

COUNTRY LIVING



D I G E S T

CONTENTS

<u>1. A LOG HOME PACKAGE - WHAT TO EXPECT</u>	2
<u>2. LOG HOME RESTORATION</u>	4
<u>3. SOLAR - OFF GRID OR ON GRID?</u>	8
<u>4. DIY WOODWORKING PROJECTS</u>	10
<u>5. BE AN URBAN HOMESTEADER</u>	12
<u>6. DIY VS TYPICAL OWNER-BUILDER</u>	13
<u>7. TINY HOUSES - GREEN LIVING, SUSTAINABLE LIFESTYLE</u>	15
<u>8. ARE TINY HOUSES THE WAY OF THE FUTURE?</u>	17
<u>9. FIVE SIGNS YOU'RE READY FOR COUNTRY LIVING</u>	18
<u>10. MICROWAVE COOKING - THE BASICS</u>	19
<u>11. WHISKEY BARREL SINK</u>	23
<u>12. FURNITURE LOG SOFA FUTON</u>	24
<u>13. BUILD A BIRCH-LOG COFFEE TABLE</u>	25
<u>14. WIRE SPOOL REPURPOSED INTO A WINE TABLE</u>	27
<u>15. RUSTIC COUNTERTOP FOR CABINS</u>	28
<u>16. TREEHOUSE APARTMENT BUILDING</u>	29
<u>17. ENCHANTED FOREST</u>	30
<u>18. MOST PERFECT RUSTIC LOG CABINS</u>	31
<u>19. CHIMNEY SMOKE</u>	33
<u>20. HOMES OF THE FUTURE</u>	34

1. A LOG HOME PACKAGE - WHAT TO EXPECT

What does one get with a log home package? Well, a packaged log home, of course! Sounds like the package would be huge, right? Obviously, the log cabin would be disassembled, so we're talking about a kit here. Log homes kits are superior to building from scratch, and most log-built structures being put up today are constructed from these types of kits. Let's take a closer look at what one can expect when receiving a log cabin kit...



First off, a log home package is created in a very special way. The "kit" part of the whole thing isn't in creating uniform style homes as one might have a tendency to think at first by the way the word 'kit' is used. This term is more to convey the ease in which everything is put together. You won't have to deal with a truck load of raw logs to be measured, cut and have all the notches shaped individually, one at a time, as log after log is placed down in succession. This would be far too time consuming, and you wouldn't be able to move into your log cabin until nearly a year or more has passed by. With a kit package however, all of the individual logs come to you pre-milled to size and shape, all are kiln-seasoned so that there would be no need for constant maintenance as the logs age, shrink and settle over time, and what's more is that the kit has been pre-assembled at the mill to assure a perfect fit. As it is disassembled for shipping, each part is numbered in order of construction.

In this way, when you receive a log home package, really nearly all of the work has been done for you. All of the stripping of bark, the shaping, the measuring and cutting, the formation of the joining notches and other joinery points, and again, all logs and parts are numbered... so all you have to do is to take the parts from the package and place them down in order. Now, instead of taking the better part of a year or more to get to move into your new log home, this can all be accomplished in a matter of a mere few short weeks. One of the benefits of building from a kit that cannot be ignored is the cost - being that all logs and parts are pre-milled in a factory type setting, this then is the absolute lowest per-log cost means of acquiring a log cabin home. For this reason, and for the reason of ease of construction, the majority of all log structures being built today is done with a log home package kit such as these. Whether these are built for living in as homes, for creating a hunting or fishing lodge, to build a guest house, or for commercial business offices, this is the most popular, most cost-effective and most maintenance-free route to take towards log home ownership.

The beauty of a log home is something that must be experienced first-hand - the beauty of rustic nature that can be observed in a log cabin built from a pre-cut log home kit is something that really must be seen to be appreciated.

2. LOG HOME RESTORATION

Log Home restoration and maintenance is a specialty service that has the potential to offer great opportunities. There are companies that offer this as a part of their services and there are companies in the niche market that specialize solely in this area of Exterior Wood Restoration. These companies are far and few



between and log cabin owners often have a hard time finding companies that perform this this work well and professionally. There are over 500,000 log cabins in the United States and over 20,000 built every year which is why there are so many opportunities for these services. People who purchase a log home are different from your typical homeowner and are aware of the cost of continued maintenance on these special structures. Many of these homeowners are challenged when trying to find a company that can maintain these beautiful homes.

Offering these services has many pluses for your company. These services tend to be both higher dollar projects and higher profit jobs. These jobs, when successfully completed are personally rewarding as well as the positive word of mouth advertising they produce. You will not be disappointed in the amount of referrals you will get from one project.

When you get a call for one of these jobs it is best to start keeping records immediately. Having a job sheet with important information on each project is important now and for the future maintenance. Your job sheet should include information like square footage, type of wood, last time it was stained, the age of the home, types of repairs needed, etc. as this information will come in handy now and down the road. It is best to obtain as much information from the homeowner prior to meeting them for an estimate, it always helps to be prepared and you will be able to gauge their knowledge of the job as well. These homeowners tend to be both more knowledgeable and handy when it comes to the maintenance of their home. During the estimate you should ask to inspect the interior of the house regardless if you are not performing any interior restoration. You are looking for problem areas and any existing water stains. It is recommended that you document these items as well as take pictures as you do not want to be blamed for an existing problem. It is also wise to include the term "not responsible for preexisting conditions" in these contracts/estimates. Your estimate should be detailed in what services you will provide. Each project is different and there are different methods used for the restoration of log cabins. Your estimate should inform the homeowner how you will be performing the work, whether or not you will be using a pressure washer, media blasting and what type of media, or by hand with little to no machinery. This may save

you any issues down the road with a homeowner who does not fully understand the difficulty in these types of jobs.

