

Country French

13 homes
with charm
and character



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enchanting
character



Art, antiques, and old-world craftsmanship
infuse an Arizona home with European ambience
both indoors and out.

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Preserved flowers form a gallerylike installation of botanical art above a distressed, 7-foot-long French buffet. The silk-upholstered French antique chair is one of a pair. New doors, hand-carved to look old, were crafted by a local Arizona artisan.



BELOW: Old-world architectural cues are complemented at every turn by rich landscape details. "Our goal was for the house and garden to become one," landscape designer Jeff Berghoff says. RIGHT: Embellished with weathered shutters and antique light fixtures, the stone-and-stucco exterior exudes a charming, aged allure that's so convincing one would never know the house is LEED certified.



Oak trees reach toward the sun, drifts of lavender sway in the breeze, and a curated forest of palo verde, mesquite, and olive trees beckons along the winding gravel drive of this Arizona home. "As soon as you rumble across the antique Belgian cobblestones, everything starts to speak of Europe," landscape designer Jeff Berghoff says. "Native desert plantings at the street gently give way to a more European flavor."

From French limestone-capped courtyard walls to richly ornamented wood gates and intricately wrought iron railings, the exterior of this home reveals old-world craftsmanship reminiscent of the finest architectural traditions of Europe. Where in Europe, exactly, is integral to its mystery—and its charm.

"The owners didn't want a house that screamed French or Italian or Spanish," says Jim Smith, who consulted with the design team to evoke an authentic Mediterranean feel. "We just wanted it to feel old and

European, like it might have been at home in any rural village along the sea."

Its convincing facade anticipates the home's interior, where fastidious attention to detail displays the owners' deep appreciation for art and antiques, even as it extends a friendly invitation to discover the treasures within. "It gives the same immediate sense of warmth and welcome as its owners," architect Mark Candelaria says, noting that the couple have been generous philanthropists who have hosted many fund-raisers at their home, often followed by visits from nearby grandchildren. "Individual rooms were purposely designed to feel comfortable for just the two of them, but when combined, rooms also easily accommodate large gatherings and events."

Builder Jerry Meek and his team worked with a timeless amalgam of materials and finishes, including hand-hewn and reclaimed ceiling beams and antique limestone fireplaces imported from France to cozy up

THIS PHOTO: A gilded mirror from London and Italian candlesticks grace a French antique limestone mantel in the living room. Hand-painted canvas, hung like wallpaper, enlivens the beamed ceiling.





THIS PHOTO: The first item purchased for the house, the breakfast room's "housekeeper's cabinet," hails from England. A collection of antique French confit pots is displayed on top. OPPOSITE: Reclaimed French oak floors ground the kitchen, which features a Calacatta marble backsplash and countertops; the painted, furniture-style island is topped with pewter.



“This house *feels* wonderful in the morning. It glows at twilight. And it’s pure *magic* at night.”
—project consultant JIM SMITH

spaces. Painstakingly sourced architectural salvage, such as antique doors, vintage hardware, old windows, and weathered shutters, contributes a familiar sense of age. Custom millwork, creamy plaster walls, and reclaimed flooring—some wood, some stone—underscore the home’s comforting patinaed aesthetic.

Against this sumptuous array of architectural detailing, interior designers Donna Vallone and Niki

Saulino layered an inspired blend of antique European furnishings—some polished, some distressed, some worn, and some supremely elegant—gathered on buying trips across the United States. Stored in a warehouse during the four years the project took to complete, the pieces reflect the owners’ discerning taste. “Their fine eye for detail and tremendous knowledge of art and antiques played a major role in the design,” Vallone says.





OPPOSITE: Accessible through fully retractable doors off an upper-level family room, this sheltered outdoor space invites relaxation thanks to indoor-outdoor fabrics, an antique teak coffee table, and French terra-cotta floor tiles. ABOVE LEFT: A vast array of painted, stained, weathered, carved, and iron gates were gathered on buying trips across the country. Many beckon family members and visitors alike to meander the gardens. ABOVE RIGHT: The trickle of an antique stone fountain invites closer inspection in a corner of the garden. BELOW: Celebrating the art of alfresco living, the outdoor kitchen features new but aged-looking cedar cabinets, an antique stone sink, and French limestone flooring.



THIS PHOTO: A four-poster with a tufted velvet headboard fosters a romantic sensibility in the master bedroom. A pair of antique French chests serve as bedside tables; a carved antique bench from France is upholstered in linen and piled with some of the owners' collection of antique tapestry pillows.





LEFT: Enveloped in paneled alder millwork awash in an amber glaze and burnished gold trim, the master bath boasts a marble floor and carved marble tub. BELOW: A painted dressing vanity and antique slipper chair express a feminine attitude. A pop-up television is hidden within cabinetry beneath the window.



“Indoors and out, this house is about *Discovery*.
It’s not in your face. It slowly reveals itself to you.”

—landscape designer JEFF BERGHOFF

Uniting the homeowners' various collections—his antique inkwells, her antique tapestries-turned-pillows, and their gathered-over-a-lifetime art—is a soothing, neutral color palette Vallone describes as “French gray-green.” The only intense color, she notes, “is in the art—everything else has somewhat of a faded quality to it.” Crystal chandeliers, pewter countertops, an abundance of marble, and vintage doors sleuthed at the famed Paris flea market *Marché aux Puces* infuse noticeable

French flair. Still, the kitchen's English cupboard, a pair of doors from Spain, and a Swedish secretary conjure other romantic, faraway countries, and lend the house its signature sense of European refinement.

“I've shown pictures of this house to friends, and asked them to guess where it is,” Smith says. “Not one has ever said America. It has a European authenticity I don't think I've ever experienced in a home before. That's its beauty—and its magic.”