

HOME & AWAY

THANKS TO ITS WELCOMING, WINTRY TRAPPINGS, A CLASSIC VERMONT LOG HOME IS EASILY DRESSED FOR THE HOLIDAYS WITH JUST A FEW SIMPLE GREENS.

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OPPOSITE Natural elements make a seasonal arrangement sing. A vintage piece of crockery holds pinecones, eucalyptus pods, and mixed greens of white pine, balsam, and cedar. **THIS PHOTO** For interior designer Lisa Hilderbrand, scale is everything when furnishing a wide-open space with soaring ceilings. Comfortable, deep-seated furniture does the trick. A tall Balsam Hill faux tree does its part during the holidays, reaching to the rafters.



They came for the top-notch skiing. They're staying—longer and more frequently every year—for the comfort and joy.

Winter road trips to Vermont are customary for Connecticut residents Kristie and Kevin Smith and their five children, all of whom love to ski. They rented sundry houses in the past, some nice, some not so much, where they mostly just laid down their heads after long days on the slopes. Three years ago, they decided to put down roots in Wilmington, Vermont, and build a family getaway that would become a comfortable home away from home in all seasons.

The project started when they found a 2½-acre lot nestled in the woods, secluded and serene, with a river running alongside. They worked with builder Ryan Holton of RH Log Works to customize a six-bedroom, timber-frame home to suit the family's desire for lots of light and for open space they'd actually use. "We wanted something that was the opposite of our center-hall Colonial," says Kristie.

"There's so much waste, formal sitting rooms that are never sat in."

The Vermont home would befit the vernacular architecture of the area, but the interiors had to be uncomplicated, casual but not too rustic, and definitely not clad in the yellowish pine so common in log homes. Interior designer Lisa Hilderbrand of New Canaan, Connecticut, was tapped to create the modern, family-friendly vibe they all love. The ultimate affirmation of Hilderbrand's success at achieving a beckoning home: The couple's 10-year-old daughter's wish is to have her friends at this house for her next birthday.

Hilderbrand's first task was getting the wood just so, tweaking the interior stain endlessly; it had to be warm with a restful glow. They chose a palette that was "modern and earthy with natural tones of browns, blues, and grays." The palette also echoes the woody Vermont landscape, knitting the interiors to its surroundings.

A log cabin in the woods can suggest a classic decorating approach to the holidays—think yards of tartan and miles of popcorn-and-

ABOVE Builder Ryan Holton customized a design from Moosehead Cedar Log Homes to allow for a more open floor plan. A deck that runs the full length of the house offers the perfect perch to enjoy the pristine Vermont landscape. **RIGHT** In the most coveted corner of the house, a custom upholstered bench is the Smith children's preferred spot for chilling out. It's made even cozier with pillows and throws.





“The idea was to enhance the natural beauty outside the windows. Everything is textural.”

—INTERIOR DESIGNER LISA HILDERBRAND

OPPOSITE The mudroom is an ideal transition space where family and friends shed their winter wrappings. Cubbies keep order in a family with five kids. For a holiday welcome, a wreath decked in pinecones and feathers celebrates the woody surroundings. **RIGHT** A family favorite, the game table features an antique-brass base and a hand-distressed look. The upholstered chairs have sink-in style and midcentury notes. The ivory-hue pieces are silhouetted against the rich wood paneling. **BELOW** Interior designer Lisa Hilderbrand created spaces that reflect the family's wish for a home that suits both the active crew and the Vermont surroundings.



cranberry garland. But this family opts for a quieter palette, including on the tree. It's dressed with white snowflakes and golden pinecone ornaments, chosen to reflect the soft winter wonderland outside the windows. Vintage crockery and simple glass hurricanes are filled with evergreen branches, juniper berries, and pinecones.

No matter what the season, though, simplicity and livability drive the decor. There isn't a place where you can't relax and put your feet up, Hilderbrand says. "Texture is everything, but we used performance fabrics, such as leather, chenille, and faux fur."

The open kitchen is designed with clean-lined cabinetry and artful tile that meshes with the living areas. A cherry red Lacanthe range is the centerpiece of the room, crowned with a custom 7-foot-wide range hood.

The kitchen island is designed to look like a piece of furniture with Shaker cupboards stained to contrast with the perimeter cabinetry and a waterfall countertop made of subtle, leather-finish granite.

There's plenty of room for togetherness, but the family members also have their favorite retreats. Kristie's haven is the master bedroom suite with its whitewashed walls and lush bedding. For the kids, the upholstered bench next to the fireplace in the great-room is a main draw; it's the perfect place to curl up with a book. "Every one of our children has fallen asleep on that bench," Kristie says.

The irony is that they wanted an après-ski house, but now find they spend less time than ever on the slopes given the inviting home that is so tailor-made for them. Kristie sums it up: "It's our happy place." □

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BELOW Set for breakfast, the dining table is adorned simply with leafy rhododendron branches, a reminder of greener seasons ahead. **RIGHT** A larger kitchen area was one of the adjustments the homeowners made to the floor plan. Lending the space some bold color are a striking Lacanche range and leather-and-wood counter stools. Hilderbrand designed the steel-and-brass range hood to suit the home's spare but rustic style.



"The house is more comfortable than we ever could have imagined. In fact, it's changed how much time we spend on the slopes. We really feel at home here."

—HOMEOWNER KRISTIE SMITH



ABOVE A tall woven leather headboard has both rustic and modern appeal in a secondary bedroom. Geometrics offer clean, organized pattern that lends visual interest throughout the neutral space. **ABOVE RIGHT** A double vanity topped with vintage-inspired circular mirrors and a boldly patterned, cement-tile floor give an upper-level bath the look of a boutique hotel. **RIGHT** The designer tempered the home's ubiquitous wood and created a restful retreat by whitewashing the walls in the master bedroom. The room is bathed in light and scaled to accommodate a king-size four-poster (also whitewashed). **OPPOSITE** This campaign-style chest of drawers sums up the classic but linear style of the home. Brass accents appear throughout the home for visual flow.