The easiest job is when you get a brand new cabin to preserve and maintain however, this is seldom the case with these homes. Most of the time you will be dealing with previously coated homes and often times with multiple or failing coats. These are not easy jobs to do correctly and painters, pressure washers, and homeowners often make these jobs harder by improperly performing this work. You must first inspect the log cabin thoroughly before determining how to proceed. During the estimate you should inspect the logs for any rot. This can be done in a number of ways. Often contractors use a screw driver or hammer to tap and push into the wood looking for rot. A very good tool for this is a wood prodding tool that pesticide companies that specialize in termites use. Any place where water stains are present or any logs that are rotten should be fixed prior to moving on to the next step. At this point if we are using a pressure washer to clean, strip, and restore the logs is it more important than ever to use the proper products and the use of dwell times for each. Your goal is to use as little water as possible at the lowest pressure possible to rinse off the melted old finish(es), mold, mildew, etc. to get the job done. This is actually the correct way to restore any exterior wood when using a pressure washer. The machine should be used as a big "rinsing tool" only! The "work" is performed by the cleaners and strippers and relying on the recommended dwell times for each. Dwell time is defined as the amount of time a product is left on a surface to effectively "do the work." The problem with using a pressure washer is that if there is any damage the machine usually ends up getting blamed. In cases that involve legal action there are many "experts" who will testify on the damage caused by these machines.. I have given testimony in one case that was nearly \$500,000 in damages. There is a lot of negativity about using a pressure washer for wood restoration that should be more attributed to lack of knowledge. You will want to take a lot of pictures for documentation on these projects and strictly adhere to industry standards.

Another alternative is to apply the solutions by hand or with a pump up or low volume sprayer and agitate with stiff bristle brushes. After allowing for the proper dwell time you can rinse with a garden hose and a stiff bristle brush. The goal here is to let the water run down the surface of the logs only. After both of these methods you will apply a wood brightener to the surfaces prior to sealing or staining to neutralize the surfaces and open the pores of the wood for three main reasons; durability, better adhesion, and for a better application of any borate treatment.

Another method is media blasting in which Cob Blasting is the most common with regards to log cabins. Corn cob media is combined with high volume compressed air to remove old coatings. On thicker and multi-coat surfaces some contractors will use sand or crushed glass as well however if using these other media alternatives be prepared to hand sand the logs. Regardless of what media you use you will change the logs to a rougher surface. One of the advantages to cob blasting is that there is no water involved.

You will not have to worry about water leaking to the inside and damaging the interior or left over moisture between logs that may lead to mold growth under the stain. Another advantage is that corn cob media is biodegradable and safe for the environment. The biggest disadvantage is the clean-up. Do not expect, nor promise, to clean-up corn cob media 100%. This media gets everywhere and it will be around for a bit and if it can get inside the home it will. The best practice here is to inform the homeowner of this prior to beginning the job.

At this point, prior to staining, if you are going to be applying a borate treatment it would be now. A borate treatment is applied to prevent wood destroying insects from damaging the logs. This is meant to be a preventive measure and will not necessarily be effective for an existing condition.

Staining and sealing log cabins should always include the use of a brush. Many companies use only a brush method only, because of challenges with chinking. This is still considered the best method to achieve the highest quality work. If you use an airless sprayer make sure to carefully tape and prep all surfaces. DO NOT SPRAY on a windy day as over spray can carry a great distance. When using a spray method it is best to back brush the surfaces before the stain dries. The key to a beautifully restored cabin is in the preparation. Address all discolored, uneven areas, and rough surfaces that need to be sanded prior to staining. Over time the sides of the cabin will wear unevenly. For instance, the sunny side of the house will look different than the shaded side of the house. Keeping the exterior looking consistent over the years can be a challenge. ALWAYS use a stain on logs and not paint. Stains allow the wood to breathe and keep the wood from rotting. Most companies and homeowners use a tinted sealer or a semi-transparent stain on log cabins. Using a solid stain will hide the wood characteristics and is more film forming which will pop and peel as the wood expands and contracts. There is another desirable option and that is to intermix the desired semi-transparent color with a natural sealer at a 50/50 ratio. This will allow more of the natural grain to show through while giving a more consistent finish and hide some of the light variances in the wood while still providing protection.

When restoring log cabins another service you will want to provide is caulking and chinking. Chinking and caulk are used to fill gaps between logs or between logs and windows, doors, roof lines, etc. where water, air, insects, and pests can enter the log cabin. Chinking is now more flexible and "moves" with the wood during expansion and contraction of the logs. Chinking is like caulk with fine sand particles in it and comes in various colors and tones to suit any situation. Generally for areas up to ½ of an inch you will use caulk and anything over ½ of an inch you will use chinking. In older cabins mortar and other materials were used for chinking but it is now obsolete because of the lack of flexibility, issues with bonding, and cracking. Chinking can be used in both older and newer cabins but will often need backer rods or foam installed prior to chinking. This helps seal and gives a flat surface for the chinking to be applied. Chinking can be applied by bag (like a pastry bag), a caulk gun, or by a pump.

Another service you may offer is log replacement and repair. This is no easy task and involves different tools and equipment to be used. When removing a rotted log you may have to support the building which could involve jacks, braces, and supports. One way to replace a log is to slide the new log in as you take out the old one. In other cases you may only be performing repairs to parts of the logs. For example the butts and tips often rot and are cut out by a chainsaw and the ends replaced with the new piece. On whole logs where the surface may have rotted you will use a chainsaw and a chisel to remove the rotted area and a half log is installed over top of the existing piece. These services are costly for the homeowner and very profitable for the company.

