

A Guide to DIY KIT HOMES

Do you dream of building your own home, but think you can't afford it? A kit home — whether you build it yourself or hire someone to do it for you — may be the key to unlocking your dream.

By Robin Mather

You can see it in your mind's eye: that perfect house, a snug cabin nestled in the woods alongside a pond shimmering in the sun's slanting rays. You've held that image in your head since you were a teenager, and now you're finally ready to build it.

You'd love to build it all by yourself, but you're not sure you have the necessary skills. Or perhaps you know that you have the skills, but the time and effort of finding all of the materials seems daunting.

Maybe a kit house is the answer. Kit houses can be grand or tiny, sophisticated or rustic, traditional or ultra-modern. Kit homes can offer efficiency in construction as well as

in energy use after the house has been built, and many kit home companies offer state-of-the-art green and renewable energy options. In short, if you'd like to build an affordable custom home (or cabin), a kit house may be a solution.

One of your first decisions will be how big to build. Census statistics show that the average home size in the United States has grown from 1,600 square feet in 1975 to more than 2,200 square feet in 2005, notes Steve Linton, president of Deltec Homes. No one but you can say what size home is right for your family, but maybe you don't need a formal dining room or that "bonus" room.

Is there a way to calculate how much your dream house will cost? The website www.B4UBuild.com, which answers questions about home construction, says a new house "will



Deltec Homes offers round and traditional house kits.



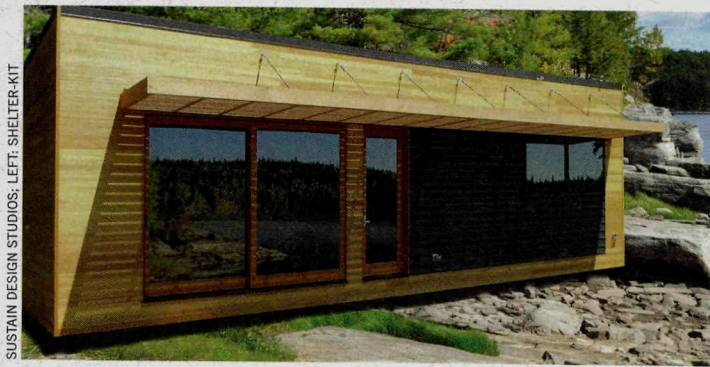
Shelter-Kit's barn homes are designed for beginning DIYers.

probably cost \$80 to \$200 per square foot." Thus, a 1,500-square-foot house, with no sweat equity from you, could cost \$120,000—or \$300,000. The figures provided by the companies in our chart on Page 36 range from extremely low to moderately high. Do your homework to find out what's included in your kit.

A DIY home kit can simplify a lot of your building decisions. Some house kits, such as Shelter-Kit's owner-built homes, are designed for the beginning do-it-yourselfer.

Other companies offer kits for more experienced builders, often with panelized construction (in which walls are built in a factory, then shipped to the homesite to be installed).

The next step up would be the contractor-built kit home. Finally, some companies offer home kits that can be finished as "turn-keys"—everything from the weather-tight shell to interior walls, cabinets, plumbing and electrical work.



SUSTAIN DESIGN STUDIOS; LEFT: SHELTER-KIT

Sustain Design Studios builds modular homes with green materials.



DELTEC HOMES (2)

Deltec Homes' round houses can be sophisticated and elegant.



Rocio Romero's sleek modern homes draw nature into the house through walls of glass.



TURTLEBACK NOMADICS (2); ABOVE RIGHT: ROCIO ROMERO



Left: Turtleback Nomadics specializes in wood-framed, yurt-like homes. Right: With no bearing walls, interiors are spacious and airy.



