

Tree Houses

A large, multi-level wooden tree house is built around a massive tree trunk in a lush forest. The house features a balcony with a hammock, a slide, and warm interior lighting. The structure is elevated on dark wooden posts. The surrounding trees are dense and green, creating a canopy effect.

ESCAPE TO THE CANOPY



Contents

7 Introduction

Escape to the canopy

- 12 **Suspended disbelief** | Sweden
- 20 **Embedded in nature** | United States
- 26 **Arctic experience** | Finland
- 34 **Common dream** | Switzerland
- 42 **Lofty escape** | Sweden
- 50 **Tuscan delight** | Italy
- 56 **Chapel on the river** | United States
- 60 **Treetop castles** | France
- 68 **Inspired geometry** | South Africa
- 76 **Jungle living** | Costa Rica
- 82 **Designer hideout** | Australia
- 88 **Across the canopy** | Canada
- 94 **Woodland wonder** | United States
- 102 **Connected to nature** | Mexico
- 108 **Patchwork of glass** | United States
- 114 **Lakeside living** | United States
- 120 **Lavender fields** | Italy
- 126 **Simple pleasures** | Russia
- 130 **Uplifting experiment** | Indonesia
- 138 **Cozy tranquility** | Denmark
- 144 **Reflective ambitions** | Sweden
- 152 **Pinecone peek-a-boo** | Italy
- 160 **Summer garden retreat** | United Kingdom
- 166 **Building on traditions** | Mexico
- 174 **Thermal motivation** | Portugal
- 180 **Playing with the aspect** | France
- 188 **Pine design** | Portugal
- 194 **Backyard beauty** | Portugal
- 200 **Counting on the view** | Germany
- 208 **Out of this world** | China
- 216 **Over the water** | Germany
- 222 **Urban double act** | Germany
- 228 **Magic in the woods** | United Kingdom
- 238 **Diner's delight** | New Zealand
- 246 **Rain and shine** | United States
- 254 Project credits



Introduction

By Peter Eising

I distinctly remember my childhood, growing up on a New Zealand farm with eight siblings creating imaginary spaces and tree houses together, to escape to the canopy. Inspired by fairy-tales (yes, also for boys), comics, and early black-and-white television shows such as *Flash Gordon* and *Lost in Space*, we used whatever we could find. From broken branches to leftover (and not so leftover!) building materials and packing cases, using hammer-straightened rusted nails and bailing twine to secure and connect our creations. What we lacked in experience and knowledge, we complemented with huge doses of enthusiasm.

Like many tree-house designers, my inspiration comes from tapping into my inner child's world and those early experiences. It is a place where innocence, inquisitiveness, nonjudgment, and the thrill of accomplishing something adventurous and sometimes outrageous, thrives. And now, the once basic tree house is a collision of many elements and responses, embodied across creativity and art, commercial realities and building technologies.

We had no understanding of material technology and engineering as kids. Spans were made from planks of (usually) unsuitable wood to create floors, walls, and roofs. When the tree house collapsed from its perch high-up in the branches, we learnt quickly which materials were too weak to take one child, let alone three or more. Aesthetics didn't rate highly. We were more interested in constructing a tree house that stayed together for more than a day and with practice and time, they did. Waterproofing was never a consideration, just an annoyance when passing showers forced us inside or saturated our uncovered sandwiches and homemade ANZAC cookies. However, this was eclipsed by the exhilarating feeling of being up high, hidden from view with vast outlooks over the local paddocks and cows, and building without any plans.

There are still no rules for building in trees; however, there is a boundary of care and safety that is crossed immediately when used in the real world. Our childhood memories and scars are evidence of the consequences of not getting it right. Materials, structural options, methodologies, and budgets enable a greater choice for design. And finally, the construction—using big-boy’s toys for the build—something I did not have access to as a kid, much to my parent’s relief. A tower crane would have reached the tallest branches, but that is a long way to fall when the floorboards collapse!