Finally, when the job is completed always ask for a referral. Don't forget to take plenty of pictures to add to your portfolio that will help secure future work as well as use in your advertising. Also, explain your future maintenance program and plan for the cabin and when you plan to be out next. This should now be a customer for life with a steady future income for you!

3. SOLAR - OFF GRID OR ON GRID?



If you are considering solar as a renewable energy system for your home, one of the decisions you will have to make is whether to be on grid or off grid.

Let's start with the basics. What is a grid? The grid as referred to in solar is the power grid maintained by utility companies. If you pay a utility bill each month, you are pulling power off the utility grid.

Going off grid with solar power is in many ways a statement of independence. You don't need to be a slave to the stinking utility corporations. You can handle your own electrical production. Ah, but do you want to?

Going off grid with solar is often more expensive in both the short and long term. The immediate expense has to do with batteries. Solar power is not just applied to your home energy needs. If you are off grid, you must store the power in batteries. The batteries are expensive and have to be replaced from time to time.

Going on grid is generally a cheaper initial choice. Simply put, you don't need batteries. You can just plug into the utility grid. It is often done at your power meter, but check with the utility to find out for sure.

Once hooked to the grid, you have the benefit of feeding power into the system. In a majority of states, you can actually sell your excess power to the utility. This is known as net metering. While you are at work during the day, your panel system will feed

electricity into the grid. Your meter will actually spin backwards and your bill will be reduced if not eliminated.

Finances are another advantage to going on grid. The federal government will give you tax credits for doing so. Many states will do so also or at least give you rebates. These incentives, however, are usually not allowed for off grid systems.

So, is there any situation where off grid makes sense. Yes, there are two. One, you simply want to be independent regardless of the finances involved. Second, you are in a remote area where you cannot reach the grid without spending significant money to do so. Barring these two situations, on grid is probably your best choice.

4. DIY WOODWORKING PROJECTS



If you are interested in DIY woodworking, then finding woodworking patterns is important to you since woodworking requires precision and finding woodworking patterns for all your DIY woodworking projects should be a goal. Although it helps when you are skilled, DIY woodworking can still be done by unskilled hobbyists as long as they are able to obtain the correct woodworking patterns and the necessary tools.

With the colder months soon upon us, building an outside storage shed is even more important in order to store various tools, equipment, firewood, plants, etc away from the elements. Firewood sheds, potting sheds or any other sheds are easy to build if you have the right tools and resources. This may also be a good time to build a dog kennel to house your family dog. Before you begin any DIY woodworking projects, proper planning is important for your work. Preparing woodworking plans or blueprints to guide your woodworking project is a great idea before you start any woodworking projects.

Finding woodworking patterns for all your DIY woodworking projects can be obtained at little or no cost to you. If you are highly skilled, you may be able to draw up patterns. For the rest of us, we can either obtain free woodworking plans or pay a minimal fee for the woodworking plans that we need. Several blueprints are available online that can be downloaded to a computer and retrieved when the need arises.

Whatever woodworking plans you obtain, it is important that the woodworking patterns are descriptive enough and provide step by step guidance. They should include

a raw materials list, tools needed as well as the time that it will generally take to complete the project.

Besides using woodworking plans to build storage sheds, dog kennels, decks, etc, blueprints can also be used to make wooden furniture easily and the more unique the better through using different external furniture finishes to alter the look of the furniture since a lot of people would prefer to be unique in some form or fashion.

As mentioned previously, you can obtain various DIY woodworking plans easily online which is becoming more and more popular. You can also obtain woodworking blueprints from books that you can purchase or borrow. All these sources are widely available and you can easily find just the woodworking plans that you need.

If you do obtain free woodworking plans, you may need to have them reviewed by a professional to ensure that they are adequate and descriptive enough to help you start and complete your woodworking project.

There are other DIY woodworking plans that are available online for a small price that are prepared by professionals which ensures that the blueprints contain everything that you need to start and complete any woodworking projects. Many of these professionally drawn up plans contain thousands of woodworking projects and you are guaranteed to find just the plans that you need for your projects and no training is usually required to use these blueprints.

The main advantage to obtaining these professionally drawn up plans is that they are prepared by highly skilled and professional wood workers. These woodworking plans are artistic and very attractive. Since most DIY woodworking projects are usually performed by unskilled individuals, these woodworking patterns are designed to make it easy for anyone to use them whether they are skilled or a novice at woodworking. These professionally drawn up plans also allow you to save time on your woodworking projects.

5. BE AN URBAN HOMESTEADER

Homesteader the word conjures up the thoughts of living in a little rustic cabin without electricity or indoor plumbing. Having to hunt for your meals and struggling to make a living. Well at some point and time this may have been an accurate description now a days the meaning of homesteader brings to mind a whole different idea. The fact of the matter is that many of us are already homesteaders, we are urban homesteaders because of want or need we have as a society turned ourselves into homesteaders. We have tried to become more self sufficient and to do for ourselves instead of relying on others to do for us. This new spirit of doing for ourselves is partially due to economic conditions, partially due to a need to provide ourselves with the confidence that we are able to take care of our basic needs and not be dependent. I truly believe that we have all had this deep within us and it has been in more recent years all right to become a do it yourself-er.

When you are collecting and using coupons or switching to more energy efficient appliance or fuel saving automobiles you are trying to cut back and conserve these are all basic tenements of homesteading. We are trying to conserve our cash and trying to do things that we have not done before in the quest to be more reliant on ourselves. So in some sense most of us who live in cities and towns are urban homesteaders of sorts. If you grow vegetables and then preserving some of them you are practicing urban homesteading. If you opt to build a new shed in the back yard from scratch or a kit you are practicing urban homesteading.

To what extent and how much time and effort you want to put into this is totally up to you. It is hard to sometimes describe what you receive in return and to make a one size fits all description. If you were to sit back and think of some of the things that you may have done that have saved you money or made you proud that you could use your hands to build or create something and the feeling of accomplishment you felt. Well that maybe one way to describe being an urban homesteader.

