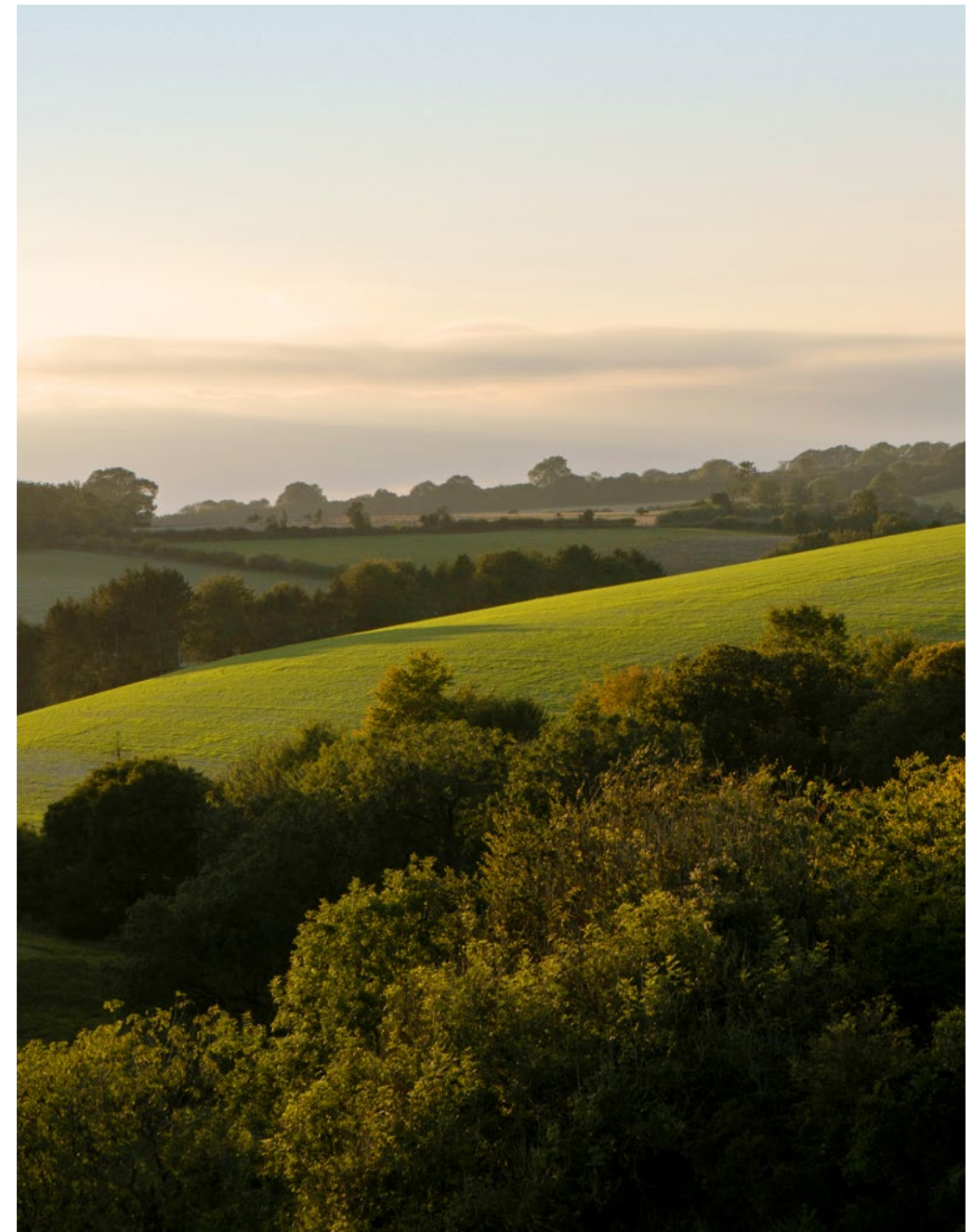


# SMALL WONDER

*Two former city dwellers have fled the hustle and bustle for a quieter life in the countryside, and created the perfect capsule home for the rest of us to experience its benefits*

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**A**s the global pandemic hit, architect Scott Lewis and his partner Caroline Jenkinson, a former furniture buyer for Heal's and The Conran Shop, were part of the mass exodus of creatives leaving London for the countryside. Unlike many others who continued with their stressful 9-5 city jobs from bucolic locations, the couple had a more radical life change planned. They chose to design and build perhaps the UK's smallest and most stylish holiday rental, The Bide, which sits on farmland in the rolling Dorset countryside. Here, Caroline tells us how they did it...

