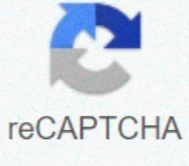




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Largest shipping container

Photo: istockphoto.comDrive past any port in America today and you’re bound to see row upon row of empty shipping containers stacked, like so many colorful building blocks, one atop the other. Due to the United State’s ongoing trade imbalance with countries like China, roughly half of the shipping containers that enter our ports never make it back to their points of origin. Not surprisingly, this growing glut of steel cargo containers has prompted more than a few creative minds to start thinking outside the box. One of them is Peter DeMaria, an innovative California architect who has spent the last decade exploring the potential of these retired containers as affordable building materials.Getting Started “For me as an architect, the challenge had always been how to give my clients the highest level of design while still keeping the projects on budget,” say DeMaria, one of the country’s first architects to incorporate steel cargo containers into residential designs. Indeed, soon after he built his own home in 2003 (and saw firsthand how even a small change in the cost of materials can wreak havoc on the bottom line), DeMaria took a year-long sabbatical and started searching for alternative building materials that could add value to his projects while helping to reduce costs. Shipping containers showed exciting potential. “They’re widely available, inherently strong, and inexpensive when compared with more conventional building materials like steel and concrete,” says the architect. They’re also resistant to fire, mold, and termites, and made of heavy-gauge steel, a material meant to last centuries. Plus, DeMaria adds, the containers’ uniform sizes (they come standard in 20- and 40-foot-long sizes) lend a level of predictability to projects that are usually anything but predictable.Building Blocks: The Redondo Beach House In 2006, DeMaria got his chance to build his first container house in Redondo Beach, California. “We were lucky to find clients like Sven and Anna PirkI. They not only wanted a residence made out of containers but they were creative and bold enough to push the envelope with me,” notes DeMaria. “It was a match made in heaven,” concurs Sven PirkI, who along with his wife, an artist, envisioned a modern, loft-style house that was both eco-friendly and budget-minded.In DeMaria’s hybrid design for the Redondo Beach House, conventional stick-frame construction combines with eight repurposed steel shipping containers to form the two-story home. The contemporary house sports four bedrooms, three-and-a-half baths, and a soaring 20-foot-high living room outfitted with glass-panel airplane hangar doors that fold out to create a seamless indoor-outdoor living space. To play up the industrial good looks of the containers in their new home, the PirkIs chose not to cover-up the corrugated steel walls with siding or to replace the sturdy maritime wood floors that come standard in cargo boxes.For long-term energy savings, low-flow plumbing fixtures, LED lights, and Energy Star appliances were installed throughout the house. Stick-frame walls were insulated with UltraTouch, a recycled denim material, and the rooftops and walls of the containers were painted with a thick coat of white ceramic insulating paint originally developed by NASA. And thanks to simple passive solar techniques, like orienting the building to catch the prevailing breeze, the house remains cool and comfortable year-round.Once all the bills were tallied, using steel containers for more than half of the Redondo Beach House’s 3,500 square feet equaled big savings. At a time when the average price of building a custom home in their area was upwards of \$250 a square foot, the container project cost roughly \$135 a square foot to build. Best of all, says Sven PirkI, “We’ve been living in the house for five years, and we’re still very happy.”Photo: istockphoto.comThe Future of ContainersSince the Redondo Beach House, DeMaria has built nearly a dozen container buildings, including a residence and gallery in Venice Beach and a community center in East Los Angeles. He’s also working on affordable housing projects in the U.S. as well as the Middle East, and just breaking ground on a custom family residence in Mar Vista, California “We’ve streamlined the process and learned more about what the containers can hold up to and how we can modify them,” notes DeMaria.Most containers come in 20- and 40-foot models and generally cost between \$1,650 and \$3,000 each, depending on size and wear and tear. One-way containers that have only made one passage are usually in the best shape and demand a premium. For residential projects, DeMaria prefers High Cube models, which have a taller 9’6” ceiling.Another thing he’s learned is that there’s a whole contingent of design-minded home builders who’d love to live in a container home but can’t necessarily afford to commission an architect. To address this groundswell of interest, DeMaria created Logical Homes (logicalhomes.com), a web-based portfolio of seven affordable model container homes. “We don’t believe good architecture is something that should only be experienced by the wealthy,” says DeMaria, “so we changed the way we deliver our product.” The model homes, which DeMaria refers to as “next-generation prefab,” come in 16 different configurations, all of which are available as is or tweaked to the buyer’s specifications.Logical Homes contemporary designs range from the