

## Mountain Magic

*A bed-and-breakfast inn in rural Tennessee is far from rustic*



The inn's great room provides a relaxing place to sit and read or just enjoy a roaring fire.

By Eileen Beal

ROBIN CONOVER



Ten years ago, Vikki Woods came to the Appalachian Mountains to do some long-distance horseback riding. She fell in love with the mountains and decided that some day she'd call them home. But it wasn't until her husband died and she consulted a career counselor that she discovered how to make her dream come true.

"The career counselor said I'd make a perfect inn keeper," explains the 60-something proprietor of the Iron Mountain Inn, whose colorful past includes

stints with the Metropolitan Opera and *Life* magazine. "And I knew that I wanted a log inn. When you live in the woods, you should live in logs."

It took Vikki about a year to turn her dream into reality. She bought 140 acres of land outside tiny (population 600) Butler, Tennessee. "I was only looking for 10 acres," she says, "but when I saw this, I had to have it."

Next, she scoured the property for the perfect building site. "I wanted a flat ridge with a southwest orientation so I'd get sun all winter long," she explains.

Then she designed the three-story, four-bedroom log inn and her attached suite. "I decided on how many guest rooms I'd have based on how many I

thought I could manage on my own if my help couldn't get up the drive from the road," she says.

Living in an RV on the site for eight months, Vikki acted as her own general contractor and interior designer. "I chose every finish and fixture and material for the inn," she says, "right down to the locally made quilts on the beds."

All that attention to detail and guest comfort are evident today. The inn's window-walled great room is bright and sunny all year round. It is full of

books, games and big comfortable chairs clustered around the stone fireplace. The dining room—where guests enjoy breakfasts of seasonal fruits, fresh-made breads and rolls, omelettes, waffles, ham and sausage—is lit by an elegant chandelier and furnished with antiques that Vikki inherited from her grandmother.

Both rooms open onto a wrap-around deck, which offers a panoramic view of the Cherokee National Forest (at its colorful best in October) and a wildflower meadow (best seen in May and June). "Sometimes we'll sit out here and drink tea or lemonade and watch the hawks circling in the sky," Vikki says, "it's a great spot for star-gazing, too."

**Nearby Watauga Lake is one of the cleanest lakes in the nation.**

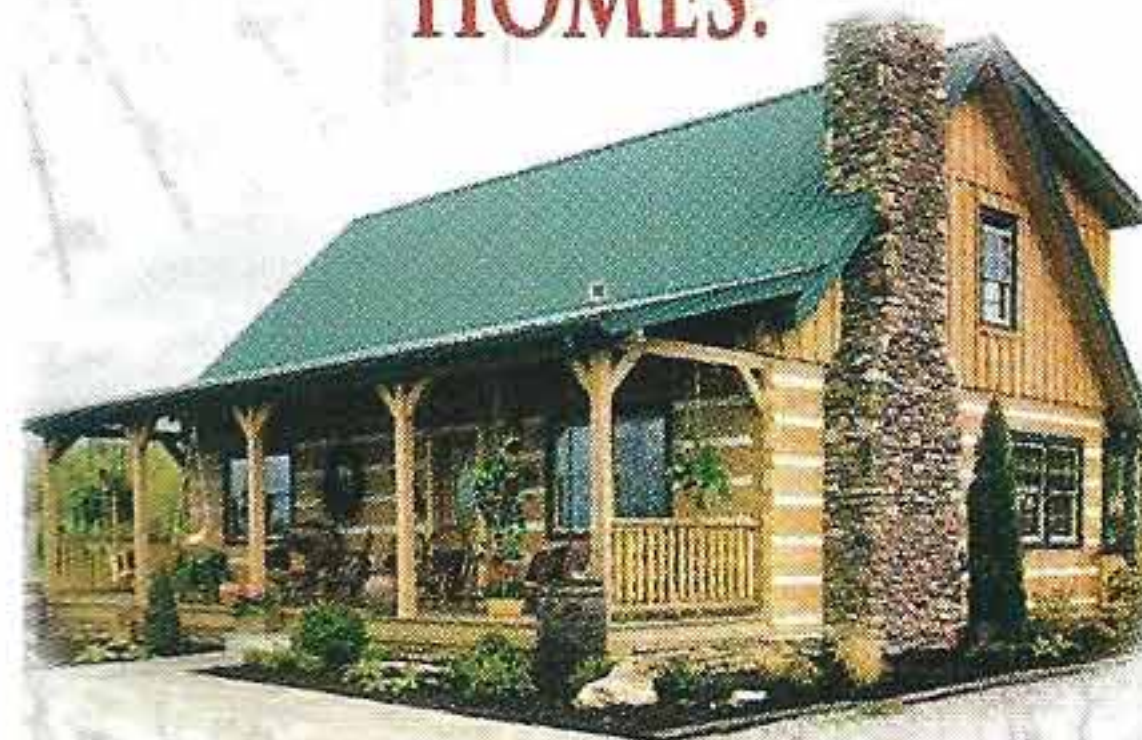
**The four-bedroom log bed & breakfast sits on 140 wooded acres in the mountains of northeast Tennessee. Besides pampering guests, innkeeper Vikki Woods designed the home herself and supervised its construction.**



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