As evidenced by the stunning tree houses showcased here, the essence of tree-house design in the real world remains emotive, limitless, and has universal appeal. Shape, form, materials, and textures inspire and capture the heart, whether it be beautiful timbers, raw and exquisitely finished, or eco-charcoal external finishes, such as those used in the Treehouse (Playing with the aspect) in France, or the contrasting look of the modern steel and glass seen in Treehouse Solling (Over the water) in Germany. ACES Treehouse (Embedded in nature), a simply sophisticated learning platform in Aspen, displays a beautiful wooden framework, while the Danish hotel suite, LOVTAG (Cozy tranquility), is inspired by the local environment. Other examples, such as Yoki Treehouse (Rain and shine) in Texas provide a clear demonstration of working with the tree configuration, while Urban Treehouse (Urban double act) in Berlin displays a pre-determined aesthetic in its design. Whether the final design is traditional or contemporary, working with nature, or something quite random—it is always inspired.

Other designs included in this collection are simply sculptural delights, such as Tree Snake House (Thermal motivation) in Portugal or where the structure has been integrated into its backdrop, as we see in Tree Houses@ACRE (Building on traditions) in Mexico.

The designs here beautifully integrate with equally stunning environments, a duty of the designer to create naturally belonging structures, whether an ‘Arctic Experience’ or something to suit the tropical conditions of ‘Jungle Living’ in Costa Rica.

From the simplest to more complex and sophisticated designs, tree houses are built to captivate the minds of young and old, rekindling fond childhood memories and inspiring memories yet to be created. It is our responsibility to encourage new generations to use their imaginations wherever possible. Creativity lies in the foraging of materials, fixings, and tools, learning from trial and error, and embracing nature and the elements that impact our lives. That is what learning is about. And my childhood experience in constructing tree houses with my siblings inspired me to become an architect.

Peter Eising is the managing director at the award-winning firm Architects Pacific Environments, based in Auckland, New Zealand. Peter’s experience reflects a strong focus on residential/lifestyle work, covering a wide range of project types that also include resorts and lodges, master planning, urban design, retail, low-cost and affordable housing, and civic developments.







Escape to the canopy

Suspended disbelief

Another addition to the renowned Treehotel in northern Sweden, The 7th Room rises majestically on twelve columns and into the tree canopy, offering views of the Lapland landscape. With its focus on the surrounding nature, the design features large windows, a netted terrace suspended above the forest floor, and a tree stretching up through the cabin. The boundaries between indoors and outdoors are blurred, making the arboreal hotel room part of the forest.

Designed to be a celebration of the traditional Nordic cabin, the wooden façade is clad with pine boards. The surface is burnt to create a dark and maintenance-free façade. The indoor flooring is made from ash wood, while birch plywood is used for the interior walls. With two bedrooms, a social lounge area, bathroom, and the airy terrace, the cabin accommodates up to five guests. The lounge area is located on the lower floor, while the bedrooms are on the upper level with the beds embedded in the floor. A staircase brings guests from the ground and up into the cabin, along with a small lift for transporting luggage.

With the primary aim of bringing people and nature closer together, the structure playfully blends the distinction between indoors and outdoors, by way of the double-layered net. The daring can sleep outside on the net under the starry sky. But guests who remain indoors can also enjoy the celestial splendor, with expansive, openable skylights in both bedrooms. Scandinavian-designed furniture and lighting create a soothing and minimalist atmosphere. A north-facing floor-to-ceiling window gives you the best chance to see the Aurora Borealis on a clear day, giving this social space the name the Northern Light lounge.



THE 7TH ROOM (SNØHETTA), Harads, Sweden









Site



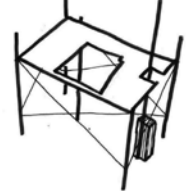
Columns



Elevator



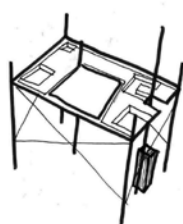
Connecting columns



Sixth façade



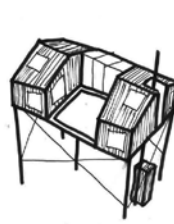
Structure



Plan



Walls



Roof



Net





Common dream

Two best friends shared a common dream to build their own tree house, creating a special hideaway for themselves and guests. They turned to Baumraum, who specializes in designing tree houses, to bring their dream into reality.

