



## Yosemite's Splendor

**A rental cabin pays homage to its incredible surroundings.** By Danielle Taylor

INSTEAD OF CREATING a luxury cabin in a spectacular location, surrounded by the wonders of nature, and keeping it all to themselves, Jim and Kristine Maxwell enjoy sharing their log home with others. Their 3,423-square-foot cabin, nestled on a private plot of land deep in Yosemite National Park, lets visitors enjoy rustic accommodations in one of the country's most awe-inspiring areas without having to break the bank. "We're really focused on giving guests an experience they'll remember forever," Jim says.

The property's history dates to Yosemite's creation, when a stubborn landowner forced the National Park Service to let one section of land remain privately owned. Over time, the small cabin community of Wawona developed there. The government tried several times over the

years to acquire it, but, although several holdings were absorbed into the park, others remained in private hands.

After learning that some 1960s Wawona cabins were being sold, Jim bought his first one in 1998, followed later by four more. He renovated them, remaining true to the originals, but his ultimate goal was to build a truly spectacular new cabin, where he could have his hands in every aspect of its design, construction and outfitting. "It's been a therapeutic hobby," says Jim. "I like to select the stone, to design all aspects of the cabin and its decor. I put a lot of effort into searching for just the right thing."

For years, the Maxwells researched every aspect of their dream cabin's development. After drafting a set of plans, Jim shopped them to several companies before

**ABOVE:** The cabin's unassuming exterior belies the luxury accommodations within. The stone barbecue bumpout displays an etching of Yosemite landmark Bridalveil Fall and a quotation from John Muir: "In every walk with nature, one receives far more than he seeks."

**OPPOSITE:** Open spaces, comfortable furnishings and handcrafted logs define the home's interior, especially in the great room. Log provider Oregon Log Homes brought in the 12-inch Douglas fir logs from a Yakima reservation in Washington.

deciding on Oregon Log Homes, based in Maupin, Oregon. In November 2008, crews broke ground to prepare for building the following spring and summer.

Jim and Kristine envisioned the cabin being used for families traveling together, so they designed it to have three full master suites, plus pull-out sofas and Murphy beds. It easily accommodates up to 14



Photos courtesy of Jim Maxwell



**ABOVE:** The dining room, just off the great room, provides a rustic setting amid the log work, which includes carved archways for an open feeling.

**LEFT:** Log posts in the great room and on the stairs suggest the forest that surrounds the cabin. Although the cabin officially sleeps 14, it's clear from the spaciousness that there's plenty of room for everyone to carve out their own space where they can feel right at home.

**OPPOSITE:** Guests can either cook for themselves in the well-equipped kitchen or hire a professional chef to prepare gourmet meals for them. Says Jim: "We're really into pampering our guests."





**ABOVE:** After a day of exploring, this warmly lit master bedroom invites repose. The handcrafted headboard features flora and fauna native to Yosemite and California.

**LEFT:** One of the home's three master bathrooms perfectly balances luxury accommodations and rustic accents. Potter's Woodcraft in Coarsegold, California, supplied the custom-built hickory cabinets for the bathrooms and kitchen.

**OPPOSITE:** As the property is surrounded on three sides by Yosemite National Park land, Jim strove to stay true to the cabin's awe-inspiring location with the home's exterior living spaces as well as its interiors. Guests can enjoy meals together on the custom-crafted sugar pine picnic table and then venture back into the park, only a few steps away.



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guests at a time. "Our goal is that the first couple says, 'we'll take this one,' and the next couple says, 'no problem, we're good over here,'" Jim explains.

Hoping to create a one-of-a-kind experience, the Maxwells tracked down some distinctive materials, including lumber used for the front steps of Studio 89 at the old Warner Bros. movie lot. The hand-peeled logs came from a Yakima reservation in Washington, and Jim personally selected stones from several California rivers for the fireplace, foundation and built-in barbecue. He also had trees that were removed for construction milled for all the door and window trim — not the cheapest way to

deck out the home, he admits, but "the right way to do it."

Once construction was complete, Jim and Kristine outfitted the cabin to provide rustic ambience and the ultimate in comfort. For example, one end table is actually a 542-pound petrified stump. The picnic table on the deck is built with a single slab of sugar pine and Manzanita legs, a signature feature of all six of the Maxwells' cabins. "We're just always looking for places to work in Old-World craftsmanship while at the same time meeting our commitment to the comfort of our guests," Jim explains.

The cabin opened to the public in March 2010 and has wowed visitors ever

since. "When the very first guests pulled up," says Jim, "they were just amazed at the outside. They walked in the front door, put down their bags right there and didn't even take the chance to look around before they went right back to the rental office to put down a deposit for the following summer." ♣

**IF YOU GO:** The four-bedroom, four-bathroom cabin comes with a fully appointed kitchen and great room. Nightly rates range from \$756 to \$1,200. For more, call 888-225-6666 or visit [redwoodsinyosemite.com/book/house.html?Num=164](http://redwoodsinyosemite.com/book/house.html?Num=164).