

10 Minutes for the Planet

The Tiny House Movement ©

by *Valentine Rinner*



Hello everyone and welcome to this week's episode of 10 Minutes for the Planet. Two weeks ago, we discussed eco-construction: the modern green marketing trend and the sometimes not very ecological materials and methods involved, versus natural construction projects, which are often local and cooperative.

Today we'll take a look into another trend in ecological housing: the Tiny House movement. Tiny houses are small or extra-small houses, usually between 10 and 40 square metres. The Tiny House movement encompasses an architectural, social and ecological movement, emerging in the U.S. in the late 1990s, inspired by Henry David Thoreau and Lloyd Kahn. The movement became more popular after the housing crisis following hurricane Katrina in 2005, as well as the financial crisis of 2007.

Tiny houses are also a response to harsh materials and financial conditions, providing temporary shelters after disasters, transitional housing for the homeless, as well as access to property for small pensions. However, for some, tiny houses are a chosen lifestyle. With the development of large suburban areas, houses have become much larger, and therefore cost more, consuming more of our limited resources along the way. For enthusiasts, tiny houses are a way to consume less, having less house but more home, less money but more time, less luxuries but more comfort.

Depending on local legislations, tiny houses have taken different forms. In France, the most popular form seems to be the tiny house on wheels. These houses that are aesthetically similar to regular houses, are simply built on a large trailer. There are no official size limits, however, in order to be able to ride on French roads with a heavy vehicle license, a trailer must be no larger than 2.5 metres and weigh 3.5 tons. Which means that French tiny houses on wheels are usually 2.5 metres large by 6 metres long, and 4 metres high, for an average of 15 square metres with a sleeping loft. They are usually made from wood and other solid materials but are relatively light, to stay under the 3.5-ton limit.

Tiny houses can be built off-grid or connected to city water and electricity. Amateurs and experts usually estimate the building cost of a tiny house between ten and sixty thousand euros. Ten thousand if you build it yourself, with mostly recycled materials, and sixty thousand, if you have it designed and built entirely by a specialised company. A popular option seems to be to buy an empty Tiny House for a few thousand euros and decorate the interior by yourself. There are now a handful of companies making Tiny

Houses in France as the trend develops, with estimates of 500 French tiny houses on wheels with full time inhabitants, and dozens more joining the trend each month.

On the Tiny House France Facebook group, with 4,500 members, the main issues that are raised are which insurance to take for a house? Which materials are best? And which municipalities are tiny house friendly?

That's it for today but stay tuned for more on Tiny Houses in next week's episode of 10 Minutes for the Planet.