What I think really is important if you want to be an urban homesteader is that you decide what you are willing to invest of yourself. The amount of passion that it stirs will to some extent dictate how much you will even want to do. I like to think that we are all capable of being good stewards of the earth and have a basic sense of caring for our families and communities and work towards enhancing both. This is what I feel is a good representation.

6. DIY VS TYPICAL OWNER-BUILDER

Is there much advantage in being a DIY (do-it-yourself) owner builder? Many people manage their own building or remodeling projects. But, a few will also jump in with both feet and do a lot of the physical building labor. This is the DIY owner builder. Who saves the most money?

To answer this, we must allow for different approaches to DIY work. Some people use a lot of friends. Sometimes friends are in the building trades. Some people work quickly and knowledgeably and others take their time and even learn as they go.

Differences between DIY and Typical "Manage Only" Homeowner Builder

The "manage only" builder will employ a lot of subcontractors to do most, if not all, of the labor to build the home. DIY builders will use a lot of their own labor and get the help of friends and family.

On the surface, you would bet that the DIY approach would save the most money! That's not *always* the case, however. Let's break things down a bit further.

How the "Manage Only" Owner Builder Saves

This most popular way makes homeowner builders their own General Contractor (GC.) There is a savings right off the top even if they don't perform their own labor. Now, they may hire a home building coach, but the amount they pay for this coach is generally far less than paying for a GC. This often saves them between 10 and 20%.

They save additional money by managing many of the building materials purchases and avoiding some of the GC mark-ups on materials. This can put another 10 to 20% savings in their bottom line.

Finally, most "manage only" owner builders do, in fact, provide some basic labor even when they don't consider themselves involved in labor. By helping out wherever they can, it's not uncommon for them to save another 5%.

How the DIY Owner Builder Saves

In many ways, the DIY builder is much like the "manage only" one. But, they do much more. Working as their own GC, they enjoy the same savings there. Also, they usually are involved in the materials purchasing and can save there too.

Now, here's where things get quite a bit different. The DIY builder does a significant amount of work. Cutting out the cost of many of the subcontractors can really pile up the savings. So, should this be the approach of every owner builder?

No. Not likely.

Cautions for the DIY Builder

The apparent advantages for the DIY owner builder can sometimes turn against them. This is where the comparison gets a bit dicey. Here are some things to consider:

- A DIY owner builder often tries to do too much of their own labor which can really extend the time it takes to build which increases financing costs and interest charges.
- If a DIY builder isn't careful, mistakes will be made that can be very costly to correct which will wipe out much of the potential savings on the project.
- Some DIYers will spend so much time on the project that they feel forced to take time off work resulting in lost income. This lost income is, in effect, an added cost to building.

The Home Building Coach to the Rescue

If a DIY builder takes care to avoid the common problems, then yes, this home building/remodeling approach can definitely cost less. Just be sure that, if you do attempt to be a DIY owner builder that you have the skills to perform the labor and that you don't overdo it.

Lastly, a home building coach can really be of exceptional value to you. A coach that is experienced working with DIY owner builders can keep you on the straight and narrow and help you avoid costly errors and lost time.

Prepare well, learn all you can before you begin, and you'll not only save money but you'll have a great time too!

7. TINY HOUSES - GREEN LIVING, SUSTAINABLE LIFESTYLE



As at 2013, an average single family house was 2,598 square feet. That is according to the United States Census Bureau. All these units have a variety of accessories from air conditioning, stories, basements, forced - air furnaces, bathrooms, etcetera. Needless to say, this large living ultimately results in lots of overheads. Apart from the expenses involved in building and maintaining these superfluous units, there is also too much usage of electricity and gas. The tiny house movement solves these challenges and more.

Living small is living green. If you are living in less square feet, your energy needs will automatically go down. Over half a million air conditioning units are needed to sustain the 2,598 square units of houses. Reduce the square footage per house and the air conditioners that are needed will drastically reduce which will have a positive impact on the utility bills. Tiny houses have a smaller carbon footprint which is what we need to be vouching for if we intend to save this planet from the looming decline.

Most city dwellers are crippled by huge debts thanks to the mortgages they have on their homes. A house that would typically cost \$290,000 if paid for in a single payment will eventually cost over a million if paid out using the hire purchase model that mortgages are based on. Most people spend their entire lifetime trying to clear mortgages and some even lose their houses when for one reason or another they are unable to continue with the monthly payments. The solution to this is living in tiny houses. It is cheaper and sustainable.

Even though we all naturally love more space, green living is a concept that is catching on with remarkable speed thanks to the tiny house movement. More people are subscribing to the sustainable lifestyle school of thought. That would explain why the topic is increasingly becoming popular not only on social media but also on mainstream media like CNN, Guardian, AP, NPC, etcetera.

Not everybody might find it necessary to make such a drastic change in their life in the name of sustainable living. However, any revolution that left a huge mark on earth was never led by masses. That is why the tiny house movement has a great chance of shaping the future of mankind. Tiny house communities might soon be common place across the continents of the world but especially so in the industrialized countries. Green living is what mother earth needs to keep alive.

8. ARE TINY HOUSES THE WAY OF THE FUTURE?

Tiny houses are becoming more and more desirable. Not only are these houses more financially manageable for many, but the appeal they offer goes beyond just finances. Many Americans are looking for a simpler life. Many of us are realizing that life is not all



about our possessions-there's more to it than the material objects you can call your own. We are, possibly, on the track to becoming minimalists.

Well, at least some of us are. I like my home and I like the space it gives me. I don't think I could live in a space consisting of less than 100 square feet. No, I definitely couldn't. But some people can. Whether or not you think you're one of the people who could live in such a small place, and live in it happily, is not really the point here. The point is, we are all, as a people, heading in a hopeful direction.

