

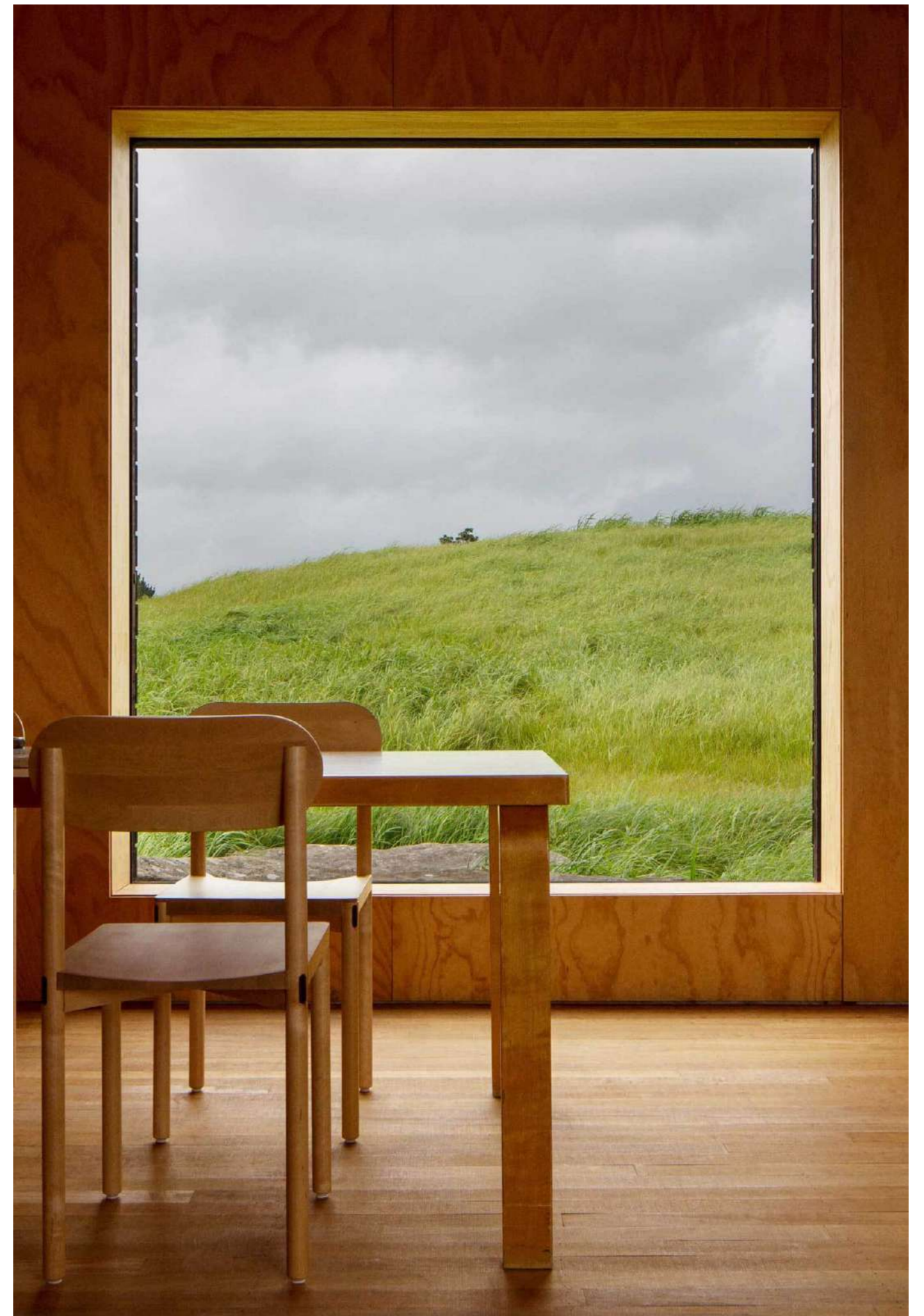


FIND A PLOT

Whether you dream of a seaside escape or a rugged mountain hideaway, it's important to look into where your cabin will be situated and really understand it's conditions and limitations.

Many cabins are built in beautiful but ecologically sensitive regions that may present themselves with some tricky building issues such as; restricted access, property zoning or rates and taxes which vary depending on your local council.

