

TinyHouseOfTheSouth.com

BASIC STATS

What is (are) your name(s)?

- o Amy Dinsmore and John Skeen

What do you do for a living?

- o Graphic Designer, General Manager

How many people do you/will be living in your tiny house?

- o Two (for now!) + 1 Golden Retriever pup + 1 feisty feline

What part of the country do you live in?

- o In the good ole South where we like our tea sweet and our biscuits buttered! More specifically? In Atlanta, Ga.

How many square feet is your house?

- o Approximately 192 sq ft without the sleeping loft (264 sq ft with!)

When did you start your build?

- o End of October 2014

Is your house complete?

- o Not yet! We're shooting for late summer/early fall 2015.

Have you been documenting your tiny house build and if so, where can people find that information?

- Oh, yes! We're all over social media. You can find us here:
 - **Blog:** TinyHouseOfTheSouth.com/
 - **Facebook:** [Facebook.com/TinyHouseOfTheSouth](https://www.facebook.com/TinyHouseOfTheSouth)
 - **Instagram:** [Instagram.com/TinyHouseOfTheSouth/](https://www.instagram.com/TinyHouseOfTheSouth/)
 - **YouTube:** [YouTube.com/channel/UCbzJpGI_cKpMUWVBnlXw4xA](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCbzJpGI_cKpMUWVBnlXw4xA)
 - **Twitter:** [Twitter.com/TinyHouseSouth](https://twitter.com/TinyHouseSouth)
 - **Pinterest:** [Pinterest.com/TinySouth/](https://www.pinterest.com/TinySouth/)

BACKGROUND

Why did you decide to build?

- Freedom. Freedom from the rat race, freedom to follow passionate pursuits, freedom to travel, freedom to spend more time with our families and future children.
- Security. Security of knowing that, while we're able to be free from the chains of the "American Dream", we'll still have a warm, inviting place to rest our heads and spend our lives together.

What was your life like before your tiny house? Were you fairly active, have you always had 'projects' going on? Were you fairly sedentary and looking for a change? Did you tend to work too much? (This question is an effort at trying to figure out WHO gravitates to the tiny house lifestyle)

- Although we're both in different industries, we have both experienced what it's like to be chained to 50-60 hour workweeks, to live for the weekends and that rare time off. In fact, that was our biggest motivator –

just getting a break from the insanity that is the “American Dream” and being able to once again, center ourselves and find a more sustainable, peaceful way of living.

How did you come to hear about the movement, figure out it was right for you and get started?

- o It was on a blog post (maybe Treehugger.com?), that Amy discovered an article about Jay Shafer back in 2010. It’s funny how one man has changed so many lives. This stranger introduced us to a different way of living, changed the path of our lives, and for that we’re so grateful.

What is/was your design inspiration?

- o We are infinitely inspired by so many tiny homes that we continue to see. Our initial inspiration lay with the homes that we first stumbled across:
 - o Tumbleweed Houses
 - o Chris and Malissa’s “Tiny Tack House”
 - o Vina’s Tiny House from Sol Haus Design
 - o Shay and Tom’s “Lucy” in New Zealand

TECHNICAL:

How do/did you find the time to work on your house with a job, kid(s), relationships, AND building a house? Did you do anything special to keep the balance?

- o Amy left her job as a fulltime graphic designer to plan and spearhead the build project after spending many months planning and finalizing the

house plans. She still does some part-time freelance graphic design, but John, however, is a super hero that continues to work long hours as a General Manager of a retail store to pay the bills and helps out with the build on weekends, We both look forward to the day that he can take a break once the house is complete!

Have you run into any problems with local codes? How did you solve them?

- o Not yet! (*knock on wood*)

Where did you get the tools that you use? Were they yours, borrowed, rented etc.?

- o All purchased; Craigslist, sales at Home Depot, Lowes, and Amazon

How long did (are you expecting) construction to take?

- o We were hoping for 6-9 months, but it's looking like it may be closer to 9-12 months.

Have you/were you able to stay on schedule?

- o Definitely not. In Georgia, we've had a really wet winter/spring, so there were weeks where it would rain all week, or be rainy on John's days off, so that has hindered progress on the build.

What is/was the most time consuming portion of your build?

- o The roof!

What is/was the most limiting factor for your build?

- o Weather. Helping hands for the tough/heavy stuff. Confidence to move forward when you don't know all the answers.

Is your house on a trailer? If yes, how do you attach to the trailer? How do you move your tiny house? (Do you have a truck, do you hire it done?)

- o Yes, our house is on a 24 foot trailer. The subfloor is connected to the metal beams with 64 galvanized lagbolts/washers/nuts. We do not currently own a truck, but are not planning to do much traveling right away, so if we need to move the house, we'll hire a professional with a big truck. There's plenty of those in the South!

Do you have accessory houses/dwellings that you use to supplement storage/working/living?

- o Before we started our build, we constructed a 10x12 storage shed on the property where the build is taking place. We needed a dry place to secure our expensive tools, and bikes/large items.

Where did you get your plans?

- o A SketchUp model of a smaller house plan was purchased from Tiny Home Builders, but Amy learned SketchUp, and completely customized/rebuilt the layout. This taught her a lot about the anatomy of house structures and how each board fits together.

Have you consulted any 'professionals'? (structural, mechanical, plumbing, design etc.)?

