

Special Advertising Feature

Beyond NYC

Living the Unusual Life



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Unique homes are waiting for prospective buyers who dream of living: on a mountainside in the Berkshires (top); adjacent to their own private beach on the North Fork of Long Island (bottom left) or on a family compound with lots of space for vehicles, too (right).

by Julie Bennett

The world outside of the Big Apple contains more than homes in the suburbs. “The Berkshires has always been an attraction for New York City dwellers,” says Cindy Welch, a real estate broker with LandVest in the Berkshires and Upper Hudson Valley. “They came here during the Gilded Age and built ‘vacation cottages’ that were not much smaller than their Newport, Rhode Island, mansions.”

Her client, former television producer Jeffrey Diamond had a much smaller Manhattan home. “My wife, Amy, and I were living in an apartment with two little boys and a golden retriever and wanted more space,” he says. “A colleague owned a weekend home on one side of a mountain in the Berkshires so we bought a 300-acre tract on the other side in 1986. My father-in-law saw a house designed by David Sellers on the cover of a magazine, clipped the article and said, ‘This is the guy who should design your house.’”

“Sellers came out, hiked the property and chose a location,” Jeffrey relates. “I told him I wanted a house that feels like living outdoors.” Sellers complied and built a four-bedroom home using some of the property’s many trees and stones. The Diamonds used their “treehouse” home on weekends while their boys were in school, then moved there full time in 2012. “It’s very private and quiet here,” he says. “After I retired in 2010, I became a novelist, and this is a

wonderful place to write.”

“And read,” Amy adds, whose favorite spot is the library, with its walls of windows.

Nevertheless, the couple is ready to downsize. They’ll keep something smaller in the Berkshires, they say, and return more often to New York to be near their sons and grandchildren. The oak tree-lined “Treehouse” at 720 West Road in Richmond, Massachusetts, and its matching 150 wooded acres, are now for sale at \$1.75 million.

SPACE FOR EXTENDED FAMILY AND THE MODEL T

Jerry Calabrese, a former media and entertainment executive, discovered Litchfield County, Connecticut, one night in 1979 when he got lost driving back to Manhattan from Tanglewood. “All these little towns, like Sharon, Salisbury and Kent, are right out of Norman Rockwell paintings — but they’re real, and only 90 miles from Manhattan, so I went back and bought a weekend house.”

In 2009, he and his wife, Jean, bought something larger, a family compound on 65 acres in Sharon. The main house, Calabrese says, was originally two stone buildings built in the early 1900s that the previous owner had put together. There’s also a former stable converted into a guest house, a pool, a pond and a barn that was transformed into a giant space for car storage, with its own car lift.

“Back then, we had a large extended family,” Calabrese recalls, “and it was great to have everybody on the property. After so many years in the rat race, it was a relief to retreat to the tranquility. We moved here full time about seven years ago, but at our stage of life we want to spend more time traveling, and 65 acres is a lot to keep up with.” Calabrese is selling the compound and 22 acres for \$2.45 million. He and his wife plan to build a smaller home on the remaining 40-plus acres.

His broker, Steve Pener of William Pitt Sotheby’s International Realty in Kent, says the house fits into “the big,

overarching theme here. People are looking for privacy and water, whether it’s a backyard pool or a nearby lake. Since we have a low inventory of homes with those attributes, people are buying land with the hopes of building their perfect home someday. We’ve probably had more land deals in the last six months than we’ve had in six years.”

A PLACE FOR SUMMERTIME LOVE

On Long Island’s East End, you can buy land — plus a stretch of beach to call your own. Nicholas Planamento, a broker with Town & Country Real Estate in Mattituck, New York, says a ranch house for sale in Greenport, on Long Island’s North Fork, includes 110 feet of private beach. “There’s even a famous boulder on it called Love Lives Here that’s listed in local rock-climbing guides,” he adds.

Owner Kimon Retzos reveals that his parents purchased the house in 1965, when he was a small boy. “We lived in Queens and this house was our summertime escape,” he says. “It was my parents’ way to get back to nature, and my base for activities from horseback riding to fishing to oil painting.”

After his parents died, Retzos sold their Queens home and moved to the seaside house full time in 2019. “This is the right time to sell this house as well,” he says. “I’d like to pass on this property’s wonderful views and calming nature to another generation that will enjoy it for 50 more years.”

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