

Home on the Road

An architect embraces simplicity by moving his home and business into a sleek, sustainable Airstream.



AFTER DECIDING to open his own firm, architect Matthew Hofmann wanted to downsize his life. He fully committed to a long-time interest in small-space living by moving his home and office into a 1978 Airstream. “I wanted to reduce my overhead and manage risk by living a simple, cost-effective lifestyle,” he says. “I’ve also always been fascinated with Airstreams and wanted to explore a mobile, more minimalist standard of living.”

True to his firm’s light-on-the-planet principles, Hofmann set out to renovate the Airstream with sustainability in mind. Some items, such as the original cabinetry and under-bed storage drawers, Hofmann saved and reused in the renovation. Old materials that couldn’t be reused were sent to a recycling yard, and new materials were sourced from regional suppliers.

Smartly designed spaces outfitted with convertible furniture help Hofmann live well in his tiny home. The Airstream’s main area actually serves as four rooms: dining room, office, lounge and guest room. Tearing down walls, building in storage and removing visual clutter helped open up the interior, making it feel more spacious and comfortable.

For Hofmann, living in 160 square feet isn’t a problem—as long as he keeps it clean. “Clutter in a tiny space can tend to take over quickly.” Downsizing and getting all his possessions to fit in the Airstream was a bit harder. “Thinning down was not easy. I began to realize how much value we as Americans place on our possessions.” But Hofmann sees many advantages to living small. “High-quality materials and fixtures become affordable when building and furnishing a tiny space. Seventy square feet of flooring is a great deal at any price.”

— SUSAN MELGREN

1. Hofmann found his 1978 Airstream for sale on Craigslist. He rescued it one dark and stormy night from behind a chain-link fence where it was being guarded by a “pit bull with attitude.”
2. While the Airstream’s frame was solid, the interior needed complete refinishing.
3. Although it’s small, the Airstream includes a full bed, a bathroom with a shower, a dining table and a fold-out awning.



1. Hofmann operates his sustainable architecture firm, Hofmann Architecture (hofarc.com), out of his 160-square-foot trailer.



2. Hofmann reused the original overhead cabinetry, updating it with a fresh coat of paint.
3. The custom sofa, which doubles as a full-size bed, is covered in Greenguard-certified fabric. The Airstream’s original under-bed cabinets were salvaged.
4. A Hafele (hafele.com/us) pullout pantry system keeps the kitchen organized and food clutter out of sight.

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