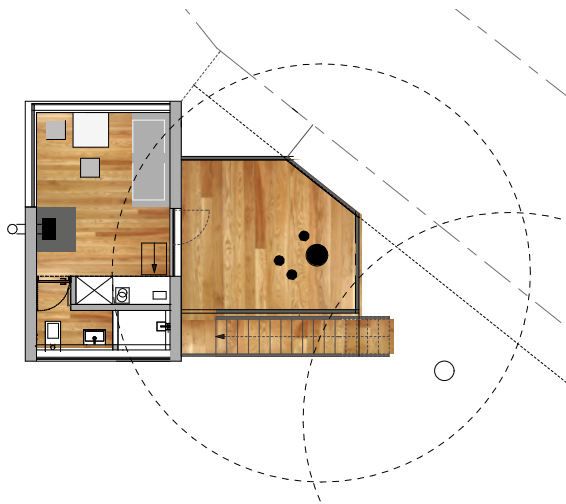
The chosen location had beautiful oak trees and a picturesque view of the valley below. The resulting design combined a traditional pitched roof with an almost black building structure within a steel frame, with large glass surfaces, resting on four pillars. All components were prefabricated in Germany before being assembled on-site in just a matter of days.

The interior employs only oiled oak for cladding and for the built-in furniture, which bestows a lovely warmth, and gives it a calm and elegant character. The open living room and bedroom make full use of the height afforded by the gable, and natural light floods in. The north side frames a picturesque view over the orchard and down to the river Thur.

Above the integrated pantry and the bathroom is a gallery with a cozy sleeping area. A skylight provides an exceptional view into the canopy of the oak and to the stars at night-time. A small wood stove creates warmth and coziness on cold days. The petite bathroom contains a beautiful stone from the nearby river, which forms a natural stone sink. All in all, this cozy and perfectly designed tree house is a dream come true for two friends.



BAUMHAUS HALDEN (BAUMRAUM), Halden, Switzerland



Floor plan



Elevation











Tuscan delight

Taking the idea of green and sustainable architecture that one step further, Black Cabin combines a solid construction with high-tech elements, and proudly displays luxury as its watchword. This well-appointed structure, available for rent, is set within the grounds of a Tuscan olive and lavender farm, with stunning views over the rural Tuscan landscape to the Cimini Mountains and across to the sea of Tarquinia.

Nestled within the strong boughs of a 200-year-old maritime pine, the tree house was designed by French company La Cabane Perchée following an idea proposed by Renzo Stucchi. It is clad in Canadian cedar, and effortlessly oozes tranquility and a luxurious elegance. The interior is designed by Claudia Pelizzari from Archiglam, employing contrasting colors and natural fabrics, such as linen and cotton, and using materials in unusual combinations, such as wood, glass, and steel, creating a glamorous and ultraluxe look. The shower is decorated with Corian marble and crystal. Careful attention to detail pervades the design, and includes a Bose home theater system, LED lights, and heating/air conditioning.

The owners wanted to explore the idea of a tree house being more than a fable or figment of imagination, and have created what they describe as an eco-loft, suspended from the tree. The design carefully does not impose or damage any part of the tree, and in return, the structure is shaded from the hot sun. The result is a holiday retreat that allows one to enjoy the sense of nature, but with all the comforts still available. The perfect place to escape, unwind, and regenerate.



BLACK CABIN (LA CABANE PERCHÉE), Tuscany, Italy









Inspired geometry

When the client requested a cabin-like, one-bedroom hideaway resembling a tree house to be built on their tree-rich property, the architects were inspired by the surrounding trees, and also the timber cabins of Horace Gifford and that master of working with the void or in-between space, Kengo Kuma. The result is an eye-catching beautiful timber-clad cylindrical structure.

The design also drew on influences such as Louis I. Kahn and his mastery of pure form, and the detailing ethic of Carlo Scarpa, to produce a process of geometric restraint and handcrafted manufacturing.

Located in a small clearing among the forest-like garden, the resulting structure explores the geometry of a square while responding similarly to the verticality of the surrounding trees in order to maximize views. The building became a vertically arranged “clearing in the forest,” with living space on the first level, a bedroom placed on the second level and a roof deck on the third. The half-round bays accommodate a patio, dining alcove and stairs on the first level, and a bathroom on the bedroom level. The building sits lightly on the ground, its height accentuating the feeling of being among the trees. Entry is by means of a suspended timber and Corten steel ramp, adding to the sense of adventure.

