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Natural Beauty

A Modernist home melds clean lines with exotic stones and wood, creating the feel of a warm embrace with natural light and sweeping vistas

Offered by Raju & Neil Chhabria
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REACHING NEW HEIGHTS

L.A. homebuyers opt for the volume and grandeur of lofty, ornamental ceilings

WRITTEN BY WENDY BOWMAN
PHOTOS COURTESY OF WAYNE FORD

There was a time when 8-foot ceilings were considered the general rule of thumb. But times have changed, bringing with them homebuyers now clamoring for soaring 10-foot-plus ceilings adorned with dramatic accoutrement. Not only do these high-flying canopies provide an awe-inspiring decorative accent that can change the overall personality of a room, but they're functional as well, adding ventilation and natural light while creating a sense of openness.

"High ceilings are a desire that all homeowners have, and it's going to stay that way," says residential and commercial designer Annette English of Annette English & Associates. "No one wants a low ceiling that brings you down; the higher the ceiling, the more spacious a room feels."

While towering ceilings are great, the consensus is that they're even better when enhanced with attractive, personalized treatments. "The ceiling is another opportunity to add design or interest, and it should not be left undone," adds English. Among her recent projects: a custom transitional Mediterranean-style home in Beverly Hills that features an open great room with a 17-foot ceiling highlighted by thick, heavy reclaimed beams to add

warmth and character; along with a contemporary Pacific Palisades residence that boasts a voluminous living room accented by a 15-plus-foot ceiling that creates opportunities for stand-out art pieces—such as a Ron Arad coffee table—to become a focal point, with the textures of the ceiling pendant and stone fireplace adding a touch of drama.

According to Alice Kimm, principal of JFAK, who worked on the design of the new Santa Monica residential development Aire, high-ceilinged areas are a way of welcoming in light, views, and the feeling of being in an expansive and welcoming space. "Our clients come to us because they want open and inviting spaces with great light that will serve as a backdrop for their individual tastes and lifestyles," she says. "We also find that light fixtures and other elements, such as ceiling fans and beams, become important decorative elements of the design."

High ceilings can be sloped, vaulted, angled, domed and sculpted in numerous ways. Especially popular among L.A.-area homebuyers are coffered-style ceilings. Take, for example, a light and airy new Cape Cod-style home now on the market at 16954 Strawberry Drive in Encino that features stunningly high coffered ceilings paired with an ever-appealing clean and neutral palette of white.

"Buyers today like clean and grand; this is what we have when we have white and high ceilings," says Adi Livyatan of Rodeo Realty, who is listing the 8,439-square-foot property for \$5.485 million. "For



this particular house, it's beyond the white ceilings. Buyers today are drawn to white, but they also want to see the coffered ceilings and all of the details."

Adds Chelsea Smith, senior designer at Hirsch Bedner Associates (who recently completed a high-end residential project in the exclusive gated community of Bradbury that included an expansive double-height grand hall with an intricately designed 18-foot oval skylight): "As Southern Californians, we are always drawn to conditions that flood our interior spaces with as much natural sunlight as possible. Any soaring height of a ceiling that can also be paired with towering windows is what we constantly associate with luxury design. How decorative those ceilings might be will depend on the individual taste of the homeowner, and the overall style of their home...but, regardless, they always want the 'wow' factor."

When it comes to L.A. homebuyers seeking elevated experiences, the sky really is the limit.

(above) The airy new Cape Cod-style home pictured features stunningly high coffered ceilings paired with an ever-appealing clean and neutral palette of white.