

WORDS BY CATHERINE RICHARDS GOLINI

HOUSE TO GO

Found the perfect plot of land, but can't afford to build on it? A new wave of prefabricated houses means you can live in cutting-edge style until you're ready to build your home



The terms 'flat pack', 'prefab' and 'caravan' don't tend to excite those in search of a dream home.



Images of dingy post-war structures with leaky roofs abound, while 'flat pack' uttered in the same breath as IKEA—in reference to its Boklok house—inevitably results in jokes about Allen keys and missing screws.

The fact is, 21st-century trailers are anything but trashy, and manufactured or prefabricated homes are nothing new. The American mail-order company Sears was selling kit homes a century ago (70,000 were sold between 1908 and 1940) while the concept of prefabrication is central to modern building techniques. "Over 90% of housing in the UK is prefabricated. All major house builders use systems of componentry, which is calculated down to the last screw," says Paul Warner, Research Director at 3DR Reid.

What is new is that prefabricated homes are starting to look contemporary, and to reflect a growing demand for greener living. "The expansion of choice with a modern style can only help people become more aware of an alternative," continues Warner. "IKEA flat pack is a great move in this direction, which may be improved by competition from organisations like Toyota who produce fantastic products, from houses to cars. I welcome the day when the conversation refers to brand of dwelling rather than brand of car, and to a planning system that automatically approves a good brand of house in principle, with only the disposition of its parts to the location needing debate."

From minuscule to majestic, fixed or mobile, modernist or traditional, dwellings currently in production globally (and there are many more innovative designs that never make it beyond the drawing board), go way beyond Swedish-inspired, affordable housing. Start using terms such as 'modular' or 'micro housing' and it all starts to look pretty exciting.

Whether you're needing extra work/living space, are planning on building your dream house or have found the perfect location and need a dwelling for the short to mid-term, prefabricated and manufactured housing offers a number of advantages over traditional builds.

One feature common to all is speed. Compared to the average build time of 18 months, some manufactured and prefabricated dwellings can be ordered, produced and erected in as little as eight weeks. Another advantage, which is of particular interest to those wanting a second home abroad, is the ease of consignment. Tim Pyne's m-house is designed to fit, flat-packed, into two shipping containers, making worldwide delivery a breeze, while the m-ch is so small it can be delivered on the back of a truck.

And then there's cost. Custom-designed architecture has always been available to those with large bank

▼ m-house

Fast becoming an iconic object, Tim Pyne's m-house (pronounced m-caravan. With nearly 100m² of living space) has everything you would expect to find in a large kitchen/dining area, a ceiling height of nearly 2.5m; underfloor heating; and a solid fuel stove. It has external finishes, including futuristic eco-friendly options including solar panels. The m-house can also float, if houseboat is your thing. Pyne is currently planning m-house Ibiza—potentially the funkiest trailer house yet. [See website for pricing details.](http://www.m-house.co.uk)

