

# LIVING THE HIGH LIFE

They're all over Instagram, have inspired numerous hotels and even have their own Animal Planet television programme. So, just how did grown-up treehouses ever become a thing?

WORDS: HUGH FRANCIS ANDERSON

If you were lucky enough to have grown up with a garden full of trees mature enough to support the weight of a crooked hotchpotch of two-by-fours constructed by Dad, then treehouses probably kindle a special kind of magic, recalling carefree days of playing in the canopies.

They may have been dangerous, perpetually wet and bitterly cold, but treehouses were the things that made your non-treehouse-owning friends ☹



The Mirrorcube Treehouse, Sweden

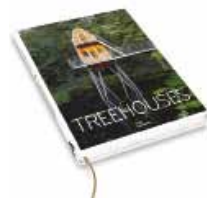


⌚ jealous more than anything else. So perhaps it's in an attempt to rekindle this spirit of youth that so many people are commissioning adult versions of their childhood hideaways.

In the UK, one company dominates the luxury treehouse market. Brothers Simon and Andy Payne run Sussex-based Blue Forest, and have been building souped-up treehouses since 2003. Their commissions include everything from James Bond-inspired dens, with CCTV and biometric security systems, to commercial projects for large international corporations.

"Treehouses are the ultimate kid's den," says Simon. "They capture much of the adventure and imagination that we can all associate with childhood. Treehouses embody escapism. We have built treehouses with home cinemas, hot tubs, Agas, secret rooms, escape pods, bars, kitchens, fire pits and even canopy lookout towers!"

Blue Forest go so far as to employ independent arborists to help develop construction methods that do not harm the trees, including 3D laser tree surveys and air-spades (which dig by using jets of compressed air), and only ever use the most sustainable timber available.



Treehouses - Small Spaces in Nature, £49, Andreas Wenning, [amazon.co.uk](http://amazon.co.uk)

**CLOCKWISE FROM BOTTOM LEFT**

The Pure Package Treehouse, Surrey; Djuren by Baumraum, Germany; Pool View Treehouse, Surrey; Tegernsee by Baumhaus, Germany; Blue Forest - Little Acorn Treehouse, Sussex; UFO Treehouse, Sweden; Teahouse Tetsu Treehouse by Terunobu Fujimori, Japan

"The quality and methods of construction used in our treehouses are similar, and perhaps even better, than most conventional buildings," says Andy. "They are a very sustainable form of architecture."

Elsewhere, when German-based architect Andreas Wenning, and his firm Baumraum, builds houses in the trees, he focuses on the connection between dwellings and nature. Many of Wenning's clients spend upwards of £150,000 on the adult incarnation of their boyhood dream. Like the brothers at Blue Forest, Wenning describes adventure as a huge factor for treehouse living. "Our clients like adventure, the cosiness of a small space and getting close to nature."

Baumraum's Bauhaus-esque designs take direct inspiration from the works of architectural powerhouse Morphosis and industry-leading pioneer Richard Neutra, both of whom he names as personal heroes.

The recent publication of Wenning's first book, *Treehouses - Small Spaces in Nature*, a title which joins a long list of coffee-table books to ignite the recesses of the treehouse imagination, pays homage to his flair for design. Ⓞ

## BRANCHING OUT

For those who can only dream of building their own home among the foliage, treehouse hotels have sprung up to offer you the chance of living the high life, if only for a few enchanted nights



**CHEWTON GLEN**

**HAMPSHIRE**  
FROM £800 PER NIGHT

Set in a secluded valley of Hampshire's New Forest, The Treehouses at Chewton Glen offer guests a natural forest setting with a reassuring feeling of luxury. At around 200 to 400 metres from the Chewton Glen Hotel, guests can escape civilisation without forgoing comfort. Floor-to-ceiling glass provides panoramic views through the forest canopy to the valley beyond. The Treehouse Loft Suites feature a secret galleried bunk area for younger guests - ideal for families. [chewtonglen.com](http://chewtonglen.com)



**TREEHOTEL**

**SWEDEN**  
FROM £365 PER NIGHT

A wide range of incredible buildings that have to be seen to be believed, alongside spectacular views of the tall pine forest and Lule River, mean that each of Treehotel's rooms are genuinely unique. From the stunning Mirrorcube, to the overgrown Bird's Nest, to the surreal UFO, guests can harness the wilderness of Sweden while experiencing the pinnacle of contemporary Scandinavian design. [treehotel.se](http://treehotel.se)



**TONGOLE WILDERNESS LODGE**

**MALAWI**  
FROM £188 PER NIGHT

Deep within the Nkhotakota Wildlife Reserve, the Tongole Wilderness Lodge takes the treehouse adventure to the next level. Watch the roaming wildlife, including leopards and substantial herds of elephants, on safari during the day, and relax in the luxurious open-plan suites overlooking the Bua River by night. Exceptional dining options and locations make Tongole the only high-end lodge in the entire 1,800 km sq reserve. [tongole.com](http://tongole.com)