


A two-story log cabin with a balcony, nestled in a lush green forest. The cabin is built with light-colored wood and features a prominent balcony with a railing. The surrounding trees are dense and vibrant green, suggesting a summer setting. The cabin is situated on a slight rise, with a grassy area in the foreground.

# *animal house*

Hunting trophies return  
to their original stomping  
grounds to adorn a  
New Hampshire cabin.

A two-story log cabin with a prominent stone chimney on the left side. The cabin features a steep gable roof and a large deck with a wooden railing. The exterior is made of light-colored logs. The cabin is surrounded by dense green trees and a grassy area in the foreground.

John Mathieu and Lisa Trahan's cabin overlooks a dirt road leading to the front of their rural New Hampshire property. "If there's one car that goes by all day, I'm lucky," says John. Lisa quickly adds, "And that's the mailman." The seclusion suits the couple, who hope to one day sell their primary home and retire to the cabin.





Most homeowners build their log cabin and then decide how to decorate it. But Lisa Trahan and John Mathieu aren't most homeowners.

"My husband and our son, Spencer, are avid hunters, so we pretty much had our living room decorated like a taxidermy shop," says Lisa, laughing about the family's primary home in Manchester, New Hampshire. "The deal was, when we built the cabin, all the animals were going."

And so they did — to a beautiful 1,140-

square-foot eastern pine cabin in the foothills of the Granite State's White Mountains.

Today, the partridges, ducks, deer, moose and other trophies look right at home in John and Lisa's 2-year-old cabin — which makes sense, given that the 5-acre site has always been about hunting.

### Humble Origins

"I had a little camp up there originally, and it was pretty rundown," John recalls of the ramshackle place he'd owned since the late 1990s. "So I decided it was either put money in the old hunting camp, which needed a lot of work, or just demolish it and start from scratch."

**ABOVE:** Wide-open and welcoming, John and Lisa's New Hampshire cabin uses comfy furnishings and a soaring ceiling to make the space feel both intimate and expansive. Clear stain on the logs adds to the airy feel.

**OPPOSITE:** Partial credit for this lovely cabin goes to the gigantic moose head and its stuffed brethren. Once the dozens of hunting trophies began taking over their primary home, John and Lisa decided all the critters would relocate to the cabin — which, fittingly, sits where John's old hunting camp once did.





Already pleasantly decorated, the ample loft is slowly being turned into a traditional master bedroom. "It's not fully furnished yet," says John, who intends to add a closet someday. "We're still plugging away at it."

Once he and Lisa realized what they really wanted was a comfortable, year-round log cabin, the decision was made. Demolition it was.

After visiting trade shows and doing lots of research, John and Lisa fell in love with a log package from New Hampshire-based Coventry Log Homes. Not only were the logs harvested locally, but their clear finish makes the smallish cabin feel airier than it might if the stain were darker. And, naturally, the finish also provides the ideal backdrop for John and Spencer's animals.

The cabin's open layout means family and friends can relax in the living room and still chat with Lisa, who says the kitchen is one of her favorite places to be. Though not a hunter herself, she's happy to cook whatever the guys bag. Just don't ask her to taste it.

"I don't eat any of it," she says with a laugh. "It's really not my thing."

Surprisingly, the country was never much her thing, either.

"John and I are kind of like 'Green Acres,'" she admits. "'New York is where I'd rather stay...' But now I love it up here. I really do."

Log cabins have a way of bringing people around.

### Focus on the Future

John and Lisa built their cabin with retirement in mind, hoping one day to live in it all summer before heading south to escape the harsh New England winter. In the meantime, they make use of the three-bedroom, two-bath-

room retreat as often as possible.

"I go up all year long," says John, an equipment operator for the state highway department. "I hunt every fall. There's great snowmobiling in the winter and great trout fishing in summer."

Lisa, who works for an insurance agency, gets there less frequently, but is as eager as her husband to one day retire and start summering at the cabin.

With a caveat. "We need to add a screened-in porch because of the big bugs!" she exclaims.

Beyond that, there's not much John and Lisa would change. Builder Bruce Elliott of Bruce Elliott Carpentry was a joy to work with, and the modestly sized cabin has plenty of space for the family and their bird dog, Ruger.

It's also a nice parent-free getaway for Spencer, a recent college grad, who heads to the cabin — sans his mom and dad — whenever he can.

"He informed me that he's already got plans to have a party up here," says John. With the nearest neighbor more than a quarter-mile away, "they can do all the hootin' and hollerin' they want, and no one will hear."

Not that anyone who did hear would complain; they'd likely ask to join in the fun. Whether it's sitting around the outdoor fire pit, hiking to the nearby pond with rod in hand or simply relaxing in the gorgeous surroundings, John and Lisa's mountain cabin feels like a woodsy welcome mat.

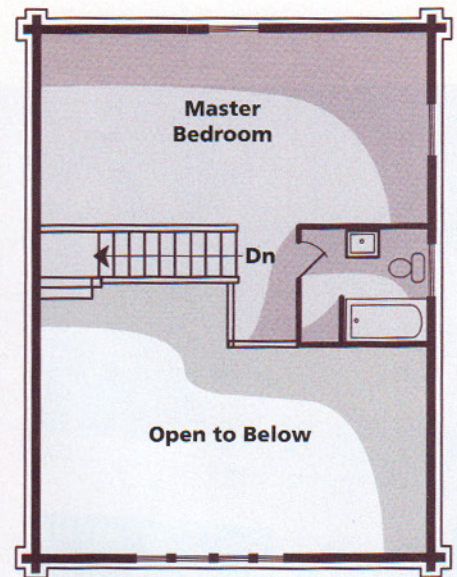
And to think it all started with a few too many animal heads.

SQUARE FOOTAGE: 1,140

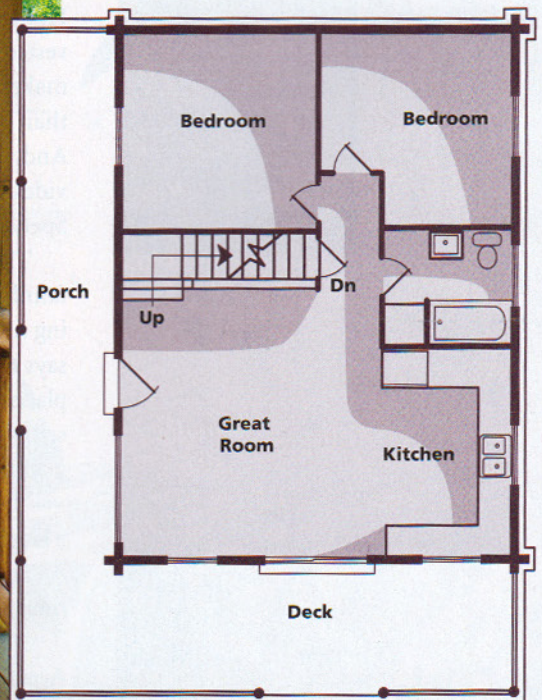
BEDROOMS: 3

BATHROOMS: 2

For more resources, see pages 58–59.



Upper Level



Main Level

The comfortable side deck, with its sprawling views of the surrounding forest, provides the perfect spot for John and his son, Spencer, to plan their next hunting or trout-fishing expedition. Eventually, Lisa hopes to add a screened-in porch to the cabin to protect against pests.