

From the great room to the bedrooms, the theater room and gas fireplaces, Fern Hill Lodge offers an escape from everyday life. Guests may choose to unplug and enjoy the wilderness of the foothills of Monmouth, or connect to the free WiFi and keep current on the world outside this magical place. The lodge is available as a vacation home and sleeps up to 20. It is perfect for any group gathering, from family reunions to business trips, from wine tours to athletic team getaways.

EMILY MENTZER
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Log cabin vacation home

Fern Hill Lodge has the amenities you need for a short trip or long stay

By Emily Mentzer
The Itemizer-Observer

MONMOUTH — Tucked away in the hills of the outskirts of Monmouth lays a paradise years in the making.

Fern Hill Lodge sits serenely on the top of a 25-acre property that expands out into an open valley. Everywhere you turn — outside or inside the log home — has been lovingly crafted into a welcoming, peaceful space.

Polly McCrea and her husband, Jerry, built the 5,300-square-foot log cabin from the ground up. It wasn't an easy task from the start.

"I tell people it was a really big craft project," Polly McCrea said, smiling.

First, the McCreas had to design the home for the narrow stretch of property. Designing a home was not something Polly McCrea had ever wanted to do because "you have to live in it," she said. Often, something you think would be nice in a home turns out not to be great to live with afterward, she noted.

After studying thousands of designs in magazines and online, she and her husband decided to do something different.

"This hillside has such a nice view, we needed a long skinny house to take advantage of that," she said. "We came up with this (floor plan) on our own."

Next came trips to Montana, where the logs were cut and assembled into the home. Contractors built the first and second floors separately in Montana, disassembled and labeled them, and sent them to Monmouth via log trucks to be reassembled.

"A log truck came every day for three days," McCrea recalled. "We hired all our neighbors. They were like boys with Lincoln Logs."

All the logs from one truck had to be pinned — or placed — before the next truck arrived the next day.

"The logs went up in about a week," McCrea said. "Then the real work started."

Once the logs were in place, Jerry cut doors and windows with a chain saw while Polly got to work staining and chinking — the sealing of the space between each log, inside and out. The process is similar to grouting tile, on a much grander scale.

When Polly's husband got cancer and died in December of 2013, Polly didn't want to live in the large home alone.

Her sons suggested turning it into a vacation rental home.

"We thought, who would come out to the boonies?" Polly recalled. "I put it on the



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Polly McCrea and her husband Jerry built the 5,300-square-foot log cabin home in the summers of 2007 and 2008. She lovingly refers to it as "a really big craft project."

market on VRBO (Vacation Rentals by Owner) and immediately started getting bookings. We were booked through the summer. I thought, I guess people do want to come out to the boonies."

Turns out, Monmouth is the perfect location for a lot of reasons. In addition to being fairly close to the beach, shopping in Salem or Portland, Willamette wineries and hiking at Silver Creek Falls State Park, many people planning vacations enjoy

the solitude.

"A lot of people want to play games, eat and reconnect," Polly said. "They tell me, 'if we're out at the beach or Disneyland, everyone takes off.'"

But at Fern Hill, a large hot tub, fully stocked pond and outdoor fire pit — with wood for each night — invite groups to be still, enjoying each other and nature.

Inside sleeps 20 people. A great room features a river rock fireplace and comfortable seating. The kitchen is

cleverly designed to accommodate large groups coming and going.

A home theater room includes a projector, screen, hookups for a laptop, VCR and DVD players, and, of course, a popcorn machine.

Guests vary in where they come from and why they choose Fern Hill, ranging from family reunions, business meetings, wine tours and retreats.

No matter what your reason for staying, everything you need or might want is at

Hand-built home away from home

What: Fern Hill Lodge, Vacation Home.

Where: 6000 Fern Hill Road, Monmouth.

Amenities: Six bedrooms plus loft, four bath, 5,300-square-foot home for vacation rental on 25 acres. Beds for 20. Wifi, gourmet kitchen, gas fireplaces, theater room with 10-foot screen and seating for 18, Wii, exercise room, Ping Pong table, games, large hot tub, fire pit, stocked fishing pond with row boat.

Rates: \$500-\$600 per night, two-night minimum. Varies with holidays.

Of note: Don't forget to say hello to Jeremiah the bullfrog, who has made the goldfish pond his home for four years after being hand-raised by Polly.

More information: www.vrbo.com/557598, or find the business on Facebook. Email Polly at fernhillpolly@gmail.com, or call her at 503-930-3080.



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A large fireplace is the centerpiece of the great room. It is hand-crafted with river rock and adorned with various keepsakes from Polly and Jerry McCrea, including fish and other items collected by the husband and wife.



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A fully-stocked fishing pond waits for guests to explore on row boats. The pond is catch-and-release.