**What made you decide to leave London?** We hatched a plan to leave in 2019. Scott is from Dorset and we both hankered for a life by the sea. Having spent more than eight years in the city, it felt like it was the right time to set up our own business, so we pooled our skills and designed the structure of The Bide while still living in London. We then moved in with my parents in Lincolnshire, where we began the build on their driveway. **How did the idea come about?** It was during a trip to Berlin, when we visited the Bauhaus Archive, that we saw a number of creatives had designed and built a series of tiny houses all constructed on 2.5-metre by 6-metre trailer bases. We were totally inspired by how each designer had approached the challenge of working with such a small footprint and that the results were so unique. When we returned from our holiday it was an idea that we kept coming back to.

**How did you find the plot?** We designed and built The Bide before we had anywhere to put it, as we didn't have the money to purchase land ourselves. We contacted farmers in Dorset about renting land, but fortunately my uncle had a friend whose family owned a farm in Milton Abbas and he put us in touch. They were so open-minded about the idea and we've ended up with a 200-metre parcel of land that neighbours a small coppice. It has been a collaborative and joyful partnership. **What informed the dimensions of the structure?** Many of the cabins we researched were single storey designs, which comprised a combined sleeping and living area, but we thought it was important that both areas were given their own space, so we went for a one-and-a-half-storey structure instead. It has a super-king bed located on a mezzanine above the bathroom and a small kitchenette. It was important that the space felt as light and spacious as possible, not claustrophobic.

**How did you decide on the décor?** We decided to

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design bespoke furniture pieces so that they could be efficiently recessed into the wall. This ensured that they would integrate into the space without looking incongruous. We designed a floor-to-ceiling bookshelf to house a curated library, which also adds pops of colour. My cousin has a kit car company and kindly gave up his weekends to sweat it out with us in a hot factory making the rolling ladder and dining table. We wanted as many of the internal materials to be as natural as possible, so we went for a rubber floor and organic-pigmented MDF panels for the walls and ceilings.

**Did you avoid the Scandinavian wood and white finishes associated with a lot of cabins on purpose?** We wanted The Bide to have a contemporary interior. There are quite a few ubiquitous birch ply cabins on the market that seem a bit utilitarian. We are both drawn to intimate and cosy environments that have interiors which feature a richness of texture. Our base consisted of grey wall panels, which have a really beautiful patina to them, and we complemented them with matt green Fenix table tops, chunky wool accessories and a slick mustard Panton light. We were heavily influenced by Swedish colourist Tekla Evelina Severin, who produces evocative colourful spaces that have real depth. That's why we went for peach splashback panels for the kitchen and bathroom, as they offer a touch of playfulness.

**Does contemporary architecture work as well as traditional styles in a rustic setting?** It was important that The Bide would give new form to an old idea – we didn't want a rustic cabin of the past. For us, it was less about creating something that nestles into its setting and more about creating a place that sits lightly in the landscape. Although the cabin deliberately contrasts with the countryside, it's visually interesting and we've used a common agricultural cladding for the exterior, which means that it doesn't look completely alien. ▶



# 'BEING SURROUNDED BY NATURE IS VERY GROUNDING... WE PREFER THE SLOWER PACE'

**Why was sustainability such a major factor?** Our original aspiration was to build an off-grid cabin, but our research revealed that most rely on bottled gas for heating. This use of a fossil fuel under the guise of 'off-grid living' made us question what sustainable design really is. Our compromise was to go for a fully electric on-grid set-up. With the national grid increasingly being powered by renewable energy, and the fact that the farm has a large array of solar panels that feed energy back, we thought this was the most sensible approach. We also came up with a highly insulated, air-tight envelope using sheep's wool insulation – the material's natural lanolin has the added benefit of helping to regulate the temperature in the cabin.

**What has the response been?** Our first five months of bookings have been really encouraging and we have received some lovely reviews from our guests in a little notebook we leave in the cabin. The farmer has been surprised and encouraged by the age of our guests and has been impressed by a new generation of holidaymakers who want to focus on environmental getaways.

**Would you like to create similar dwellings in other locations?** Our plan is to build another structure on the same site, but this would be a new typology, as we want each cabin to have its own identity. It wouldn't necessarily be bigger, just different.

**What are the benefits of your new life?** Being surrounded by nature is very grounding. We have benefited from many walks with our Borador puppy, Mabel, on the South West Coastal Path and our lifestyle is much healthier. We miss the city sometimes, yes, with its diversity and creativity, but we much prefer the slower pace. [thebide.com](http://thebide.com)