compact 320-square-foot Kara (pictured below), which features a roll-up garage door that opens onto a 270-square-foot porch, to the 1,692-square-foot Seto, a three-bedroom family home, which can be affordably expanded to five bedrooms by simply taking off the prefabricated Techno roof, adding more containers on top, then putting the roof back on—no moving out required! “We never want anyone who moves into a container home to feel like they’ve had to make compromises,” says DeMaria. As such, customers can customize the seven basic models, including sheathing the corrugated steel walls in siding to camouflage their industrial pedigree. The models range in price from \$49,000 for the smallest unit to \$449,000 for the supersized 3,560-square-foot version of the Seto, which includes five bedrooms, three-and-a-half baths, a great room, second-floor deck, twin garages, and a covered front-porch with a built-in fireplace.It’s just a matter of time before people become comfortable with the idea of building with containers and start embracing the technology, says DeMaria. “We’ve got a lot of things in the works, and once the projects all kicks in, container architecture is going to blossom. There’s no doubt.” To see more of the Redondo Beach container house, take our House Tour slide show. To learn more about Peter DeMaria’s work, visit DeMaria Design. To price containers in your area, click here. Do you have an inordinate amount of shipping containers? Are you trying to include what to do with all them? In the unlikely event that the answer to this question is “yes,” you’ll be pleased to learn that they’re far more practical than you may have imagined. And if, as is more likely, the answer is “no,” then good news! You can grab yourself a decent-size shipping container for just over \$1,500 — sans renovations, of course. Further reading Shipping containers are flood- and fireproof, making them a great home-building material. Ranging in length from 20 to 30 feet, shipping containers are typically only used for 10 to 15 years, but they can last much longer. It is estimated that there are 24 million empty shipping containers in the world that will never be used for cargo again. But, as the saying goes, one man’s retired shipping container is another man’s crazy, high-end modular home. What? That’s not a saying? It should be. Without further ado, here are some of the raddest shipping container homes on the planet. Jens Markus Lindhe Location: Wuxi, China Design: Arcgency, Esbensen, Teknologisk Institut The WFH House is coined as more than just architecture — it’s a sustainable product. The dwelling is a prefab home, meaning it can be exported anywhere in the world, though, the first model was finished in 2012 and is located in Wuxi, China. It’s equipped with solar cells and a green roof, not to mention an underground storage container for housing rainwater. The WFH House uses 40-feet-high shipping contains as the structural framework, rendering it adaptable ear quakes, climate change, and other local challenges. Grillagh Water Patrick Bradley Architects Location: Cavan, Ireland Design: Patrick Bradley Architects Located on the banks of the Grillagh River in Cavan, Ireland, the Grillagh River House is a hidden marvel situated in the rural countryside. The home is the first modern shipping container home designed and built in Ireland, one that utilizes four 45-foot shipping containers to create two cantilever forms. The home’s layout has been cleverly designed to take full advantage of the surrounding pastoral views, culminating in a home that’s as beautiful to look at as it is out of. H04+ Honomobo Location: Prefab home certified for California, Washington, British Columbia, and Alberta Design: Honomobo Made from four 40-foot shipping containers, the H04+ is another prefab home that could be your new forever home. There are two floor plans currently available, one featuring three bedrooms and one bathroom, and another that consists of two bedrooms and two bathrooms. Both floor plans include a large living room, however, as well as a dining room and full kitchen, that latter of which is finished from floor to ceiling with glass. This single level home measures 1,224 square feet, and given its prefab nature, can be built anywhere. Container Cabin the Catskills Porter Location: Saugerties, New York Design: Nowhere Studios If you don’t want to fully commit to a shipping container home, you can stay in this cozy cabin in the Catskills Mountains for \$195 a night. The 20-foot shipping container sits on 20 acres, and features a wood stove, sofa bed, kitchenette, and writing desk, among other modern amenities. With low-energy windows and sliding glass doors, staying warm isn’t an issue, nor is relaxing given the hammock, hot tub, and 64-square-foot yoga platform that reside just outside the residence. Needless to say, nature is rarely as accommodating. Bard College Media Lab Matthew Carbone Location: Annandale-On-Hudson, New York Design: MB Architecture Rome wasn’t built in a day, but this media lab at Bard College apparently was. The installers reportedly assembled the structure on site in a mere half a day, costing a total of about \$200,000. The two-story structure emphasizes tranquility, with open spaces to work in, an unassuming black and white color palate, and plentiful windows to let in natural light and give students a view of the trees just outside. A large garage door opens up, granting access to the main room. MB Architecture’s site states that the same design could be outfitted with a kitchen and