

BLENDING IN WITH THE LANDSCAPE

People have always built houses using the natural materials they have found easily to hand – earth, stone and wood. These materials are still used, and with traditional buildings often blend in with the landscape, sometimes to the point where they become practically invisible ...

Tree houses

In the Indonesian province of Papua, the forest people live in houses built 25 metres up in the trees. Each frame is large enough for a dozen people, protected from high winds, mosquitoes, snakes and, it's believed, evil spirits.

Building with bamboo

24 Bamboo is one of the world's most abundant, relatively simple and light, and easy to work without sophisticated tools, wood has been widely known to build homes for some 20,000 years. But it's not the only natural material used in construction. For example, in the Pacific, a village of Micronesia, homes are traditionally made from palm trunks, bamboo and plaited leaves, with roofs made for the most part of palm fronds, and the floor is made either of earth or of coral.



Building with earth

Earth is the most easily accessible material for humankind, so it's right there – under our feet! Almost half of the world's population lives in homes made out of earth. This can be worked in three different ways: mud-brick, rammed earth or adobe, or mixed with straw and other material to form a mix called cob or wick. Each looks different depending on where you live, but earth houses are everywhere – and they blend in to the landscape.



Eco-domes

In recent times, new methods of construction with earth have been developed. Some are very striking, such as these conical houses made from logs of split pine or logs of another, pioneered by the famous American architect Frank Lloyd Wright. These so-called 'eco-domes' are cheap to make, very sturdy and easy to dismantle. Over the past 40 years, such homes have been constructed in various places around the world, sometimes as emergency accommodation.



Building in stone

Harder to work with than earth, stone was often reserved for building monuments. But people did also use stone to build their homes, particularly in mountainous areas, where it was easily accessible and made dwellings that could stand up to the difficult climate.

LIVING IN FAR-FLUNG CORNERS

Fleeing to safety, wanting to trade for prayer, finding nature's gifts in the desert, seeking riches or knowledge, or standing guard over the sea... there are many reasons for living on the edges of the world.

Safely isolated

For centuries, again and again, the Dargi people of Ask took refuge along the Badkhan Escarpment, which is 180 kilometers long and very difficult to reach. It provided a barrier against those who wanted to protect themselves from invaders and to preserve their identity right up to today.

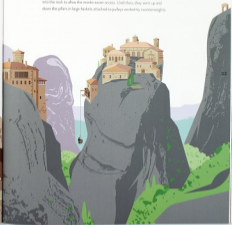
Retreating to pray

Retreating to a quiet place can be a way of finding the presence God felt is necessary for prayer. The Buddhist monastery of Phuktal in India was built in the 15th century on the side of a cliff that is apparently unclimbable. Some 60 monks live there, 3,000 meters above sea level and mostly isolated from the outside world. It's a "three-day walk to reach a road that is possible by car".

Suspended in the sky

In the center of Greece, near the town of Kalithea, a series of massive natural rock pillars rise out of the ground. Several Orthodox Christian monasteries were built centuries from the 14th century onwards. They became known as the *Sketes* (from a Greek word meaning "high up"), because the monasteries appear to float in the sky. It was only in 1920 that ropes were carved into the rock to allow the monks access. Until then, they went up and down the pillars in large baskets attached to ropes worked by counterweights.

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RAINBOW RESIDENCES

Yellow, red, blue, green... around the world, some people and communities paint their homes in bright colours, creating surprising, vibrant bouquets of buildings in the landscape.

Not just a pretty facade

In the Middle Ages, for practicalities like fire, no houses would sometimes be painted a specific colour, telling everyone what was inside. For instance, in the French region of Alsace, bakeries were painted yellow like corn, blacksmiths' forges red like embers, carpenters' workshops blue, and tanneries' shops green.



A blue town

Delhiya, in northern India, is known as 'the blue city'. The town was originally home to a great number of bankers, members of the higher social class in Hinduism, that favour distinguishability. Their stone colour - the blue that helped to keep the houses cooler when the weather was very hot, and they have helped keep it so ever since, too.

Colour at first

In the 16th century, Dutch settlers founded trading in the Cape, in Africa's southern tip, and brought in slaves, many from Malaysia. The slaves' descendants later founded the Bo-Kaap quarter, once hilltopping down on the city centre, and painted their homes in bright colour. The use of bright colours was highly symbolic, as their slave masters had been made to wear only white.



Multicoloured homes

The Dahan part of Vijapur in south India is among the most colourful cities in the world, for a rather surprising reason. There, the houses were traditionally built from a kind of clay mixed with lime. To protect them, the inhabitants made roofs from corrugated iron that they salvaged from the railways. The corrugated metal had the annoying tendency to rust, so the locals painted their homes using leftover paint. The use of paint is highly not-recommended... and the very colourful!





Living on bridges

In towns built on rivers, crossing points are very important. Bridges have often been built with shops and houses on them. In London, such bridges are built with houses, like any other street. With space increasingly short, especially in big cities, the houses practice is once again being considered, right in our living cities.

Safe on stilts

Houses have been built on stilts in the Netherlands, near and far, since prehistoric times. Thanks to the stilts, their inhabitants were protected from invaders and had plenty of dry outside their front doors to fish. The principle behind these constructions was simple: plant wooden posts deep in the ground, then span them with a floor on which to erect the house. The same principle was used to build dams or to logjams, that Italian city is supported by a veritable forest of millions of wooden posts.

WACKY HOMES

Breaking with tradition and inventing one's own way of living is possible, playing with locations, materials, light, even vertigo! Chosen from around the world, the houses featured here prove it.

A beehive house

Residing in an enormous beehive, the wooden sphere conceived by Tom Church is located in a forest on Vancouver Island, Canada. It's attached to three trees by ropes, and people have to climb spiral ladders to reach it. Equipped with a bed and a kitchenette, the home is suspended in the air ways with the wind, or at its occupants' move about. "Have you suffer from vertigo? You'll love this!"



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A railroad house

If you have a yard on high and relatively uneven, a hot that can be strapped to the side of a block of flats is a masterpiece. So that's what the German Stefan Eisenbach dreamed up with his Railroad House, making an unusual interconnection apartment that has become so unique. Its design consists of three 6.25 meters square provided with several openings. Just a few hours, such object can be moved to the original building using a crane, then it's held in place by steel cables. What's more, ensuring the owner can take the hot easy hot.



A staircase house

What kind of house can fit easily on a long, narrow and, above all, very steep piece of land? Given these constraints, the Hongkong architect Alan Sze conceived a building like stairs descending a slope. From the car park at the top, each room is like a landing. And the same goes for all the rooms are serviced by an outside staircase running the length of the house.



A tentlike house

In a Swedish nature reserve, the architect Stenroos Larsson and Boris Savon have built a wooden house with the exceptional capability of being able to extend in summer, allowing in the sunlight, and to retract in winter, making it easier to heat.

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