

On wheels: Pete and Sophie Oswald's tiny home

Vital stats:

- 40 square metres
- 5.7 tonnes
- Length 8.5m, width 2.9m, height 4.7m
- Estimated build cost (including appliances): \$120,000

GUY WILLIAMS

WHEN Pete and Sophie Oswald decided to build a tiny house, they'd never seen one, let alone been in one.

Four years ago, the well-travelled couple were based in Queenstown but spending part of each year in Europe or North America.

But they were starting up their eco-friendly paper products company, Little Difference, and wanted to put down firmer roots in the resort.

"We'd probably lived in 10 different houses in Queenstown, so we wanted to live in something that was our own," Sophie says.

"We couldn't afford a house, so we thought a tiny house would be a good option."

With some architectural drawing experience under her belt from a previous job, she began drawing up plans.

By the end of 2016, Sophie's plans were with a Christchurch steel fabricator, who translated them into a framing plan.

By winter of the following

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Pete and Sophie's big tiny house

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year, with a new trailer and flat-packed framing in place at Pete's parents' property in Blenheim, they started to build.

Pete, a pro freeskier, says they're a "kind of practical" couple, but had never built anything, and didn't have any tools.

"We had no idea what it took to build one.

"We set out thinking it would take two months, and it's still going four years later."

Using the building code as a guide, they picked up specific skills from YouTube videos, and got advice from local tradies and suppliers.

Then, part-way through the build, they realised their tiny home was going to be way too heavy for the 3.5-tonne-capacity trailer.

After ordering a six-tonne trailer from a Blenheim company, they lifted the part-built house off the old trailer with jacks, put it on blocks, and carried on.

Fortunately, they were able to sell the old trailer.

"We didn't want to compromise because we knew we wanted to live in it for quite a long time," Pete says.

Rather than taking the two months they planned on, the build took about 18 months, made up of bursts of intense activity broken up by stints overseas or in Queenstown.

It wasn't until after they towed it to the resort during winter last year, and, needing to live in it, that they got it finished to a liveable state.

While running their business from their office/bedroom on the mezzanine, and starting a family — daughter Tula was born five months ago — they've added finishing details: a balustrade on the mezzanine, handrail on the stairs, cupboard doors and trims.

"We did it to such a high standard," Sophie says.

Pete: "We took time with every bit and made sure it was done well, and we're so happy we did now."

The tiny house sat on a friend's empty section in Arthurs Point for the first two months before the couple moved it up the road to a site behind the Cargo at Gantley's pub and cafe.

It's moving this week to a new, longer-term site.

Pete says visitors are always struck by how roomy it is inside.

"You've got the full floor-to-ceiling height in the living room, so it gives it a nice big feel."

Their advice to anyone thinking about building their own tiny home?

"Just do it, but recognise how much work's involved.

"And do it once and do it right; just because it's a tiny house doesn't mean you should skimp on quality — it should be the opposite."



PICTURE: TOM POWELL



PICTURE: PETE OSWALD

- 1 Our family: Sophie, Pete and Tula | 2 Heart of a home: The kitchen-dining area
3 Long way down: The living area's high ceiling gives the tiny home a roomy feel
4 All in one: Bedroom, nursery and office



PICTURE: PETE OSWALD



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