

# THE High Life

A treehouse in the mountains marries form, function—and plain ol' fun

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PHOTOGRAPHY BY KIMBERLY GAVIN



**THE BIG IDEA** The owner of this Carbondale property wanted a whimsical treetop sanctuary where his kids could indulge their artistic fantasies, so he sought out architect Steve Novy of Green Line Architects and designer and craftsman David Rasmussen of David Rasmussen Design. Together the three dreamed up a retreat that feels organic and playful—for both children *and* adults.

**DEFINING DETAILS** Free from the practical constraints of most buildings, the structure “has very few right angles,” Rasmussen says. But it does borrow design elements from the main home: The rooflines are similar, as is some of the siding material. A window configuration on one wall is a riff on the windows in the main house. “We kept the language of design within the same family so that [the main house and the treehouse] look like they’re brothers or cousins,” Rasmussen says. “Obviously, the treehouse is the funky cousin.”

And as you might expect from a treehouse, most of the materials are reclaimed and local. For example, the exterior is clad with a rough-sawn cedar from a local mill, which means it’s less processed, greener and a bit less polished, perfect for a home among the branches.

*(above from left)* The treehouse is made of reclaimed and recycled beams, logs and lumber. A leather chair and ottoman from Ekornes complete a cozy corner by the handmade front door. A side door leads to a platform above the Crystal River. “We wanted to give the owner some different options for enjoying the beauty of his property,” says designer and furniture maker David Rasmussen.





“With interiors, you want to balance the natural elements with manmade things to keep it interesting,” interior designer Robyn Scott says. “We felt we could bring in a few iconic pieces and mix styles in such a playful space.”





## Tips For Treehouse Lovers

**No trees? No problem.** The team at Green Line Architects constructed “trees” that would support the structure by driving steel rods through the centers of blown-down oak logs. No heavy excavation required—though you might enlist the help of a structural engineer.

**Get in the zone.** Before you break ground (or branches) check with your county’s zoning board. Structures under a certain square footage can sometimes be constructed without a permit, but you want to be sure that you’re building within the rules.

**Go natural.** It’s easy to find beautiful materials that are less processed, more eco-friendly—and far more charming than their polished counterparts.

**FINISHING TOUCHES** For *CH&L*’s photo shoot, interior designer Robyn Scott of Basalt-based Robyn Scott Interiors played up the structure’s extraordinary design with art and grown-up furnishings that balance the space’s organic style. “[The treehouse] is kind of like an art piece, so we brought in other art pieces,” she says.

Take the chaise, for example. Called the LC4 Chaise Lounge, it was designed by Swiss modern architect Le Corbusier and is perhaps one of the modern era’s most recognizable shapes. The same goes for the Saarinen side table from Knoll. The crowning touch comes from equine-inspired artwork—some pieces in bright, bold colors and others in black and white—from local artist Summers Moore.

The final design proves that treehouses aren’t just for youngsters. “Adults need to have places that are less serious, where you can see the frivolity or folly or fantasy of life,” Novy says. “We need places that inspire creativity. That’s why places like this are so important.” □

### DESIGN DETAILS

Architect

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*(opposite, left)* In the main living space, interior designer Robyn Scott opted for bold rugs from the Isberian Rugs showroom in Basalt to soften the abundance of wood. Rasmussen built the green chair. The spiral ship's ladder leads to a sleeping loft that reveals views of the Crystal River and Mount Sopris. *(opposite, right)* It's easy to imagine a Hobbit peeking out from the front door, which Rasmussen built in his furniture studio. "I put windows low on the door so that the kids could see out," he says. *(right)* Pull up a seat at the bar, courtesy of Rasmussen, who built the stools. Local ceramic artist Alleghany Meadows crafted the pottery. The custom-made elliptical windows pivot in the center to open.