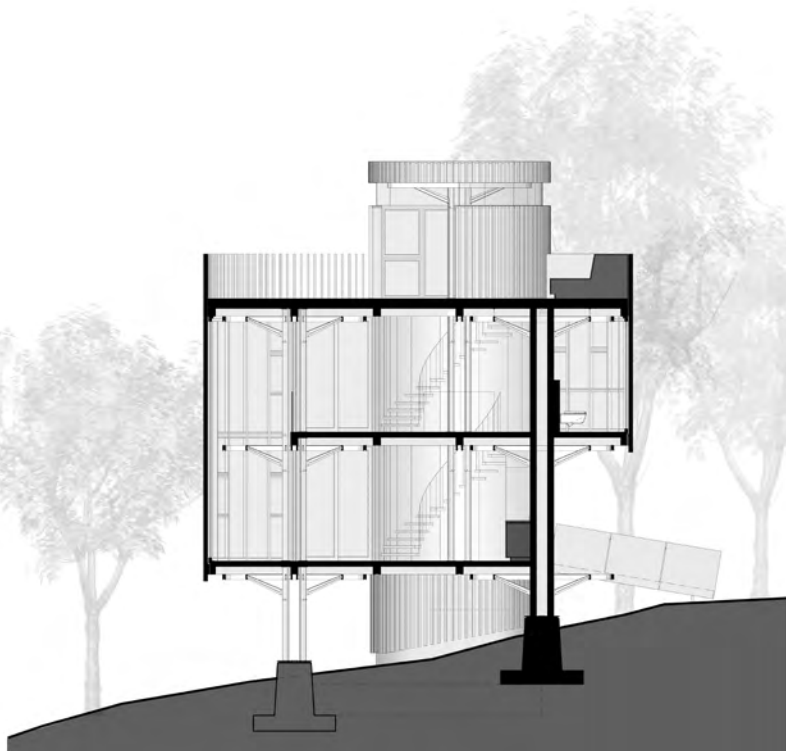
The interior is bathed in natural light, with generous glazed windows, while the warm timber tones form a delightful contrast to the verdant canopy outside. The connections between steel and timber are expressed by means of handturned brass components. All materials are left untreated, and will express the passing of time as they weather naturally within the surrounding environment.



