

# In Your Dreams



Lou and Kristen Sena's home in the Carmel Highlands offers spectacular views of Carmel Bay, Santa Cruz and the Santa Lucia Mountains — and sometimes of the top of fog. Located less than two miles from Highway 1, the hilltop retreat features a passive solar design and includes energy-efficient radiant heat, low voltage lighting and concrete floors.

## Hilltop home offers convenience, solitude and a world-class view

By CHRIS COUNTS

**T**HE VIEW from Lou and Kristen Sena's Carmel Highlands home is so astonishing that you almost have to stand on its deck to believe that photographs of its panoramic vista are not the creation of some clever artist. Yet despite the view, countless thousands of motorists who have passed below the home on Highway 1 have no idea it's even there.

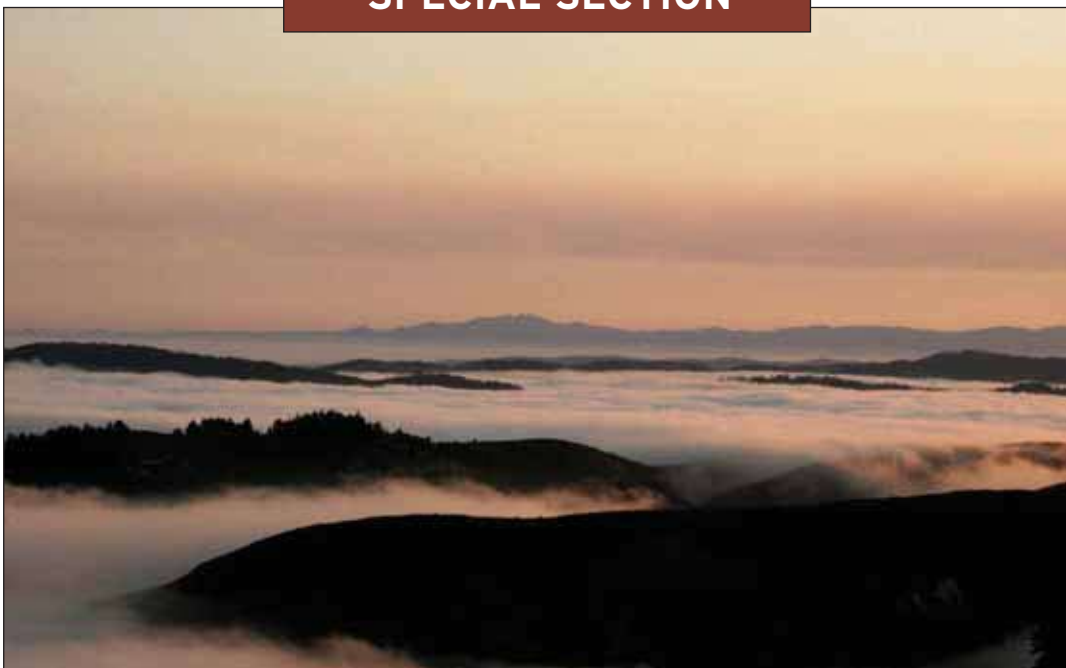
The Senas' hilltop home dramatically offers 21st century convenience and comfort, but still features back-to-nature solitude and privacy. It feels like it's a world a way from the hustle and bustle of Carmel, yet in just minutes, its owners can be sitting in a downtown restaurant enjoying the culinary wonders of civilization.

"It takes just 10 minutes to get to town," observed architect Mary Ann Schicketanz of the Carmel architectural firm, Carver + Schicketanz. "Yet when you're up there by yourself, you feel like you're in the wilderness."

A 1.8-mile private road leads to the house, passing through a shady forest of Monterey pines, cypresses and redwoods along the way. Perched on a ridge 1,200 feet above sea level — and usually above the fog line — the home offers extraordinary views of Carmel Bay, Santa Cruz and the surrounding Santa Lucia Mountains. Immediately adjacent to the house is a lush meadow that fills up with colorful wildflowers in the

