

small house style



FEB 25, 2011

An Airstream story – Living Large in Small Spaces

The Great Recession has forced millions of Americans to go on a spending diet. Many have lost their homes and have scaled back. But not for everyone. Let's take a closer look at rightsizing with Matthew Hofman of Hofman Architecture.



For **Matthew Hofmann**, living with less in a smaller space is his choice. He prefers it, and it's not hard to see why. "Ever since I was a kid building 7-story tree houses I've liked reusing old stuff and making it usable again," says its owner Matthew Hofmann, owner and founder of **Hofmann Architecture**, who spent the past eight months restoring the 25-foot Airstream. "It's not only beautiful, it's also useful." "I'm at a point in my life where I'm trying to live with less" says Hofmann, who parked the **Airstream** on a Montecito home site that burned down in the Tea Fire.



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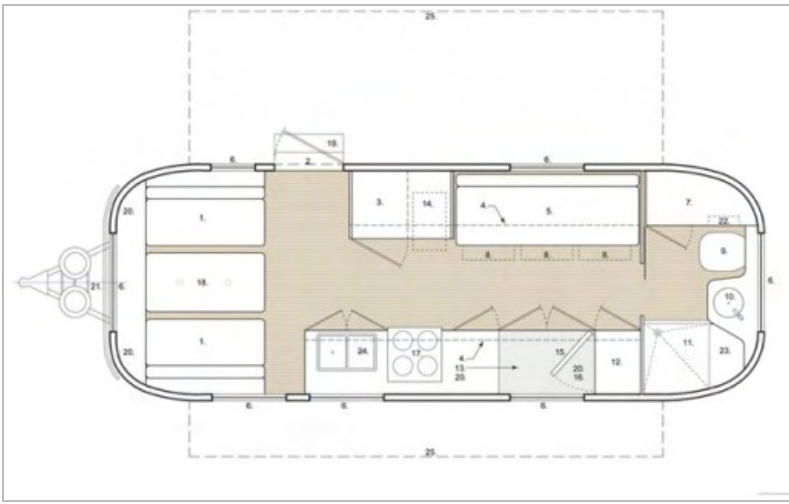
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"I enjoy working with clients who are willing to step boldly into the future with gutsy audacity," he says. "Life-changing events, such as a fire, remind us that we can not only live with much less, but we can truly be content, too."

Why would anyone want to live in just 158 square feet of space? To bring that dimension home, that's like living in less than half a typical 15' x 20' bedroom with a 4' x 5' bathroom.

To be sure, small space living isn't for everyone. Some people would never like it or adjust to it. Still, the reality of living in a small space does offer many unique advantages.

Here are a dozen real life reasons why this Santa Barbaran architect thinks life is grand in a small space — 158 sq. ft., to be exact.

1. **Lower utility costs** — How does an normal gas and electric bill of \$18 a month sound? That adds up to an average annual savings of nearly \$1000. Now that's some serious cash.
2. **Quicker to clean** — Got a call that the girlfriend's parents want to stop by? No worries. Even if it is a disaster area, the place can be buffed out in 30 minutes — tops.
3. **Less maintenance** — Say "goodbye" to repainting, cleaning the rain gutters, and repairing that broken sprinkler. And, who needs a gardener when you don't have a



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yard? Fear not, you still get to enjoy the great outdoors better than ever.

4. **Zero clutter** — We told you this wasn't for everyone. If you're the type that needs piles of mail and unread magazines then this isn't for you. But if you're like Hofmann, where "everything has its place," then it could work. "I've gone 90% paperless."
5. **Improved relationships** — Say what? That's right, studies show that couples who live in a small space have healthier relationships. "My girlfriend and I don't hide in our caves when something comes up," says
6. **Fresh-is-best lifestyle** — Hofmann, who studied architecture in Italy for a year, liked the way the locals bought fresh produce, meats and cheeses at the open-air market each morning. "Excessive refrigerators, freezers and pantry spaces just get stuffed with outdated food," he says. "And frozen or canned food is plain nasty."
7. **Anti-procrastination** — Hey, we told you this wasn't for everyone. If you're a do-tomorrow-what-can-be-put-off-today kind of person then living in a tight space is going to be harder to ignore your need-to-dos because they'll be staring you right at you.
8. **LMIA's (Less missing in action)** — One phrase you may never hear again is: "Honey, where's my _____?" Because stuff simply has fewer places to hide.
9. **No impulse buys** — "I don't buy things I don't need anymore," figures Hofmann, "because I don't have a place to put it." Paper towels may be convenient, but they're not very earth-friendly. "Isn't that what a sponge and towel are for?" he says with a smile. "And where am I going to store a 20-pack roll, anyway?"
10. **Fewer guests** — At the risk of sounding anti-social, it's an absolute certainty that you never again will have to awkwardly-respond to the expectation that the inlaws want to stay with you. "Isn't that why they invented hotels?"
11. **Height- friendly** — Hofmann, who is 6'4" doesn't have to duck his head, "but it's close." But his girlfriend, who's 5'5", can reach everything, easily.
12. **I ended my dysfunctional relationship with Costco** — I realize now that I don't really need a 5lb bag of peanuts or the treadmill that discourages me from ever leaving the confines of home. Though, I still enjoy accompanying a friend to the mega box store to try the free samples.

The creative process, Hofmann believes, isn't accomplished by adding more, but by taking away what is distracting. "The design questions were, "How much does one remove? How much does one keep?"

The must-do list included the use of regional materials and reusable products, such as bamboo for flooring, countertops, the table, along with recycled content throughout. Weight was also a huge issue. Less was more. Lighter was better. And like luggage packed on an airplane, the load needed to be properly balanced.

"For me the solution was creating open space using honest materials. I wanted to bring a sense of outdoors in, so it needed to be bright and airy by nature, yet warm and multi-functional."

As a licensed architect he also needs a quiet, comfortable place to work — a space that is mobile and easily converts from residence to workspace.

Hofmann is clearly comfortable blending his home and office. "For me, a space that serves only one purpose is a waste of space. But for someone else it may not work."

Last January, Hofmann hitched up and took his first road trip to the El Capitan Mesa RV Park that overlooks the Pacific Ocean and Channel Islands. "It took just 10 minutes to hook-up and the **Airstream** rolled along great," he says. "The next morning I took a long walk on the beach, went for a swim, and later worked on a new project."

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Hofmann Architecture LLC is a multi-faceted architectural design build firm with offices in Santa Barbara and San Diego, California. Visit www.HofArc.com to see more photos or to follow their weekly blog.

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Matthew Hofmann – Architect, LEED Accredited Professional

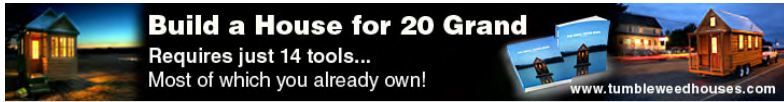
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