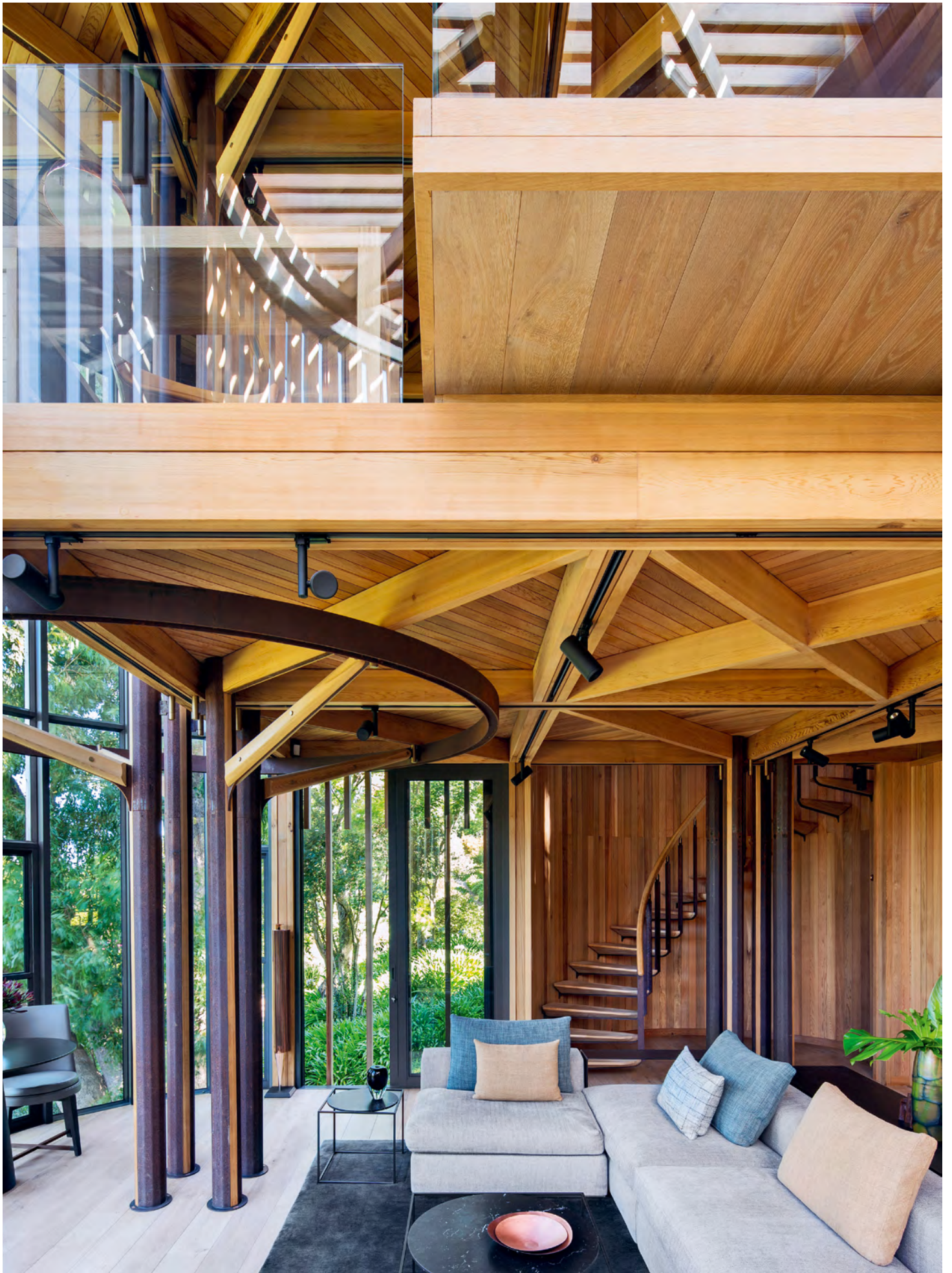
CONSTANTIA TREEHOUSE (MALAN VORSTER ARCHITECTURE INTERIOR DESIGN), South Africa







Section







Woodland wonder

Located in Hot Springs and nestled in a natural hillside alongside Lake Hamilton, this stunning tree house is a welcome addition to the Evans Children's Adventure Garden, within Garvan Woodland Gardens, and is the first of three ultimately planned to grace the grounds.

Designed as part of an ambitious plan to entice children back into the woods, the tree house uses a rich visual and tactile environment to stimulate mind and body, and to strengthen connections back to the natural world. The architects were able to draw on their own childhood experiences from growing up in mostly rural settings and merge this with the firm's philosophy of "think, make, do" to produce a unique structure that accommodates the needs of all users.

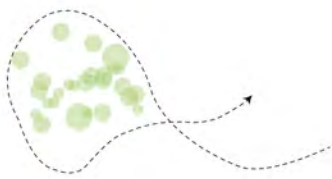
The form and program of the structure was driven by the underlying theme of dendrology: the study of trees and wooded plants. The screen creates a semitransparent shell, and comprises 113 fins made from thermalized Arkansas-sourced Southern yellow pine wood. This evocative form dynamically shrouds multiple levels of spaces for both children and adults alike, and refocuses their attention to the natural wonders of the surrounding forest canopy. In this way, children who have become disconnected from playing in nature and have little knowledge of the forests, insects, and animals of Arkansas may be drawn in to observe at a close distance.

This mysterious form, with its creative play of shadow and light and enticing sense of exploration and adventure, becomes a magical experience within the Ouachita forest, and easily blends in among the native pines and oaks.