I can admit that I could never be a tiny house person, but the thought of it motivates me to take a step back and realize that I could live a simpler life. I can get rid of some of this "stuff" I have around the house. Some of it I've had for years and every time I come across it, I think to myself, "I should really get rid of this", yet I find some excuse to keep it. But recently, within the last few months, I have found myself willing to part with my possessions much more easily. I have found myself asking, "Why should I keep this?", rather than saying to myself, "Well, I can't get rid of this because....."

I feel that this change of heart, or change of perspective, is a good thing and a hopeful thing. I feel that it's a positive thing. And even though I may never be the type to downsize to a tiny home, I think I'm on track to being the type of person who can say to myself, "Just because you have the space, doesn't mean you need to fill the space."

I encourage you all to take a look around and really ask yourself how many of your beloved possessions you really, really need. There could be someone else out there who could need them more. And during the holiday season especially, there are plenty of open hands willing to accept your "stuff"!

9. FIVE SIGNS YOU'RE READY FOR COUNTRY LIVING

Relocating is full of choices: big house, small house. Short house, tall house. City house, country house. In regards to the latter, both places have advantages. For those who have only lived in the city, the country may be particularly appealing. The following are five signs you are ready to ditch your metropolis for something a little more down home.

You are tired of neighbors: Neighbors are good for some things - the occasional cup of borrowed sugar, for instance - but they can also cause problems. Loud parties, poor lawn care, their habit of throwing their trash onto your driveway, can all compound and cause feuds that rival those in *West Side Story*. Country living, however, can relieve some of this strain. Living in the country doesn't mean you will be free of neighbors, but the space between your houses will allow your neighbors to feel like neighbors instead of like roommates.

You want a bigger yard: A city offers a wide variety of yard selections: from backyards that fit a swing set, a trampoline, and a croquet set, to yards that are just big enough to be your toy poodle's toilet, sizes vary greatly. Still, even the biggest city yard doesn't compare to a country yard. City yards are measured in feet, country yards are measured in acres. If you are seeking a yard that you can't possibly mow in a single day, a country yard may be for you.

You want your own space: Yes, "Wide Open Spaces" may be a song by the Dixie Chicks, but it's also a dream come true for those who are tired of being bogged down by the claustrophobia of the city life. In the city, houses, condos, and apartments are often crammed together like a sardine box: no one truly has their own space. The opposite is true in the country. You will never find a sardine in the countryside.

You're Sick of the City Life: The city is good for certain things: restaurants, taverns, and shopping malls are all within walking distance. But, a city can also come with its fair share of problems: crime, noise, and pollution are just a few examples. The country, while not necessarily void of the aforementioned issues, is generally less likely to have them. With much less congestion, and far less people, country life is usually much more quiet and much more peaceful: two things that you may have been seeking for quite some time.

You Want Fresh Air: There is country air - air that smells like pine trees and flowers - then there is city air - air that smells like car exhaust and, on good days, Starbucks. While some people may love the latter, others want the former. For anyone who wants air that is truly fresh, country living is your best bet. Far away from traffic, smoke stacks, and semi trucks, country air allows you to breathe freely without wondering what you are actually inhaling. Whether you are leaving Manhattan for one of those gorgeous Catskill homes and upstate NY real estate or you are headed out of San Francisco for a vineyard retreat, country living is definitely a change from the big city. A change that is usually well worth it.

10. MICROWAVE COOKING - THE BASICS

Do you feel that you don't have time to cook? Do you like using technology in cooking? Are you a health freak? If yes, this is what you are looking for. **Microwave Cooking** - The wonder of technology making life in the kitchen easy, healthy and beautiful! As everyone, even I love cooking with a microwave not only because it is easy, but because I have bought one recently. Not everyone knows how to use a microwave. I have an aunt who got a microwave as a gift which she uses only to roast 'Papads'. But it is not designed only for that. Microwave is a gift to cooking. Even I am not an expert when it comes to Microwave Cooking. After some researching, I came up with this mini guide which may come handy and will be useful.



Why use Microwave?

As you might be aware of Microwave cooking is

- Easy
- Healthy, as the nutrients are preserved.
- Quick, hurray! We have more time.

Not all food can be prepared using Microwave. Only few Microwaves well i.e. cooks well. Using food that are not suited for microwaving can not only spoil the recipe, but also damage the microwave oven itself! It is a costly mistake. Take care!

Food that can be cooked in Microwave:

- Fish
- Whole fruits and Vegetables
- All Poultry
- Sauces and custard

Food to avoid:

- Do not try to hard boil eggs. That is not going to happen with microwave oven.
- Batters and Pancakes
- Roasting large turkeys/Hams as it will get cooked unevenly
- Do not try to deep fry!

Cleaning:

This is one of the most important and the most easiest work as far as this appliance is concerned. You can clean in minutes.

- Use Soft Sponges or cloth to clean
- Use dish washing liquid
- Deodorize by keeping the door open for some time and cleaning with baking soda dissolved in warm water.
- Another simple way to deodorize (Which I normally do) is by using the below recipe.

1 cup of water

2 slices of lemon OR few mixed spices (like cinnamon stick, bay leave etc)

Heat on high for 2 to 3 min or until the water is boiling. Now remove the water and you are left with a fresh smelling new microwave.

Cooking Equipment:

Every time when I use a vessel in microwave oven, I get worried if I am using the right one as using the wrong dishes might spoil your oven. Here are a few you can use,

- Glass-ceramic
- Porcelain
- oven proof glass bowls and dishes
- Casseroles
- Plastic containers which are marked oven/dishwasher safe

Do not use:

- Any metal container
- recycled paper
- Plastics that are not marked as oven safe.