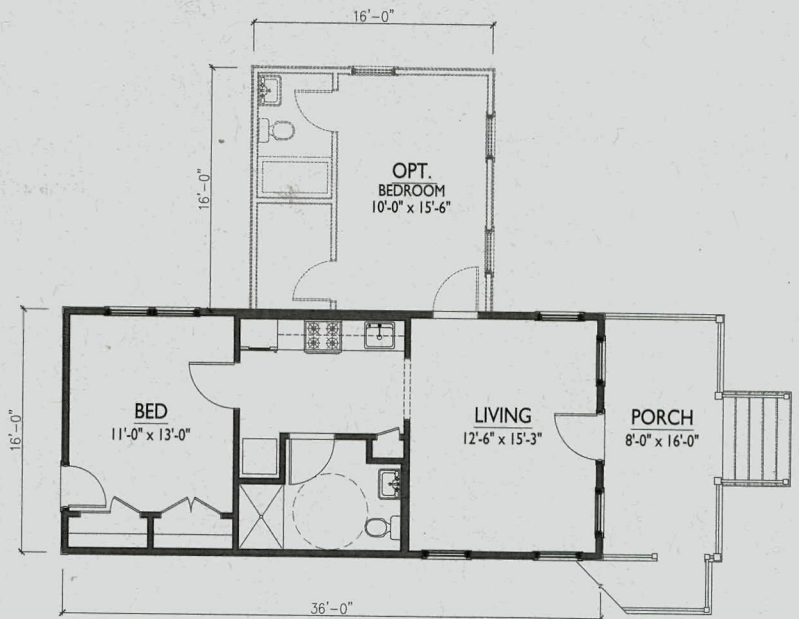
TRUE NORTH LOG HOMES; LEFT: SMALL HOME OREGON; PAGE 37: CUSATO COTTAGES (2)



Left: Small Home Oregon's houses meet modular housing codes. Right: True North Log Homes' Louisburg model shows French-Canadian influences.

Kit Homes for Every Style, Size and Budget

Company Name and Contact Info	Type(s) of Kit/ \$ Per Sq. Ft.	Additional Notes and Description
Deltec Homes: 800-642-2508; www.DeltecHomes.com	DIY, Contractor, Turn-key \$20 to \$60	Most popular sizes are models in the 1,600-square-foot range. High-quality homes from 300 to 7,500 square feet. Built to withstand the harshest weather, including high winds and heavy precipitation. Exterior shell only. Net-zero features available.
True North Log Homes: 705-645-3096; www.TrueNorthLogHomes.com	DIY, Contractor \$200 and up	The Louisburg plan reflects French-Canadian inspiration. Kits include everything to make a watertight shell. Patented Keylock Air Seal Corner; no nails, screws or lag bolts in joinery.
Montana Mobile Cabins: 406-287-5030; www.MontanaMobileCabins.com	DIY, Contractor, Turn-key \$165 to \$250	Best-selling model is the 14-by-20-foot Hunter. Log cabins shaped by hand, built on company's site and delivered to buyers. Complete mobile cabins.
Tortoise Shell Home, LLC: 707-206-7581; www.TortoiseShellHome.com	DIY, Contractor, Turn-key Varies greatly	Best-selling kit is the 8-by-17-foot Galapagos. Steel-framed (wood-framed optional) homes may be built on trailer or foundation. Solar and wind power options, and composting toilets.
Modern-Shed, Inc.: 800-261-7282; www.Modern-Shed.com	DIY, Contractor N/A	Most popular is the 10-by-12-foot Classic Modern Shed. All offer prefab panels, R-30 insulated roofs and prepainted siding.
Tiny House Company: 832-350-8785; www.TinyHouseCo.com	DIY, Contractor \$65 to \$98	Best-selling kit is the 208-square-foot Americana. All models are towable. A family-owned business with three generations working together.
Stillwater Dwellings: 206-547-0565; www.StillwaterDwellings.com	DIY, Contractor, Turn-key \$225 to \$300	Custom prefab homes in modern style with premium contemporary finishes, founded by residential architects.
Portland Alternative Dwellings: pad.williams@gmail.com ; www.PADTinyHouses.com	DIY, Contractor \$3 to \$4 (using salvaged materials)	Best-selling kit is the Don Vardo, often used as a studio or home office. Portland Alternative Dwellings offers design, consultation and construction services, as well as plans, workshops and an e-book, <i>Go House Go</i> , for DIYers.
Tiny Green Cabins: 651-788-6565; www.TinyGreenCabins.com	DIY, Contractor, Turn-key Varies	Wildflower, an 8-by-16-foot tiny house with loft and 3-foot covered porch, is popular. Moveable, custom-built for each customer. Plans and design services for DIYers and kits and assembled shells also available.
Sidekick Homes: 303-777-6383; www.KephartLiving.com	Contractor, Turn-key \$150 to \$200	The Glass House, a contemporary home, is popular. Homes designed for older family members to live with the family but independently and safely.
EZ Logs USA: 503-752-8022; www.EZLogsUSA.com	DIY, Contractor, Turn-key \$34 to \$65	Most popular model is the 181-square-foot Lange00G.
ShelterKraft Werks, Inc.: 206-701-1464; www.ShelterKraft.com	DIY, Turn-key \$106 to \$220	Standard models are environmentally friendly with optional propane stove/heat, solar power/hot water, wind power, composting toilets, etc. Best-selling kit is the 8-by-20-foot CargoCottage, with green building materials.