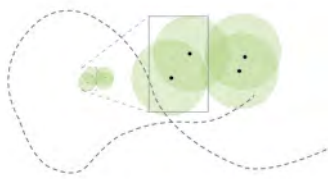


EVANS TREE HOUSE (MODUS STUDIO), Hot Springs, AR, United States

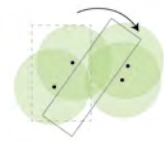




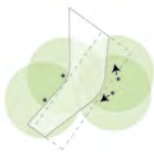
a place in the trees



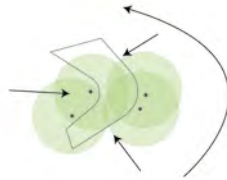
a place to play



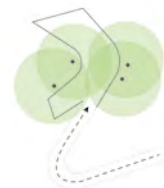
in a site rich with colors, forms, and textures



a place that plays, squeezing between the trees



pulled by the bridge and pushed by the trees



balanced between rigid garden geometry and organic softness, while being connected to the site









Out of this world

ZYJ Tree House World was dreamt up as a campsite style resort villa. The first phase consists of fifteen sets of independent villa-style rooms. The second phase, known as Treehouse in Qiyun Mountain, sought to provide a place that would appeal to children while providing somewhere safe for them to play.

Situated on a ridge, the new set of wooden structures take the theme of a UFO, an element from science fiction sure to attract the interest of children. The resort buildings are elevated on stilts and are spread out, connected by raised wooden walkways. The entrance to the resort is through a stone circle, above which a large silver flying saucer is suspended.

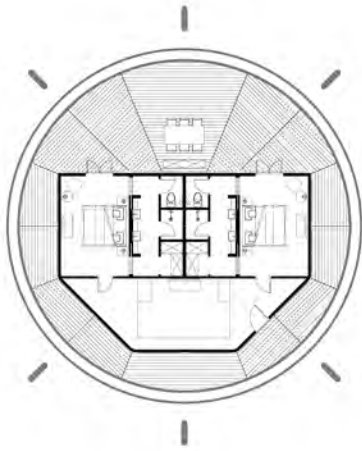
The main accommodations are luxuriously appointed, and the beautifully crafted wooden volume forms a UFO shape; the wood will fade over time and blend in with the surrounding forest. Various interior design details continue the theme of the world of flying saucers, from the constellation of stars on the bedroom ceiling to images of aliens at the foot of the bed. To cope with the rainy weather, the architects increased the depth of the eaves and added a circle of porch, forming a sheltered space for inhabitants to rest and soak up the views. The surrounding pine forest provides a sense of tranquility and isolation as the residents relax in a sea of green, far from the hue and cry of modern life.

Three other additions radiate off the main pavilion, each continuing the sci-fi theme and meant to represent passing planets. The first circle is known as the UFO Burner, which then leads to the Starry Sky Bar, covered with a white waterproof roofing. The last satellite is a trampoline, just right for children who want to test the theory of gravity.

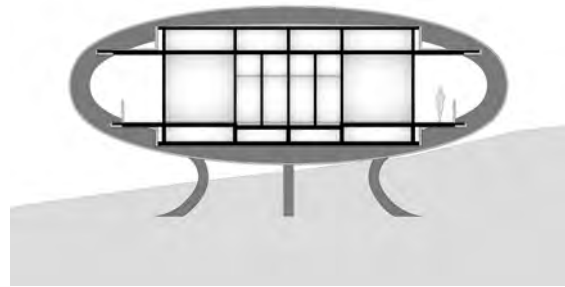


TREEHOUSE IN QIYUN MOUNTAIN (ATELIER DESIGN CONTINUUM), Xiuning, China





Floor plan



Cross section













Tree houses have come a long way since our collective childhoods. Today, they can provide a welcome respite from the stress of modern living, such as a hotel room from where star gazing is a must, a studio to inspire creativity, or simply an exceptional viewing platform to take in the lush verdant treetop canopy and scenery all around.

Lavishly illustrated, this inspiring selection of tree houses from across the globe features exquisitely finished and whimsical constructions dreamed up by modern architects. Take a magical journey through the arboreal world of tree-house design, incorporating escapes across jungle to arctic wonderlands, dreamy holiday and food destinations, eco-friendly designer hideouts, and so much more.

Perfect for your inner child!



Cover photography: Alex Steele-Perkins (Guy Mallinson and Keith Brownlie, Woodsman's Treehouse, Dorset, United Kingdom)