When picking a plot for your cabin, not only are it's conditions a key factor – you should also consider how accessible resources and materials are, which will be key contributors to how well your design develops.





‘The Eyrie Houses’ designed by New Zealand based Architects in Kaiwaka, is the perfect example of considering your environment when it comes to establishing your project. Head Architect Nat Cheshire shared with us her thoughts on undertaking a project like this, and stressed the importance of commitment:

“I suggest looking for land away from the usual weekend spots – our countries have a great depth of beauty, and bits of cheap reject farmland which often contain enormous overlooked potential. When planning a project like this, one must be committed wholeheartedly to the idea of reduction. What we’re looking for are ways to trade the reduction of scale and amenity for an extraordinary experience. ...The result should be almost like camping, but amplified. A space in which simple acts of living take on new significance, and just taking a shower or brewing a cup of coffee begins to wash away the reissue of the city.”

- Nat Cheshire, Cheshire architects

HAVE A PLAN

Making a plan is the essential first step to getting started. A solid plan will help you understand exactly what's involved in the project you're about to embark on. Write it all down, include lists and ideas and be sure to draw up a rough timeline. A timeline will help you work out the nitty gritty and keep you on track, creating a schedule for you to try and stick to. Remember to speak to the council about any limitations and guidelines before making any big decisions. At this stage, talking to designers, builders or Architects will help you better understand the road ahead and help you flesh out your ideas. Once you have your plan finalised, you're ready for the next step.





DRAW IT UP

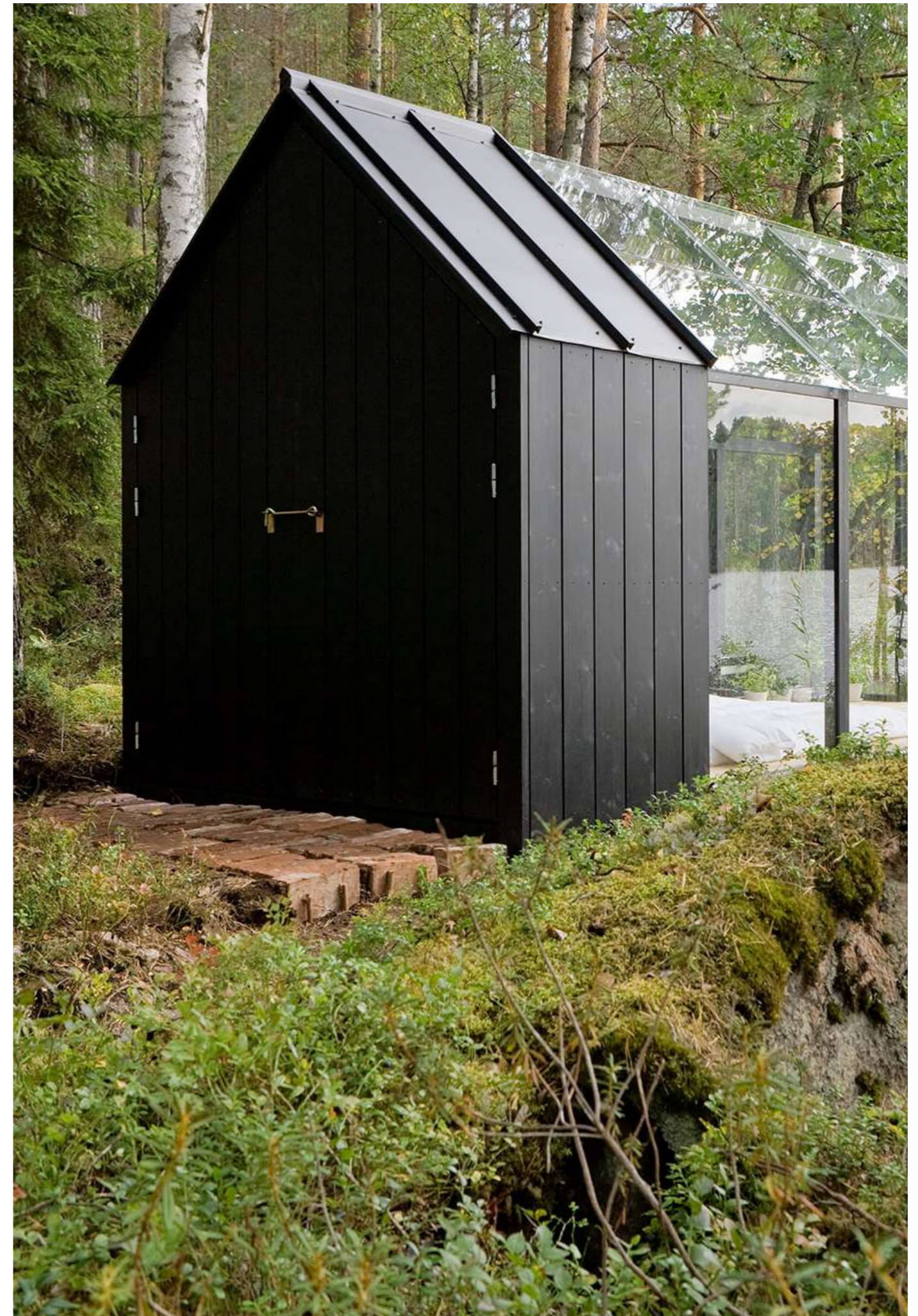
It's time to get drawing. First, start sketching things up – this will help you get a vision of what the ideas in your head could potentially look like.

