

Reader's digest

10 Unusual Homes Around The World

While houses primarily serve to provide shelter, architects around the world have bucked convention to create atypical dwellings that go beyond meeting basic necessities, in response to environmental changes, crowded urban centres, or simply to breathe their dream homes into reality. Below, a look at 10 such astonishing homes.

By Katia Jean Paul



Photo: Thinkstock

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other cities too, including Brisbane, London and, most recently, Vancouver. They come with the same amenities as regular homes, and securely stacked one on top of the other, make for quirky, colourful digs.

Shipping Container Homes - Amsterdam, Netherlands

What's an architect to do once a shipping container has done its time at sea? Convert it into a housing unit, of course! Amsterdam is home to the largest container housing complex in the world, with 1,000 used shipping containers serving as student apartments thanks to Dutch company Tempohousing. Strong, durable and cheap, used steel freight containers are refurbished into student and social housing in

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Photo: Simon Dale

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else. Since then, the architect has built similar eco-friendly “hobbitats” in the Welsh woodlands, with the help of friends and volunteers, inspiring others to do the same.

The Hobbit House - Wales, United Kingdom

As its apt moniker implies, the Hobbit House, the brainchild of architect Simon Dale, was built smack dab in the middle of the woods out of materials derived from the land, like stone, straw and wood. Concerned with diminishing energy sources and climate change, Dale built this ecologically sound abode for his family in only four months, with the help of a chainsaw, a hammer, a one-inch chisel and not much

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Photo: Thinkstock

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privacy, gardens), into the dense city tapestry. While Safdie originally intended it to be affordable housing, high demand for apartments at this coveted address has only made the utopist dwellings more expensive overtime.

Habitat 67 - Montreal, Canada

What began as architect Moshe Safdie's thesis, the Expo 67 thematic pavilion admired by thousands at the World's Fair in Montreal has since become one of Canada's architectural wonders. 354 identical interlocking units arranged in different ways make up this Lego-like co-op of 146 apartments, a revolutionary living complex located next to the Saint Lawrence river, which incorporates the characteristics of a suburban family home (fresh air,

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Photo: Niklas Morberg/Flickr

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Palais Bulles, free of rigid angular edges and corners, boasts 28 sphere-shaped rooms, an open-air amphitheatre, reception hall, panoramic lounge and 10 suites, each of which was given an off-beat, personalized touch by contemporary designers.

Le Palais Bulles - Théoule-sur-Mer, Côte d'Azur

While originally commissioned by businessman Pierre Bernard in 1979, this eccentric 12, 916 sq. ft. abode created by Hungarian architect Antti Lovag is famously associated with experimental designer Pierre Cardin, the man behind the space-age "Bubble dress", who bought the property in 1991 following Bernard's death. Overlooking the Mediterranean Sea and blending seamlessly with the red cliffs of the Esterel, the

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Photo: NehemiaG/Wikimedia Commons

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accommodate Orthodox Jewish families following the 1967 Six-Day War. While architects remain undecided on its merits, one thing is certain: Hecker's peculiar design definitely breaks the mold.

The Honey Bee Hive House (Ramot Polin Apartments) - Jerusalem, Israel

Perched upon a hill in central Ramot, this intricate patchwork of dodecahedron-shaped apartments created by Israeli architect Zvi Hecker in 1972 looks like a giant beehive from afar. Hailed as an architectural marvel by some and derided by others since it came to completion more than a decade later, the 720-unit apartment complex was commissioned by the Israeli government in order to

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Photo: Peter Vetsch

Eath House Estate Lättenstrasse - Dietikon, Switzerland

Nine quirky dome-shaped houses grouped around an artificial lake form an eye-catching settlement in Dietikon, Switzerland where they were built, in sharp contrast to the more conventional houses in the area and the rest of the world. The work of architect Peter Vetsch, these environmentally-friendly homes boasts bathrooms with rooftop windows welcoming natural light, recycled glass

insulation and each rooftop comes covered with a layer of natural soil, where residents can grow grass, or plants. Paying tribute to the natural environment, these modern dwellings are establishing themselves as ecologically sound and more appealing alternatives to traditional residential homes.

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Photo: Šarūnas Burdulis/Flickr

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by the Caribbean Ocean, this enchanting housemade of recycled materials found on nearby beaches is as close as it gets to the life aquatic.

Conch Shed House - Isla Mujeres, Mexico

The product of Mexican artist Octavio Campo and his brother Eduardo Ocampo, an architect, this seashell-like house is a paradisaical estate. Located just 13 kilometres from the popular resort area of Cancun, the pristine white two-bedroom, 5,500 sq. ft. residence mimics and blends with nature with its fluid, angular-free shape and countless sea shells incorporated into the design, right down to the faucets. Surrounded

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Photo: Sxenko/Wikimedia Commons

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Conservancy, hundreds of thousands flock to what once was the Kaufmann's summer retreat each year to take in its splendour and to hear the soothing sounds of the waterfalls beneath the house.

Fallingwater - Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

Living atop a waterfall is the stuff of dreams, and this dream became a reality for Edward Kaufmann Sr., a well-respected businessman, and his family. Acclaimed architect Frank Lloyd Wright built Fallingwater, considered one of the greatest works of modern architecture, over the falls of their estate in rural Pennsylvania in 1936. Now a National Historic Landmark entrusted to the Western Pennsylvanian

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Photo: Robert Bruno

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added stained glass throughout to offset the rusted metal, and as an homage to Catholic iconography found in old churches.

The Steel House - Lubbock, Texas

Made with 110 tons of steel, this house - which took Robert Bruno, an architectural sculptor and artist, more than 30 years to complete - resembles a veritable spaceship. Adding a pop of artistic flair to the otherwise flat Ransom Canyon landscape, Bruno built the imposing home all by himself, building on and improving it over a period of 35 years. A positively warped three-storey residence-cum-sculpture, the late architect

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Photo: Thinkstock

Micro Apartments - Tokyo, Japan

They're cute and compact, cut and squeezed into slivers of space between buildings. Ranging between 200-330 sq. ft., often with entire rooms like the bathroom and kitchen tucked away, tiny apartments have become a growing architectural trend in the densely populated city of Tokyo. More and more couples are opting for these budget-friendly micro living spaces and architects are finding

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ever-creative ways to render these spaces efficient, all the while comfortable. The idea has become so appealing, North Americans are taking note, with the more recent micro apartments in New York mirroring the design features of Tokyo's compact dwellings.

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