

Sierra *style*

Designer
Kathy Geissler Best
& Architect Greg Klein
Create A Tyrolean
Inspired Cabin For A
Multi-Generational
Family Of Skiers

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*S*ki lodges and cabins in the California Sierra have traditionally followed a rigorous Arts and Crafts architectural style. For more than a century, the favored approach has included dark redwood-paneled rooms, handsome wood floors, and a reverence for river stone. But the owners of a new ski cabin at the ultra-private Sugar Bowl in the Lake Tahoe region wanted their weekend retreat to be light filled and light hearted, with playful Tyrolean style and polished décor.

The couple, with three school-aged children and multi-generational guests, commissioned John Malick and Associates of Emeryville to bring their Austrian mountain home dream to life. Architect Greg Klein was the principal for this project. Klein's beautifully rendered watercolor paintings of the proposed house depict its colorful and intricate exterior with a unique double sloped roof shape and elegantly curved fascia, and an artful combination of materials that would make this house look as if it had stood among the pines and cedars for decades.



In the living room, a balcony and series of cabinets and wall paneling were crafted in tight knot pine. Paneling is custom-milled tongue and groove. A dramatic double-height fireplace and stucco chimneypiece add drama. The leather armchairs and ottomans are by Hendrix Allardyce, through Kneedler Fauchere. OPPOSITE TOP Eighteen highly skilled finish carpenters worked for over a year on the woodwork and paneling for the house. Paneling is tight knot pine. The box beam ceiling soars two stories above the living room. BOTTOM Kathy Geissler Best.





A floor of Ashlar-pattern flamed granite and racks for boots and jackets make the entry very practical for skiers returning from a day on the mountain. A circular antique English bench from Coup d'Etat provides capacious seating for snow-dashed skiers removing their boots and storm gear. The floor is hydronically heated.



The ski house, which is only used in the winter, has a clear path from the ski lift to its front steps, and majestic views from all windows. Completed in the winter of 2009, it reflects a classical Tyrolean mountain house style with rustic stone on the ground level (which is partly snow covered in mid-winter), walls of wheat colored cement plaster on the second level, and a rich combination of stained and painted wood shingles and trim at the top level.

"One of the challenges of building in Sugar Bowl is the extreme seasonal nature of the region," says San Francisco interior designer Kathy Geissler Best, who was commissioned to design the superbly detailed interiors. (Geissler Best founded her design firm, KGB Associates, in 1990.) Annual snowfall at this seven thousand foot elevation averages five hundred inches. The resort is a Class A avalanche area.

The construction process for the 6,500 square foot, five bedroom cabin was a lengthy one. The stone foundation was laid at the end of summer 2006, and then as soon as the

snow melted the following year, all lumber, stone and building materials were trucked in to start the complex framing and roof. By winter of 2007, the construction crew had completed the exterior and would approach the construction site/house by Sno-Cat to work on the interior.

The house also looked to Swiss mountain houses for a sense of craft and handwork. General contractor Bruce Barth and his teams worked on the multiple hand-carved wooden staircases, custom cabinetry, milled woodwork and moldings, while specialists were creating the extraordinary arched box beam ceilings and an elaborate truss ceiling that soars double height above the living room.

"Every surface in this house reveals the hand of a master craftsman," says Geissler Best. The designer, who worked closely with the architects on the project, also applied the same craftsmanship to elaborate upholstery, hand woven trim on the leading edge of draperies, and handcrafted textiles for pillows.

ABOVE A pair of Hendrix Allardyce leather chairs and ottomans stand on a Sultanabad style carpet in the living room. In the background, an intricate curved stairway crafted of tight knot pine leads to the third floor.

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In the sun-filled dining room, Michael Taylor Designs chairs surround an antique farm table. The curtains are fine wool. The chandelier was made by Naos, from Wroolie & Company. LEFT A KGB Associates “Tyrol” sofa was fabricated by Belmar Fine Custom Upholstery, with added velours and chenille pillows in contrasting blue tones. Antique stools were also upholstered by Belmar. The hand-woven carpet is from Tony Kitz Carpets.





Every material was closely considered. Elm flooring is made from wood reclaimed from Chinese temples. Interior beams and walls were hand-painted with authentic Tyrolean detailing. Entry hall windows were made with round glass in leaded frames. Copper-clad exterior windows protect the house from snow and wind.

Geissler Best is known for her superbly polished and refined décor. The owners of the cabin expected the same sophistication for their interiors. The designer researched Tyrolean and northern Italian mountain houses, and achieved a fresh European feeling with English and Italian antiques juxtaposed with contemporary furniture.

"For color inspiration, I walked through the Old Masters rooms at the California Palace of the Legion of Honor and the Louvre and studied Vermeer and Rembrandt paintings," says the designer. "I found the sapphire tones and rich gold and the ruby red accents for the living room and dining room in paintings by Vermeer. They have a timeless beauty in this mountain house."

The cabin's Cinquefoil Court address provided the classic floral leitmotif for subtle accents to the décor. The cinquefoil, a yellow alpine flower, is presented in five petal cut outs on the wood railings and balcony, and is repeated in the decorative embellishments to the timbers, as well as in the custom made living room crag and trim and fabrics in the living room and dining room.

Italian Barocco sconces invite guests into the dining room. Nineteenth-century English tole and glass lanterns decorate the living room. A handsome mid-eighteenth century alpine rent table stands in the living room, versatile enough to be used for card games, a buffet, or a gathering spot for the younger generation.

"It's such a cozy fortress against Sugar Bowl's blizzards and extreme winter conditions," says Geissler Best. "The interior feels warm and welcoming after a day of skiing, with light spilling in from all windows. The family is so happy and comfortable there."

Upon completion of the ski cabin, the San Francisco based owners and their three school-aged children invited eighty friends to toast the project at a New Year's Eve 2009 celebration. [\[E\]](#)

OPPOSITE Tongue and groove wall paneling in tight knot pine and a box beam ceiling soar above the third-floor balcony. TOP An Ebanista painted "Flandes" bed is dressed with a glamorous silk baldachin, designed by Kathy Geissler Best. LEFT Copper-clad exterior windows protect the house from snow and wind.