Above: Cusato Cottages' homes, often called "Katrina Cottages," helped spark interest in tiny homes. They were designed to replace the much-maligned "FEMA trailers" in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. Plans — not kits — are available at www.CusatoCottages.com. Most are expandable.

Company Name and Contact Info	Type(s) of Kit/ \$ Per Sq. Ft.	Additional Notes and Description
Sustain Design Studios: 416-516-7772; www.Sustain.ca	Contractor, Turn-key N/A	Modular minihome uses green building materials with minimal energy inputs. Best-selling kit varies depending on region.
Wood Joiners: 608-846-2226; www.WoodJoiners.com	DIY, Contractor, Other \$75 to \$150	High-quality timber frames with wood siding and roofs made from local Wisconsin wood. Furnishings and fittings (desks, cabinets and chairs) available.
New Avenue: 510-621-8679; www.NewAvenueHomes.com	DIY, Contractor, Turn-key \$225 to \$400	Provides free design, ideas, checklists and contracts so clients can create small homes for themselves. Best-selling kits are the Big L (one bedroom with loft and office) and Small L (one bedroom with storage above).
Arvesund Living AB: Sweden; +4664732590; www.Arvesund.com	DIY, Turn-key N/A	Designs and creates modern barn-style homes, designed for energy efficiency. Best-selling kit is the Hermits Cabin.
Montsweag Brook Corporation: 207-443-5691 or 207-522-4590; www.BungalowInABox.com	DIY, Contractor, Other \$75 to \$100	Structures made to assemble quickly on-site from panelized components with minimal impact to the building site and neighbors. Best-selling kit is an 8-by-8-foot building often used as a study or office.
Shelter-Kit: 603-286-7611; www.Shelter-Kit.com	DIY, Contractor \$20 and up	High-quality, precut, customized and affordable home, barn, garage and cabin kits for people who want to construct their own buildings. Best-selling kits are the Barn-House and Barn/Garage, both one-and-one-half-stories.
Jamaica Cottage Shop, Inc.: 866-297-3760; www.JamaicaCottageShop.com	DIY, Turn-key, Other \$31.24	Original, clever designs built from native, rough-sawn lumber sold as DIY plans. Best-selling kit is the 16-by-20-foot Vermont Cottage.
Little House on the Trailer: 415-233-0423; www.LittleHouseOnTheTrailer.com	Turn-key \$50	Clients have three options, including home-care cottages, second units, and heirloom hand-built. Best-selling kit is the 400-square-foot Loft House with a 200-square-foot double loft for storage.
Small Home Oregon, LLC: 503-201-6635; www.SmallHomeOregon.net	DIY, Contractor, Turn-key \$123	Small homes built to state modular home codes and designed for a permanent foundation. Best-selling kit is the Garden Cottage.
Turtleback Nomadics: 970-529-3782; www.TurtlebackNomadics.com	DIY, Turn-key, Other \$40	Custom-built from dimensional lumber, designed to allow for efficient assembly and takedown. Best-selling kit is the four-season, insulated model.
Rocio Romero, LLC: 314-367-2500; www.RocioRomero.com	Contractor \$120 to \$195	Thoughtfully designed to complement a modern lifestyle and connect owners to the outdoors. Best-selling kit is the LVL.
Slabtown Customs: 870-213-5310; www.SlabtownCustoms.Blogspot.com	Turn-key, Other \$32 to \$85	Tiny units built like site-built homes as far as construction, electrical and plumbing. Best-selling kit is the Annemarie with full bath and kitchen and two lofts.

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