Now a day we have even cake pans, loaf pans and baking molds suitable for microwaving.

Mostly round containers are preferred to rectangle or square shaped containers for microwave cooking. The corners get more microwave energy than the centre so round is the best shape to cook evenly.

Test your container:

Are you still skeptical in using your container for microwaving? Then do the following test,

Fill the dish/vessel you want to test with cold water

Heat on high for 1 minute

Now check,

If the water is hot and the dish is cold - The dish is safe

If the Dish is hot and water is still cold - No way! Don't use this vessel

General Microwave cooking - Tips and Techniques that can used to cook any food.

- Cover the food while cooking. It helps in cooking evenly and faster.
- Wrap bread with absorbing paper to avoid moisture on the top.
- Arrange the food so that the center has food that needs less heat to cook and the corners have parts that need more heat to cook.
- Pierce the food with toothpick so that it helps in cooking faster.
- Stir the food occasionally as directed in the recipe.
- Always under cook as food still gets cooked during the standing time.
- Always follow the recipe.

Few How to :

You might be wondering for what else we can use Microwave oven. Do not worry here comes my favorite part which makes our work easy,

How to Peel Tomato:

Pour 2 cups of boiling water in a microwave safe bowl. Add 2 tomatoes and heat on high for 45 - 60 sec till the skin splits. Cool them and peel the tomatoes with ease.

How to Garlic:

Place 2 -3 cloves on oven floor and heat on high for 15-30 sec. Remove and peel with ease.

How to cook beans:

Pre soak the beans as usual and cook them in a large container, giving space for them to expand.

How to Steam vegetables:

Place them in a bowl with little water, they get cooked with the help of the steam. If you use closed bowls, it gets cooked fast.

To Dos for cooking conventional recipe using Microwave:

We generally go with the same recipe for our favorite food and cooking with microwave needs some modification for the taste to come out right.

- Use less water than you will use generally. For example if your general recipe needs 1 cup of water, for microwave cooking, use 1/2 to 3/4 cup of water.

- Add more spices
- Add salt after the food is cooked
- Reduce the cooking time by at least half.

This is just the basics. There are a lot more to learn for mastering the art of microwave cooking, which , I strongly feel, comes only with practice. So why wait? Buy a microwave oven, cook and enjoy!!!

11. WHISKEY BARREL SINK

We always want to be creative, especially when it comes to our own home. This is especially true when we have limited space at home and we want to maximize it as possible. This whiskey barrel sink is definitely a good idea! Perfect for small and rustic looking bathrooms, they are a go when you have limited space for an elegant sink. However, you don't want to compromise the design and its functionality. You can apply this chic idea and be wise by choosing a good barrel to fit in. It gives you a couple of benefits. Firstly, they are really great for anyone's budget and second, it adds a unique appeal to your bathroom.



Of course, you have come across different bathroom sinks of varied sizes and luxury. They all have one thing in common – they look great! However, at the same time, you would have realized that these sinks could occupy almost half of the room. This is why choosing a whiskey barrel sink gives you a creative choice and at the same time, only takes a smaller dimension.

Top Features of a Whiskey Barrel Sink

This barrel furniture is a piece handcrafted especially for a bathroom. Although it looks odd to be used in your house with a weird purpose, it is actually practical. Its rustic look will definitely earn praises from individuals who are fond of pastoral art. If you are building log cabin and lodges, this whiskey barrel sink is definitely perfect in it.



This high quality American oak whiskey barrel will definitely help you save space in your bathroom as it measures 34" x 27" with 22" head diameter. The flush-against-the-wall installation and maintenance is also made easy with its flat rear access port. It boasts with an aged walnut finish and a vanity storage through its flawless access door.

Source: Goods Home Design

Link: [Goods Home Design](#)

12. FURNITURE LOG SOFA FUTON



It is so inspiring to see someone creative with wood. I salute you, Sir! Honestly, I really appreciate these kinds of people; people who look what is beyond ordinary things. For example, with a blank piece of paper, I could actually create a flower on or out of this and it would no longer just be a blank piece of paper. You see? It takes a closer look for you to really appreciate something and visualize something different from it, not only basing our judgments on what we see on the surface. How wonderful our world would be if people are always like that. It would be a perfect place to live in.

Anyway, so much for that. Let's go to this wonderfully made log sofa. According to the site, this is a rustic style log sofa and obviously handmade. It looks like it has a strong quality (which, I'm sure, is on the top of your list when you seek for a furniture) and with a futon placed on it, it would be so comfortable. It is not only a sofa. It could also be used as a bed! If you have a small house and can't accommodate a king-size bed, I would definitely suggest this! A multi-purpose sofa! What more can we ask for? You can watch football on it and when you're done, you could sleep at it soundly all-night! If your girl friends want to stay at your home, the sofa would be a perfect place for you to gossip and talk about your crushes. You can sleep there, challenge your friends into a pillow fight, (is it possible? I guess so) eat midnight snacks and have a good time.

What an ideal log sofa to end the day! However, I am not saying that you base your day's happiness in a log sofa. What I am trying to tell is that after a long day at school or work, you can always find comfort on your simple but lovely sofa. The instruction can be found below at the Goods Home Design website.

Source: Goods Home Design

Link: [Goods Home Design](#)

13. BUILD A BIRCH-LOG COFFEE TABLE

Do you make some inexpensive outdoor style furniture? Nouveau-rustic tables, chairs and cabinets are now the in-trend looks in the world of furniture. Most people think that this popular furniture will cost thousands of dollars in the market, well yes, but we have come up with basic materials to score this popular furniture in a cheaper and unique way.