bathrooms to make a functional living space. Seven Havens Budi Pradono Architects Location: Lombok, Indonesia Design: Budi Pradono Architects The Clay House — or “Seven Havens,” as it has come to be known as — was constructed at the southwestern portion of the Lombok prcoe, which is located just east of Bali. This bodacious box home is nestled on a set of concrete stilts, allowing the residence to sit just above the hillside for optimal views of the Selong Belanak. The container that creates the ceiling of the master bedroom is also set at a 60-degree tilt, giving the room a wedge shape that faces the bay. Budipradono Architects used a similar slanted design technique — albeit, a steeper one — when constructing another private residence in Indonesia known locally as “The Leaning House of Jakarta.” Devil’s Corner Brown Brothers Location: Aplawn, Tasmania Design: Cumulus Studio The design firm Cumulus Studio created this property for the Brown Brothers winery. The premises is comprised of three main sections, each of which provides guests with panoramic views of Moulting Lagoon, Freycinet Peninsula, and the Devil’s Corner vineyard. A series of timber-clad shipping containers surround an open-air terrace, where guests can imbibe the choicest of Tasmanian quaffs. Ccasa Hostel Ccasa Hostel Location: Nha Trang, Vietnam Design: TAK Architects Vietnamese studio TAK Architects created this vibrant hostel near the center of Nha Trang. Within the walls of the property, a stack of polished shipping containers have been transformed into minimally furnished dormitories for wayfarers passing through southeast Asia. The pergola surrounding the individual containers helps to shield the units from direct sunlight during warmer months. The property is also just 600 feet from the beach, offering guests sweet, sandy solitude if they need to take a break from the bustling backpackers’ retreat. Student housing project Urban Rigger Location: Copenhagen, Denmark Design: Urban Rigger and Bjarke Ingels Urban Rigger worked with architecture firm Bjarke Ingels to create this floating student housing project in Copenhagen. The main objective was to create affordable modular housing within the urban harbors. Individuals can rent a unit at Urban Rigger for just \$600 per month, which is a steal considering Copenhagen is notoriously one of the most expensive cities on Earth. The homes include a private bedroom, bathroom, and kitchen with shared living spaces. The outside of the facility features community gardens, kayak landings, and bathing platforms. Canadian construction firm Honomobo is also creating modular, stackable housing using shipping containers. Ecuadorian Container Home Lolona Darques Schettini/Daniel Moreno & Sebastián Calero Architects Location: Pichincha, Ecuador Design: Daniel Moreno Flores and Sebastián Calero Designed by architecture powerhouse couple Daniel Moreno Flores and Sebastián Calero, this shipping container home is situated in central Ecuador. The team used a total of seven 20-foot shipping containers and one 40-foot container to build the sprawling abode. The home, which is made of a host of individual modules, can be quickly disassembled and transported for a sudden change of scenery. Tomecek Studio Location: Nederland, Colorado Design: Studio H:T Although not comprised entirely of shipping containers — the lavish home only utilizes two — Studio H.T’s latest venture in the realm of shipping container homes was nothing short of gorgeous. The firm built the sustainable home on an existing rock outcropping in the Colorado wilderness, allowing the occupants to capitalize on the distant ridge views surrounding them. The containers straddle the home’s central living space, functioning as bedrooms and a kitchen, as well as a bath, office, and laundry room. The upper floor even features a bed that slides on tracks for an outdoor experience without the tent. Containers of Hope Studio Saxe Location: San Jose, Costa Rica Design: Benjamin Garcia Saxe This inexpensive home was created by architect Benjamin Garcia Saxe for only \$40,000. It’s made with two 40-foot shipping containers. Saxe created this for a couple with the intent of building a rural home that wouldn’t put them in debt. The slanted roof lets the sunlight in but also lets the hot air escape. It is located 20 minutes outside the capital of Costa Rica, but you can’t tell from the pictures that it is anywhere near a city of roughly two million people. Crossbox House CG Architects Location: Pont-Péan, France Design: CG Architects This house has three bedrooms, a kitchen, a large living room, and two bathrooms. The house was built using two merged crates on each floor. We don’t know how much this project cost, but we do know that the architects built it with the intention of displaying a low-cost alternative to most standard homes in the area. It is clear that design was important, considering the way the house was built as if to defy gravity. Container Guest House Jim Potet Location: San Antonio, Texas Design: Jim Potet A mere 320 feet of space is not much to work with unless you’re creating a minimalist guest house in your backyard. The private residence, constructed with the help of local Texas architect Jim Potet, adds a touch of luxury to a recycled shipping container measuring a narrow 8 feet wide and 40 feet long. The foundation of the structure utilizes a bevy of recycled telephone poles, while the flooring and wall coverings feature repurposed bamboo. The roof of the navy-blue crate even offers garden space — making it more than just a