Once you or your designer have drawn up some rough sketches you need to then move on to creating to-scale versions. It's important to draw things to scale to get an accurate idea of the space you're designing and to make sure it fits all of your needs and desires. If you don't know how to draw to scale – enlist somebody who can. You'll need to have all necessary measurements in order to build the structure. Once you've got your drawings to scale, it's then time to create your building drawings, if you're someone who needs help visualising the end result, look at having some perspectives drawn up – this can really help you to visualise the space three dimensionally.

It's important to decide early on in the process if you want to work with a Designer/Architect, go pre-fab, or build it yourself?

If designing a cabin yourself isn't something you're interested in doing, another option to keep in mind is pre-fab. Opting for a pre-fabricated cabin or small home can be a less involved and simplified way to achieve your desired outcome.

An example of a beautiful pre-fab modular structure is the Kekkila Green shed by Finnish interior architect and Ville Hara of Avanto Architects - Linda Bergroth. This project is the perfect example of achieving sophistication through simplicity. Made in Finland, they come in varying sizes, with additional modules available for customising - which are easy to assemble and manage to retain the humble nature of garden shed turn green house.





BUDGET

Budget will encapsulate many costs including realestate, design & documentation, landscaping, site work, materials, construction, trades, furniture, delivery and rates. Tying in with the planning stage, the first step is to know how much you have to spend, and then speaking with designers/Architects and or builders about what is achievable within your price range. Really research and try to calculate your inspiration, gauging material and design costs to put a realistic number on the things you love. Create a spreadsheet tallying up every possible cost, the more detailed the better. A general rule to keep in mind when building is this; materials take 1/3 and labour takes 2/3 of the budget. The cost of labour can be brought down depending on how involved you want to be - which will effect this general rule. It's also important to know on the labour side of things - there are definite non negotiables such as qualified trades to do the work. Following on from that, your labour budget would also cover the cost for architects, interior designers and carpenters.

A plot of land will often be more affordable than a city purchase, but by building far from a CBD it's important to factor in that other costs associated with a lack of accessibility can arise. It is important to consider budgeting for a 'contingency fund' - which is an amount of money set aside for unforeseeable expenses that pop up during the process. A large cost often comes from the manufacturing and transportation of materials. Try to avoid poor quality materials and labor - you'll spend a lot of time and possibly more money to fix them, so it's better to fork up the little extra for better quality to save your time and money. Featured here is A Modern Winter Shelter by Armin Mešić of FO4A Architecture, based in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina. Refined, wood framed refuges from the winter, the 'architectural concept is pure and simple, focused on the minimalistic design and minimal investment.' Mešić points out to us that "price varies depending on the infrastructure and connections for installations, solar panels and so on". These decisions are all important to consider when budgeting for your envisioned haven.



By now you should have a pretty clear idea on what it takes to build a cabin. In any project, it's important to make sure you know what you're doing - and also, who you're doing it with. Know who's required for what job, and remember - you're the boss! So, are you feeling ready to conquer your cabin? Location is the first step, having a plan is essential, drawing gets the ball rolling, and knowing your budget is the core foundation which sets limitations and guides you in creating your ultimate micro-home.

Happy Cabin Making!

