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supports made of recycled telegraph poles to hold the structure in place. The most enjoyable part of the process for us was to break away from modernist architectural conventions and indulge in some design fantasy. At the same time, we wanted to avoid the Dr Seuss kitsch often associated with treehouses - it's a small but serious piece of architecture."

The house is constructed from crafted timbers: Douglas fir and cedar cladding, an oak frame and shingles, plus larch slabs for the decking. And there are plenty of home comforts, including a rooftop sauna and a hot tub. "It has been fully booked ever since it opened and guests often wax lyrical about spending a few days away from the real world in the branches of our tree. Treehouses do have a universal appeal - part romance, part childhood fantasy."

Beyond these literal interpretations of treehouses are contemporary rural residences that take their design cues from the experiential quality of treetop living. Ty Hedfan (translated as "hovering house") - a Welsh escape belonging to architects Sarah Featherstone and Jeremy Young of Featherstone Young - does just that. The riverside house nestles amid ash and beech trees, and to make use of this setting, the architects have cantilevered part of the building over the nearby water, raising their living room, with its extensive glazing, up into the branches. "We enjoy the dappled light that fills the house and the feeling of being among the trees with the views along the river," says Featherstone, who also rents out Ty Hedfan (from £1,050 per week) via The Modern House agency. "The ash trees have tall, spindly trunks with similar proportions to the window frames in



This page: The Woodsman's Treehouse in Dorset - designed collaboratively by Guy Mallinson and architect Keith Brownlie of Brownlie Ernst and Marks - is built around the branches of a veteran oak tree





This page: an elliptical profile characterises Baumraum's Treehouse Djuren, in Germany

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describes as a "nest" among the trees, which is defined by an elliptical profile that he likens to "an egg cut open longitudinally". It was commissioned by a family as a guestroom, but also doubles as a place of escape where they listen to music and step back from the stresses of everyday life.

"I have always liked the idea of being high in the trees in a small but modern and experimental space," says Wennig, who is now working on a new treehouse hotel in Sri Lanka. "The contrast between a building and the natural environment creates an interesting tension that we like to explore with new designs. Each has a strong sense of expression in combination with this wonderful living organism: the tree."

The rise and rise of Nordic treehouse hotels – a proliferation of architecturally designed pods of all kinds – has played a special part in sparking interest in 21st-century forest living. Visitors rediscover the joys of getting back to nature and are enlightened by the architectural athletics of the pods themselves, as they showcase what is possible in treehouse living with forward-thinking design.

Take architects Tham & Videgård's mesmerising mirror-clad treehouse for Treehotel in Harads, northern Sweden (pictured on previous page). The Mirrorcube reflects the foliage of the trees around it and dissolves into its forest setting. It resembles a piece of sculpture or land art as much as a residence and is part of a series of one-off treehouses at the resort – other designs have been created by Scandinavian practices such as Snøhetta and Cyrén & Cyrén.

Moving to Finland, Studio Puisto has created a set of elevated cabins in the Rovaniemi woodlands of Lapland for the Arctic TreeHouse Hotel. Here, too, the architects' vision focuses on providing an immersive experience, which translates into the idea of creating "nests among the trees". These nests provide safe, warm spaces amid the pine and spruce in which to appreciate the extremes of the Arctic climate and its wildlife. The houses are raised above the forest floor upon timber legs – they make little impact upon the landscape and are camouflaged by green roofs.

"The popularity of forest resorts in Finland and Scandinavia generally might have something to do with our long history of living in close proximity to nature," says Studio Puisto's Mikko Jakonen. "Traditionally, Finnish houses were often far away from their closest neighbour and almost isolated in the forest. We continue this tradition with our summer houses and people here appreciate the silence and privacy of this way of living."

In the UK, furniture-maker and craftsman Guy Mallinson has created a 21st-century space at his Woodsman's Treehouse (pictured overleaf) – a recent recipient of two regional architectural awards from RIBA (Royal Institute of British Architects). The house is a new addition to Mallinson's 14-acre Dorset woodland estate, designed collaboratively by Mallinson and architect Keith Brownlie of Brownlie Ernst and Marks and built by a team of craftsmen in the branches of a veteran oak tree. The two-storey retreat is used for grown-up glamping (from £840 for two nights) and courses in woodworking surrounded by native trees such as oak, ash and willow.

"The very thing that distinguishes this project – the tree – also presented its challenges," says Brownlie. "We wanted to avoid stressing the oak, so it does not bear the weight of the house – instead we used