Exterior Matters

The good thing about birch is that it is smooth, light and convenient. In this project, you are going to need 34 birch logs with the diameter of 3-4 inches. Cut the birch to your preferred sizes or you can even send it to your local lumber store and they will cut the logs for you. If you are a nature lover and worried about cutting birch tree, do not worry! Birch is a fast growing tree and you won't harm the environment if you make your table.

Getting Started

Supplies and tools you will need:

- Birch logs cut into 18 inch long piece
- 4x8 ft. sheet birch plywood
- Glue (not just any glue but wood glue)
- Wood screws
- Grout
- 4-inch casters
- Clear polyurethane
- Circular saw
- Miter saw
- Cordless drill
- Grout float
- Putty knife

Start with the Base:

Firstly, cut the plywood to 33x24 inches for the base. Next, create a plywood box measured 27x18x16 inches.

Cut two pieces 27x16 inches and two pieces 18x16 inches. Afterward, glue each sides and screw. Don't forget to screw through the box directly to the base to make it more solid.

Attach the Logs:

Secondly, glue the logs to the sides of the box. Make sure to cut the logs using the miter saw to 18 in. You can also alter the quantity according to the logs' diameter. If you want it to be more secure, screw through the wood box to every log.

Close the Top:

Next, you can close the box with the same size of the plywood's base. Screw and locked it.

Add Designs:

You can cut the wood into 1 inch rounds using the miter saw and glue them on top of the box, placing them nicely in rows.

Sealant Work:

Using the grout, apply the grout float and smooth it between the logs, make sure it is even. You can also design your own appearance using knife by scraping off the grout. Then leave it for few minutes and let it dry.

Attach the Wheels:

Attach the wheels using screws at the base of the table. Make sure it is the same measurement to keep it in balance. Afterward, apply clear polyurethane on the wood.

Source: Love Where You Live

Link: [Love Where You Live](#)

14. WIRE SPOOL REPURPOSED INTO A WINE TABLE

Altering an ordinary piece into a brilliant work of art requires mainly innovation and creativity, but it also requires a careful eye when it comes to repurposing. Do you know someone with a backyard full of these



old things? Ever wonder to yourself just what you could do with them because they are just so cool looking? Whether you are driving through the Tuscan, Californian or Okanagan wine country, you will not be surprised to find these funky looking pieces of wood flipped on their side to use as wine tables.

One could also use these funky tables for plant holders or wine chillers, since they often have a hole in the top of them. You can keep it very simple and really just flip it over. Make sure it is level and sanded for any rough bits. Start with a coarse sander and move to a fine one for softly finished pieces. You could also get really creative, provided you have a bit of a builder's thumb and follow the step by step video photos from this builders gallery. This is actually a fun project for any wine experts. Aside from that it builds a great conversation piece if you are planning for a wine tasting party, it is also a wonderful gift idea to a comrade wine lover.

What do you do if you do not have these pieces of wood lying around in your yard? Well you could always try calling your local hardware store and ask them if they have any wire spools that they wanted to rid themselves of. I have even heard stories of stores having so many; they were willing to drop them off to your door step. That or try searching at Craigslist or Kijiji. So once you are done with this project, invite your friends over and I'm pretty sure they will love your wine table.

Source: Branded in Time Decor

Link: [Branded in Time Decor](#)

15. RUSTIC COUNTERTOP FOR CABINS

What is a counter top? You'll probably hear this word most of the time but you never know what it looks like. Well, it usually pertains to a horizontal work surface found in kitchens, bathrooms, lavatories, other food preparation areas and

workrooms in general. It may be constructed with diverse materials exotic qualities such as durability, functionality and aesthetics. Sometimes it comes with abuilt-in accessory items that are intended for their proper usage.



Interior design really makes or breaks the log cabin. It's amazing just how much of an impact a good interior design can have on the value of a log house. Designing a beautiful log interior means balancing log furnishings with the style of your cabin interior. Mix and matching the wrong types of interior decorating will take away from the aesthetic of your log cabin. You can't exactly use modern appliances in a log cabin setting and expect it to fit the theme of your rustic log cabin venue.

Your guests might will "ohh and ahh" at just the right type counter-tops. Commonly overlooked, your kitchen counter-top is actually responsible for a large part of the overall feel of your interior space. Always remember that kitchen is the heart of one's home, therefore it would be a crime to have a substandard counter tops. This log counter-top fits perfectly in a log cabin setting, with it's rustic feel and unique style, you would be amazed at just how popular this type of kitchen counter-top is.

These are crafted from pieces of cedar, pine, spice or juniper wood and they can take a long time just to carve and smooth, stain and finish. But the overall piece, despite the apparent simplicity of it's appearance is something true and worth its the labour that is put into it.

Source: Good Home Design

Link: [Good Home Design](#)

16. TREEHOUSE APARTMENT BUILDING



A Tree house 63 unit residential building is our feature in this article. This is utterly spectacular and quite literally a breath of fresh air as this live space sits surrounded by roads and concrete buildings.

This tree house apartment building is located in the 25th street in Turin, Italy. They call it '25 Verde'. This tree house apartment will prove to you that it is never too late to experience the tree house magic that you've never experienced in your childhood. Well, you have to thank the brilliant Italian architect behind this, Architect Luciano Pia. One of Pia's personal rules in designing a building is 'green' which means "aiming for a more three-dimensional green. Less designed, in other words, more 'natural'." And enter this tree house apartment. *winks*

The construction is completed on 2012. The eco-friendly tree house apartment has 150 tall trees. Well, I mentioned earlier about 'keeping you in healthy condition', right? Now, this is what I'm talking about. While you live in the city, these trees will protect you from air and noise pollution. They give the house a harmonious and cool atmosphere. Isn't it marvelous? They are placed in large bronze pots. Anyway, the apartment houses of 63 apartment units. Each unit has a terrace that provides indoor or outdoor spaces.

