed from authentic cedar logs imported from

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An eagle with five-foot wings is perched atop a cedar log overlooking one of the great rooms in Donmoyer's home.

Sitting on a ridge overlooking the second green of the course at The Rim Golf Club, the log home resembles a remote mountain lodge.



PHOTOS PROVIDED BY LINTHICUM

Vancouver, British Columbia. Linthicum, a Scottsdale custom builder, helped make Donmoyer's childhood dream of having a log cabin a reality.

"I guess I probably played with too many Lincoln Logs as a kid," jokes Donmoyer, who owns two Chicago businesses but has lived in the Valley since 2002 with his wife, Karen, and identical twin 7-year-old daughters. The log cabin, which was completed in 2003, satisfies the Donmoyers' desire for a respite from the summer heat without the hassle of a long commute.

"I love the desert, but it's nice to go somewhere where it's cool at night. With little kids, we didn't want a long drive. Payson is an hour and 15 minutes, door to door. We pretty much spend the summer there."

The custom log home is furnished with a collection of native-Arizona alligator juniper woodcarvings created by a favorite Sedona artist. The home's bar, dining room table and beds also are custom made from the alligator juniper, as are the front door and furnishings in the loft office. Artwork featuring twin imagery also is prominent throughout the home, a tribute to the couple's daughters.

Robert Marin, Linthicum's senior project

manager, says it's not unusual to find luxury mountain vacation homes that are furnished as well — if not better than — the homeowner's primary residence in the Valley.

"All the amenities you could have in a primary residence are there," he says. "With the standard of living this caliber of a client demands, they want to be in an exotic setting, but they want the same level of luxury they're accustomed to. That's what we do. We take all the same luxury — the granite, the Viking/Wolff appliances — but we repackage it so it has a lodge feel. That's what makes it different from their primary home."

Mirroring home

Tom Argue, a 39-year-old Scottsdale custom home builder who owns a vacation home at Forest Highlands in Flagstaff, echoes Marin's comments, saying homeowners — especially those with more affluence — typically buy or build vacation residences that mirror the luxury they have at home.

Most are designed with entertaining in mind and may include extra bedrooms or bathrooms for guests. Outdoor wrap-around wooden decks are intended to take advan-

The bar serves as a gathering place for cocktails and a divider between the kitchen and great room. The bar counter is made of alligator juniper, a native wood of Arizona and a favorite of the homeowner.

tage of the spectacular views and pleasant weather. And, many of the residences also feature the home theaters and automation that have become so popular in luxury homes throughout the Valley.

Ironically, Argue, who owns Argue Custom Homes, didn't build his Forest Highlands home. He and his wife fell in love with it while scouting for a lot within the 1,200-acre community on which to build.

Argue says his intense admiration for DMB, Forest Highlands' developer, initially led him to the community five years ago. But, once there, the couple came upon a striking Swiss chalet-style home, just off the 13th tee box of the community's Canyon golf course that looked as if it had been transplanted directly from Europe. It was for sale. And they suddenly were in the mood to buy.

"The previous owners were from Germany, and it took them two years to build the home," he says. "It is very unique, and very well-done. It's absolutely delightful and the perfect vision of what I had always wanted for a second home."

The home — originally 3,100 square feet — consisted primarily of a single mas-

Large windows, soaring ceilings and an abundance of rustic logs dominate the vast dining room of the Donmoyer's home at The Rim Golf Club.



PHOTOS PROVIDED BY LINTHICUM







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The master suite includes a cozy fireplace and spiral staircase with Manzanita wood handrails leading to an office loft. Donmoyer says the presence of wood throughout the home makes it feel alive.

ter bedroom, great room, library and wine room, as well as an attached guesthouse when the Argues purchased it. However, the couple recently completed a remodeling project that added two bedrooms, a bathroom and a game room, and brought the total square footage up to 4,450.

"You'd never know that the addition wasn't part of the original house," Argue says proudly. "It fit on the lot perfectly."

While the original home includes a number of interesting design materials, including a slate roof tile from China, reclaimed wood flooring from an old building in Chicago and plaster walls with wheat mixed directly into the plaster for texturing, Argue says it wasn't too difficult to maintain the home's integrity during the remodeling process. The new portion of the roof features slate tile, plus a couple of copper turrets in keeping with the home's European flavor.

For inside the home, Argue was able to locate a batch of old oak timbers that

matched the reclaimed flooring in other parts of the house perfectly.

These days, although the family — which includes two children, ages 10 and 13 — doesn't spend as much time there as they have in previous years, Argue says he likes to use the mountain retreat as an escape from his daily routine in the Valley. At times he's been known to pop up there just to spend the day.

"It's an absolute departure from Scottsdale, and it's a nice drive," he says.

The other thing he enjoys about his vacation home is getting to know his Forest Highlands neighbors — many of whom are from the Valley.

"There are a lot of people up there who also live in one of the DMB communities in the Valley, such as DC Ranch, Silverleaf or Verrado," Argue says. "And it seems like the majority of people, if they're not from a DMB community, they're from Scottsdale.

So, you get to know a lot of people from your own backyard who you never knew before." **L**

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