place for storing tools and housing people passing through. The Caterpillar House Sebastián Irrarázaval Location: Santiago, Chile Design: Sebastián Irrarázaval This shipping container home is located just outside of a large city as well, on a hillside outside of Santiago, Chile. It is built from 12 containers. The design was chosen by the family for its quick build time on a reasonable budget. The facade is ventilated and arranged in a way that makes electronic cooling unnecessary, using the natural, cool mountain air as a passive cooling system. Container House Ecososa Design Studio Location: Flagstaff, Arizona Design: Ecososa Design Studio Adorned with a rooftop terrace and with a construction time just under a year, Ecososa Design Studio’s desert home is one of the few residences on our list representing a student-designer collaboration. The mint-green dwelling sports an industrial design, with concrete floors and a walnut finish, along with tools for collecting solar power and harvesting rainwater. A slew of dual-pane aluminum windows provide ample natural light throughout the year, but it’s the home’s five separate decks that give it astonishing views of the surrounding San Francisco Peaks. Summer Residence Designboom Location: Sardinia, Italy Design: Designboom Located on the island of Sardinia, Summer Residence was set up as an office and living space by designers at Designboom, who used three interconnected shipping containers and did most of the work themselves. The setup contains an outdoor kitchen and dining area covered with a straw canopy and two live/work container spaces. Each space has sliding glass doors, and one of the containers is outfitted with a bathroom, including a toilet and shower. The designers also included two outdoor courtyards and a satellite connection. Casa El Tiemblo James & Mau Location: Avila, Spain Design: James & Mau It may not look quite as ornate from the outside as some of the others, but a look inside this house will still impress. This project was built with four 40-foot containers for about \$190,000. It includes a kitchen, bedrooms, a living room, and large picturesque windows. Even the landscaping is top-notch. Zigloo Domesticque Complete Nick West Location: Victoria, Canada Design: Keith Dewey Canadian architect Keith Dewey took a cue from a magazine when designing the Zigloo Domesticque Complete complex, one of the first shipping container homes in the entire country. He retrofitted eight 20-foot cargo units with a proper roof, outfitting the interior of the home soon afterward with a slew of sustainable materials intended to go hand in hand with the passive ventilation and the house’s modern design. He supposedly saved 700 trees by using the recycled materials, only to sell the house for a cool \$728,000 a mere six years after completion. Six Oaks Shipping Container Residence David Fenster Location: San José, California Design: David Fenster Nestled amid the trees of the San José mountains and atop an old railway that now serves as an emergency escape route, David Fenster’s project on behalf of Modulus was intended to waste as little space as possible and leave minimal impact on the environment. The private residence makes use of six shipping containers spaced four feet apart from one another, with the second story crates stacked perpendicular to the bottom. Recycled redwood from the site makes up the stairwell and much of the furniture, while recycled plywood that was sealed and stained supplied most of the foundation for the flooring. Manifesto House James & Mau Arquitectura Location: Caracas, Chile Design: James & Mau Arquitectura The exterior of most cargo containers isn’t exactly flattering. Fortunately, with the Manifesto House, James & Mau Arquitectura decided to incorporate a series of recycled wood pallets and shutters placed in order to beautify the structure in the summer and heat the walls in the winter. The open-space design utilizes three separate shipping containers, each placed in such a way as to allow ample room between the two outdoor patios lining the interior of the home. It also runs primarily on solar energy and features a cantilevered balcony on the top. “Eco-efficient” is one way to describe it. Container Studio MB Architecture Location: Long Island, New York Design: Maziar Behrooz Architecture This unit was built on a budget of \$60,000 as an art studio next to someone’s house. The studio was painted charcoal to match their house and blend in with the environment. It has two floors: one for painting and one to relax, reflect and work on smaller projects. The lower floor is built into the hillside. Hybrid House EcoTech Location: Shadow Mountain (near Joshua Tree), California Design: EcoTech A one-bedroom home that totals 2,300 square feet, the Hybrid House was built for a client in the media business who wanted a photo studio and large storage areas in a beautiful setting. EcoTech used five shipping containers and recycled steel to make it. It has a movable roof and a water-harvesting system that collects natural water because it’s in the desert. It actually surpasses California’s energy requirements by 50%. This is a large, eco-friendly, and nice-looking residence for the desert, which utilizes an open layout and solar-shaded windows to ward off the hot desert air. Shadow Mountain cost over \$300,000 to build. Cove Park Eco Architecture Location: Rosneath Peninsula, Scotland Design: Urban Space Management This space hosts artists from all over the world and overlooks Loch Long in Scotland. Cove Park provides residences for visual artists, craftspeople, writers, and musicians, and is only part of a larger complex for the artists in residence. A layer of grass over the top of the containers helps insulate the residence, and sliding glass doors and porthole windows let in plenty of light. 