


Peak of perfection

A warm, rustic living room with a high wooden ceiling and a large fireplace. A fire is burning in the hearth. In front of the fireplace is a sofa with a red and cream checkered pattern. To the left is an armchair with a floral pattern. A wooden coffee table holds a lamp with a white shade and several candles in glass holders. The mantel is decorated with a row of small porcelain flowers. A window with white curtains is visible in the background.

THIS PICTURE An armchair covered in a Bernard Thorp fabric and a sofa in a red and cream check by Benedict Vermillion from Christopher Norman surround the open fire in the living room. As a decorative touch, Antoinette has lined up along the mantelpiece a row of porcelain flowers in pots from Menuis Plaisirs in Gstaad. **ABOVE RIGHT** From his balcony, Ken has his own personal view of the Videmanette.



*This stylish Swiss chalet in Gstaad
combines views of breathtaking scenery
with comfort and practicality*

KEN PORTER HAS ALWAYS admired his friend Antoinette Engel's apartment in Geneva. He likes what he calls her English sensibilities combined with Continental flair. He also shares her love of warm red tones, country antiques and English sofas and chairs. It seemed natural, therefore, to ask Antoinette to decorate and furnish the gloriously comfortable top-floor apartment of a chalet in Gstaad, which he bought in 1999.

Ken's banking career took him to Switzerland via Paris 40 years ago. He lives in Geneva but spends a lot of his spare time at the chalet. Although Gstaad is known best as a celebrity ski resort, it is really two different worlds, according to Ken: "The jet set fly in and out, and many own huge chalets here, but the locals have not disappeared and there is still a vibrant and friendly village atmosphere."

About a two-hour drive from Geneva, Gstaad is surrounded by old-style villages and spectacular scenery. "Nature is dominant here and the air is clear and sharp," says Ken, who enjoys the place in summer for its walking, climbing and music (Gstaad hosts the Menuhin Festival)

and, in winter, for skiing. "One of the greatest joys about living in the mountains is the endless bright blue winter days we get. I've never missed the grey of England at all."

Built in 1998, the large chalet was designed as three apartments. Ken's apartment, which was empty when he bought it, is reached via a lift from the heated ground-floor garage. He and Antoinette gave the place character by installing timber beams and ceiling cladding and creating a mezzanine area, which gives the impression that there is another floor above the staircase. Not wishing the interior to look too new, they hunted down old parquet flooring, which they eventually discovered in a nearby barn.

An architect friend, Gottfried Hauswirth, advised on the alterations and on the kitchen and bathroom designs, and one bedroom was sacrificed to create a khaki-coloured, felt-lined study for Ken, who likes to keep in touch with the commercial world even when on holiday. The beams were stripped and aged to a mellow honey shade, and Antoinette designed the cut-out mezzanine balustrade, behind which is an area for watching television on large

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squashy floor cushions, which is a favourite hideaway for children and grandchildren.

Ken set a tight timetable for completion. "I asked Antoinette if she could have everything in place for a New Year's Eve housewarming party," he says. "Time was short, but I trusted her choices and her wonderful colour sense." Antoinette does not recount how she kitted out the apartment in just three months, but the drinks party for a large crowd of friends was a great success.

As a professional interior designer, Antoinette has her favourite suppliers and knew where to find the mix of English and Swiss pieces she needed to create a cosy but not overly rustic interior. Above all, she wanted to avoid a fussy "chalet pastiche" look. She loves to shop in London and even some of the old Swiss furniture in the chalet was found there. While at the Decorative Textiles and Antiques Fair in Battersea, she spotted a table she liked. The dealer had bought it from a castle near Bern and Antoinette ended up taking it back to Switzerland, where it now has pride of place in the sitting room. Ken added favourite pieces, such as the red leather-bound 19th-century tourist



OPPOSITE PAGE With its soft, felt-lined walls, squashy sofa covered in Colefax and Fowler's Alban in Cream and cushions from Andrew Martin, the study is Ken's oasis.

TOP In the living room, Ken peruses a newspaper next to his "perfect reading light", a Melrose Swan Neck lamp from Vaughan. The antique papier-mâché table has been painted in a red gloss.

ABOVE The carved chair in the living room is from David Rossier in the neighbouring resort of Rougemont. **RIGHT** Kitchen units in bleached wood have been designed to match the chalet's beams and ceilings.





LEFT Elegant mahogany candlestick lamps from Vaughan complement the curved Bernese chest of drawers in the living room.

BELOW The pretty bedlinen in the chalet comes from Marti Interiors in Gstaad.

BOTTOM In the main bedroom an 18th-century Swiss desk fits into an

alcove lined in a pink checked fabric from Bernard Thorp. The lamps are from Gollfar & Hughes.

OPPOSITE PAGE Antoinette chose warm tones for fabrics throughout the chalet. In the main bedroom, she teams a quilt bought in Provence with a chair covered in Tarn in Tomato from Colefax and Fowler.

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guides and part of his collection of carved wood, feline inkpots from and named after the Swiss town of Brienz.

Antoinette is a fan of Colefax and Fowler fabrics, lamps from Vaughan and Lamorna upholstery linen from Osborne & Little. She likes curtains to be made in the English style and often finishes them with trimmings from Wendy Cushing. "The English understand comfort better than anybody," she says. "There is always a reading light in the right place and somewhere to put a drink or a book."

The apartment is not enormous, but the rooms are well proportioned and both the main bedroom and the sitting room have direct access to a broad, sheltered balcony, where Ken likes to eat as often as possible. With such a view of pretty houses in the foreground and the mountains majestically filling the landscape beyond, Ken must find it difficult to contemplate a return to the city – even to one that is as attractive as Geneva. ■

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