Source: Arch Daily/Beppe Giardino

Link: [Arch Daily/Beppe Giardino](#)

17. ENCHANTED FOREST

If you grew up with fairy tales, then your knowledge of an enchanted forest is vast. A place of wonderment and magical animals, plants, rocks and creeks. Be it spells, elves, gnomes, and trolls - enchanted forests are filled with creatures that can be both helpful or tricky...that can lead you down the path to your treasures or down the paths to the dark side. The vegetation in an enchanted forest is often thick and bushy, colorful and sparkling. If you are a prince, princess or just a small child, the enchanted forest will always lead you to a place of the imagination, unlike anyone else's.



That is what is so fascinating about the movies that are being made is that although there are always certain resemblances among the enchanted forests, no two are the same. They are born in the mind of the creator, and each mind will produce a different monster..a different wizard...and different magic.

As a small child, every forest was enchanted and with every mushroom or leaf there was a chance to uncover a small fairy or talking chipmunk...some fantastical creature to guide me into a new depth of my own imagination. As adults we can still believe. Sure we have the wisdom and history to know that movies are about make up and lighting, but in a world as vast as earth, who is to say that there is no chance of a mystical encounter with a creature from a different realm.

18. MOST PERFECT RUSTIC LOG CABINS

Log cabins have gained a romantic appeal for themselves.

These structures are said to be built to last forever. When looking at some of the very old log cabins still found, one of the reasons they lasted so long is due to many factors. Firstly the use of old growth pine. This slow growing pine is mostly

heartwood and is durable and resists insect and fungus infestations.



The pine grown nowadays is grown for construction purposes in mind. They grow quickly, and these fifth-generation trees are primarily comprised of sapwood that is very attractive to fungus and insects.

Back in the day of the rustic cabin care was given prior to felling the logs. The choice pines had branches, and tops cut off years before they were cut for the purpose of building the cabin.

This process is called 'girdling.' What it does is allow the pines natural resins to bleed upwards and out to the severed parts of the tree make the tree more resinous and resistant than had it been cut and dried.

This rot resistant, fully cured pine was named the ore-pine by ancient Europeans.

It is difficult in these days to find old growth pine, and close to impossible to obtain. There are not many loggers that would be willing to girdle and let the trees stand for years before felling them. This would just not be economical in our modern times.

Supply and demands are far greater is times of old and forests have been cut down and replanted with new growth.

For today's modern structures to withstand the elements there are four things that must be done.

1. High-quality construction.

2. Design and landscaping must be done in a way to minimize contact with the logs to moisture.

3. The structure must be protected with quality, water repellent finish, and borate wood preservatives.

4. A scheduled maintenance for the exterior logs must be set up and stuck to.

Visit the pinterest link below to see many pictures of rustic cabin ideas.

Source: Pinterest

Link: [Pinterest](#)

19. CHIMNEY SMOKE

When you peer into this image of an old stone countryside cabin, what feeling is evoked in you? What memories do you have? What does it make you dream of? Have you



ever considered the idea that country life might be something you would like to try? Country living is an ideal that most of us think of at some point in our lives, but do we ever think about the realities of this lifestyle?

I grew up in the country. In my nostalgia, I will think of the smell of fresh pine tree air and the feel of dessert warm summers . . Sounds of rustling leaves, and in my part of the world, the chattering of crickets and frogs in the marsh below throughout the night. They are loud and incredible! They drove the cats wild with alertness, and some nights it was so loud that I could not fall asleep. In all its glory country living is abundant with, yep you guessed it, nature(!) and with nature comes the challenging moments.

If you have ever lived in a country house, you will know that old large houses are heavy on the workload. This statement is true whether you choose to have a farm of animals, a small, simple garden, or just a couple of house cats - which, by the way, are an essential component of mouse control in a country home. Yes, there will be mice in a country house, and yes, you will have to come up with a solution for them or they will become a problem. For me, cats were the obvious option. Other methods like traps or poison are gross and dangerous.

Don't let these things scared you! If country living is something that calls to you, try renting a home in the countryside first for a season (there are great short term rentals available on [trustedhousesitters.com](https://www.trustedhousesitters.com)) and see what calls to you. If you love pets and country living there are a lot of great options, so check out the link below.

Source: Trusted House Sitters

Link: [Trusted House Sitters](https://www.trustedhousesitters.com)

20. HOMES OF THE FUTURE

If any of you are wondering what could the houses look like in the future, then this is the article for you. First of all, in case you are not aware; we are now living in the future. 2015 is the year where technology is at its peak that even houses are now becoming high-tech. But what does it exactly



mean by houses in the future? It is pretty simple because the design and style will say it all. They look futuristic that they are not your typical white picket fenced American home. They don't come cheap as well. Here are some of the futuristic houses that you must check out.

1. 2260 Sunset Plaza- this house is known in Hollywood as the King of the Hill. Located at the Sunset Plaza in Hollywood Hills, this luxurious fortress is made of steel, glass and expensive concrete intended by architect David Lawrence Grey. He is the man responsible for its glamorous design. It is complete with a pool, a guesthouse, 9 bath areas, a gym and even a home theater. The amenities in this house seem to be endless since it has 7 rooms. And it wouldn't belong to the futuristic house category if not for the technology that is built with it. The security of this house is tight that cameras are pretty much everywhere and all its doors are powered electronically.

2. The Safe House- this is different from all the futuristic that you will find because this one looks very simple on the outside. Located in Warsaw, Poland, this house was dubbed as the Safe House and is ideal in case the zombie apocalypse ever happens. It is made of concrete and the security in this place is undeniably tight as well.

Check out more information about this house on "How Stuff Works" below.

Source: How Stuff Works

Link: [How Stuff Works](#)