12 Container House Peter Aaron Location: Blue Hill, Maine Design: Adam Kalkin Open-space architecture is seemingly becoming more and popular, but one rarely sees it in pre-fabricated homes. However, Adam Kalkin’s take on spatial living makes use of 12 shipping containers and a glazed glass structure to give the residence a direct connection to the great outdoors. Two steel staircases provide access to the upper bedrooms from the living space and kitchen below, providing welcome relief from any wind that may trickle in the house through the double doors. The Beach Box Andrew Anderson Location: Amagansett, New York Design: Andrew Anderson Touted as the Hampton’s first eco-container home, designer Andrew Anderson took more into account than merely the location of his luxury home. Whereas the four modules on the ground floor make up the residence’s four bedrooms, the top containers house the kitchen, living, and dining rooms. The \$1,395,000 home also sits amid the peaceful Napeague dunes a mere 600 feet from the ocean, while utilizing some of the most sustainable materials currently on the market. Counters made of 100%, post-consumer recycled fiber and bamboo never looked so good. PV14 House M Gooden Design Location: Dallas, Texas Design: Michael Gooden This impressive home is made from 14 steel shipping containers. Located in northern Texas, the stunning structure is uniquely positioned to take in views from the surrounding townscape. The use of drastic overhangs and several porches shield windows from direct sunlight — without obstructing the view — while concrete floors, an exposed steel structure, masonry, and glass make up the primary building elements. The three-bedroom home also features four elevated, covered balconies and a large roof deck. It cost somewhere between \$350,000 and \$490,000 to build, making this impressive home more affordable than you might think. The Quik house Adam Kalkin Location: New Jersey Design: Adam Kalkin The Quik house is an airy, modern structure in a forested region of central New Jersey, retrofitted with concrete and fir floors, stainless steel beams, and large glass panes that line nearly all sides. The main building is comprised of six shipping containers, the other just three, but the entire complex houses a large living space, multiple bedrooms, a bathroom, a walk-in closet, and more. A 12-foot island provides a beautiful view when cooking, too, while the large sofas allow you to lounge near the fireplace on frigid nights. The entire interior is even hidden behind drywall, meaning you’ll never be able to tell the structure is made of shipping containers unless you look behind the stairwell. The Savannah Project Tessa Blumenberg/Busy Boo Location: Savannah, Georgia Design: Julio Garcia The Price Street Project is a unique container home created by designer Julio Garcia to complement the lush greenery of Savannah, Georgia. The one-bedroom house was constructed from two offset, 40-foot shipping containers, and the space itself consists of a bedroom, bathroom, kitchen, and living room. Clerestory windows soften the interior with ample natural lighting, and an open wooden deck wraps around the entire building, helping to better mesh the harsh steel structure with the surrounding forest. Flying Box Villa 2A Design Location: Orgères, France Design: 2A Design This (relatively) small home consists of three shipping containers. With a budget between \$100,000 and \$500,000, the architects were able to construct an abode that capitalizes on both their creativity and ingenuity, without racking up exuberant building costs. The home has three levels, each level being 1,000 square feet. The ground level has a covered entrance, garage, and laundry room; the second level houses the living room and garden. The main level is surrounded by two glass facades, one facing the street and another facing the home’s small garden. The top level is described as a solarium, where you can take in views of the surrounding village and the natural landscape. The Maison Container Lille Location: Lille, France Design: Patrick Partouche Built from eight recycled shipping containers, this remarkable two-story home uses terracotta, metal, wood, polycarbonate, and glass to form a full house. It’s notable for being surprisingly traditional in form and function: While many container homes revel in odd shapes or unique designs, this home is modeled after traditional two-story residential houses. Of course, that didn’t stop Partouche from creating a beautiful, spacious modern interior. The house was completed in 2010. Joshua Tree Residence Location: Joshua Tree National Park, California Design: Whitaker Studio Like a rare desert flower, James Whitaker’s container home is springing to life near the Joshua Tree National Park. While development on this particular house is ongoing (after being commissioned in 2017), you can see by the carefully rendered concept images just how incredible it will be. That star-like design also offers utility: It helps keep the house filled with natural light no matter where the sun may be, and improves cooling. Whitaker continues to create unique design concepts for other container-based housing and business developments. Editors’ Recommendations

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