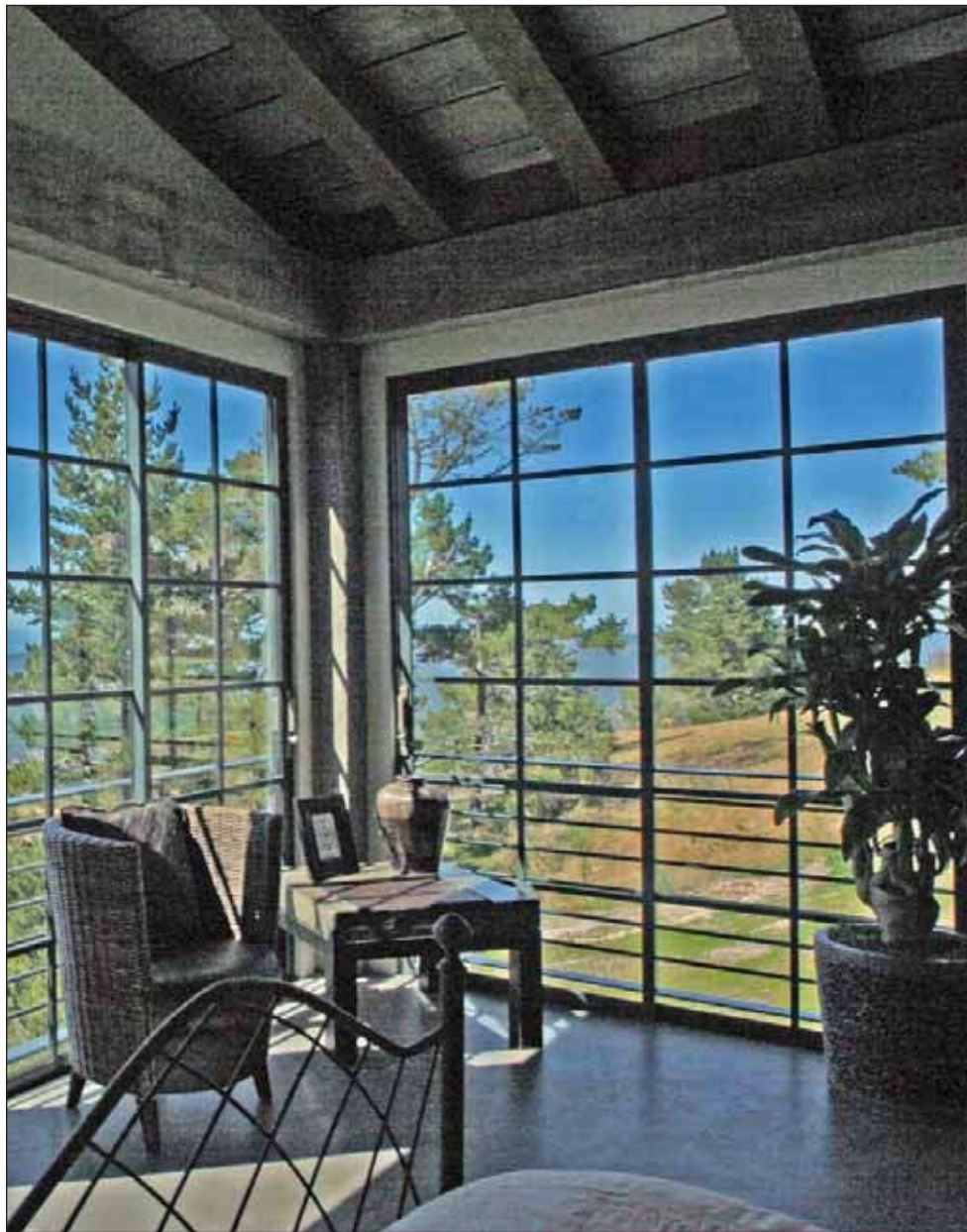


SPECIAL SECTION



PHOTOS/COURTESY CARVER & SCHICKENTANZ





To take better advantage of the sun, the home's owners cut into the uphill slope and created a courtyard behind the house (left). They also used lots of glass (above), allowing light to flood the interior, where it warms the stone floors, which also serves to heat the interior at night (below).

spring. And as an added bonus, the property borders more than 1,000 acres of open space that will never be developed.

Completed in 2007, the 4,700-square-foot house features four bedrooms — a master suite and guest bedroom upstairs, and two more bedrooms downstairs. Its copper roof has a thin, elegant profile. And the home's construction is thoroughly modern, yet the owners' use of 100-year-old barnyard planks and exquisite masonry gives it a timeless quality. "We used a lot of reclaimed materials," Schicketanz explained.

**An astonishing view out the front, and plenty of sun in the back**

Because the property is located on a north-facing slope, the home has a bird's-eye view of the Monterey Peninsula. But its owners wanted to take more advantage of the sun, so they cut into the uphill slope and created a courtyard behind the house. The sun-drenched courtyard is framed by a stone wall and includes a waterfall and a pond.

"Siting the house was very challenging," Schicketanz conceded. "People usually don't put patios on the uphill side of their homes. But we wanted to let in as much sun as possible. The site influenced the shape of the house."

The passive solar design of the home and its other "green" features — radiant heat, low-voltage lighting, concrete floors — work like a charm.

"The sun that hits the house during the day hits materials that store heat and give off heat at night," Schicketanz said. "It's a good example of a house with very low energy consumption."

And while the Carmel Highlands typically offers moderate weather, the Senas prepared themselves for the occasional sweltering day by installing 25 different exterior doors.

"On hot days, the house offers very good cross ventilation," she observed.

For Schicketanz, the house serves as a testimonial to her firm's commitment to designing homes that blend into their environment. "We do a lot of work that is site specific," she added. "And we always try to have our designs be subordinate to the landscape."

The home is featured in a new book, "Green is Beautiful: Building Sustainable Houses" by Claudio Santini and Dafna Zilafro. Featuring numerous color photos, the book takes readers on a tour of some of the world's most beautiful "green" homes.

The house is available for short-term rentals. For more information, call (831) 917-1989 or visit [www.carmeloceanviewvacationhome.com](http://www.carmeloceanviewvacationhome.com).



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