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# Your Escape Pod

Yes, you can live in paradise without ruining it. Here's how. BY ANDY ISAACSON

FOR GRANT KIRKPATRICK, finding a green home wasn't easy. When he and his wife, Shaya, bought their dream plot in 2005—30 acres of rolling oak woodland in central California—they wanted to build a house that wouldn't disturb the landscape. "The only real option was a conventional manufactured home," Kirkpatrick says. "There is so much more efficiency and less of a footprint—literally—with manufactured housing." Trouble was, the couple didn't see a single unit they liked.

So Kirkpatrick, an architect with KAA Design Group in Los Angeles, decided to make his own: He built a two-bedroom retreat with a modern, airy design and sustainable features like low-e (low-emissivity) windows and solar power. Suspecting that others might have a need for his solution, Kirkpatrick worked with KAA to create HOM Escape in Style, a line of green manufactured houses that launched last June ([homlifestyle.com](http://homlifestyle.com)). The structures come in three sizes—1,000, 2,000, and 3,600 square feet—and go for about \$200 per square foot. They're built off-site and trucked directly onto a buyer's land. Kirkpatrick's hunch was right—property owners across the West have placed orders.

"Green building is the only good news in the homebuilding industry," says David

Johnston, president of What's Working, a consulting company in Boulder, Colorado, where a remarkably progressive green-building ordinance was recently passed. Half of the respondents

in a report released last fall by McGraw-Hill Construction Research and Analytics said they were more interested in buying green homes than conventional ones in a down market. The firm anticipates green homebuilding to at least double by 2013—making up 12 to 20 percent of all residential construction. Why? Features like triple-pane glass and on-demand water heaters can reduce a home's energy use by 60 percent. Greening saves greenbacks.

A whole crop of boutique eco-design firms have realized the benefits of manufactured housing. "You have to be pretty savvy to figure out what's going to give you the biggest bang for your buck," says architect Michelle Kaufmann. "We're streamlining the process to make it easier." This year Kaufmann introduced the EcoPod, a 240-square-foot prefab module starting at \$50,000 ([mkd-arc.com](http://mkd-arc.com)).

Are the McMansion's days numbered? "We are in the middle of a cultural shift," Kaufmann believes. "No longer are people buying into the idea that bigger is better—they're wanting more in less." ▲

## DOUBLE DUTY

Turning the basic elements of a house into agents of sustainability

### 1 SOLAR POWER

A 275-square-foot photovoltaic panel can capture three kilowatts an hour (the average American home uses three to six kW-h).

### 2 WINDOW WALL

Oversize windows are lined with shelves to hold decorative objects (vases, books) that naturally absorb heat during the day and release it at night.

### 3 REFLECTING POOL

Water catchment systems collect storm water in a shallow pool (or barrels) to use for irrigation.

### 4 THERMAL PAINT

The interior of the home is coated with a ceramic-based paint that creates a tight, thin layer of insulation.

### 5 LIVING ROOF

It's not just aesthetic. Keeping a rooftop garden helps reduce storm runoff and boosts insulation.

### 6 COMPOSITE DECKING

Made from recycled plastic, sawdust, and other forms of reclaimed wood, decks are splinterproof and won't weaken over time.

Two EcoPods, shown back-to-back