- o We had some consultation with Dan Louche with the purchase of his plans. We also have a contractor uncle on speed-dial who has been a great person to call when there are small questions. Other than that, we're planning to consult with various professionals to help us install or oversee the roof, plumbing and electrical applications.

Are you insuring your house? With who?

- o We have no plans to insure yet, but we plan to do more research once the build is complete.

Have you been using any sponsorship to help fund your house? How do you go about finding that sponsorship?

- o No sponsors

SPECIFICS:

What sort of items do you have for cooking?

- o We haven't completely downsized our kitchen collection yet, but we're planning to use a small propane stove. We'll be getting rid of specialized utensils and tools, and keeping only high-quality options that will be multi-functional. We'll be keeping one of each of these, ensuring that they can be nested in storage:

1 - cast iron skillet

1 - cast iron enamel dutch oven

1 - stainless steel boiler pot (this may not make the cut)

1 - stainless steel strainer

1 - stainless steel splatter guard

2 - aluminum cookie sheets

1 - 9x12 baking pan with lid (may be cut)

4-5 - wood or metal spoons/spatulas

Are you tied to the power grid or are you off grid?

- o Tied to the electrical grid initially, but we really want to be self-sufficient and be off-grid with solar power eventually (even if the grid is available). We love what solar means to sustainability and cutting reliance on coal-generated energy. We really love the Sol Man solar cart and how it's a perfect mobile solar solution.

Are you going to have a washer and/or dryer?

- o Yes, our very last purchase for the tiny house will be an all-in-one washer/dryer unit. Amy has warm/fuzzy memories of helping her mother line-dry their clothes in the summer sun as a girl, and we'll also have access to a washer and dryer on her family's property where we'll be for a while, so we'll be putting that purchase off for as long as possible.

Where does your water come from?

- o City water. Again, we'll be preparing for the eventuality of being off-grid in the mountains at some point, so our hopes is to be able to drill our own natural water well (or have access a clean mountain spring).

What kind of toilet are you going to have?

- o Composting toilet! Humanure all the way! We will not be buying a fancy toilet though - ours will essentially be a fancy wood box with a fancy wood seat and \$5 plastic bucket from Home Depot. 😊

What do you use for a heat source if anything?

- o For our primary source of heat, we'll be purchasing a Morsø 1440 wood burning stove. It's a small convection wood stove designed to heat 1,000sqft, and it's made by a reputable stove company in Denmark.

There's just something about wood heat that we really appreciate, and we feel that it's a more natural, sustainable way to heat our home. Oh, and we like that it's made by Vikings and has a cute squirrel on the side. ☺

- o For our backup heat, we plan to have a mini-split system that will have AC/heat, so it'll keep the house warm enough if we're away from home (and on-grid). We realize that this luxurious appliance will not be usable in an off-grid/solar powered situation, but we've tried to incorporate some passive solar design in our build to help with circumventing heat-buildup.

What are some of the space savings tricks you used?

- o Storage stairs, storage couch (that converts into a downstairs bed), and fold-down wall table/desk

What do you have for insulation?

- o Sheep's Wool!

Where are you planning to park your tiny house?

- o Right now, we're building on Amy's parents' property in the suburbs north of Atlanta and living in small apartment in midtown Atlanta. Amy is also a part-time caregiver to her father, so we'll be staying put there to help her family and to save money to eventually buy our own piece of property in the mountains of north Georgia.

PERSONAL:

How much will/did your tiny house cost?

- o Expected cost: Approximately \$30,000+/-

What is/was the most expensive part of your house?

- o So far? The trailer! We purchased a custom tiny house trailer from Tiny Home Builders. The custom Jeld-wen windows were a close second.

'Best' injury story (worst injury)?

- o Uh-oh, I hope we don't jinx ourselves. So far, the worst has probably been a finger cut. John suffered a minor cut on his finger by touching the blade of the miter saw right before it stopped spinning (but this could have been MUCH worse). Does 1,000 splinters count?

What has been your biggest accomplishment with your tiny house?

- o Amy discovered she had a fear of heights after we started working on ladders. When it came time to install the roof sheathing, although terrified, she climbed the 15-16 feet (the house sits on hill incline) and finished the roof plywood installation. (with a bike helmet and safety harness, of course!) She counts that as a huge accomplishment!

What is/will be the biggest benefit to living in a tiny house?

- o Peace. Freedom. Family. Being able to care for family when needed. Time. As we get older, we realize it's more about taking hold and juicing every drop of life from every second in time - the only thing that money cannot buy.

Is there anything you'll miss about living in a standard house? What will you miss the most?

- Having a big Christmas tree, which is a big deal to Amy. We like to travel and have collected so many ornaments over the years from the places we've visited or memories we've made. We'll have to pare down our collection and start reconsidering every ornament purchase.
- Having room for musical instruments. John's a musician with an large electric piano he's carried around for the last 15 years as well as and 4-5 other instruments. He plans to pare down to his favorites, but as much as we'd like, we can't find room to fit the piano.
- A bathtub.

What has been the scariest part about building your own house?

- Self-doubt. Fear + lack of confidence + inexperience can paralyze or halt a build, especially if you don't have anyone who can come over and help out. Learning to ask for help has been a big pill to swallow!

If you could change one thing about your house what would it be?

- The addition of skylights in our roof – Amy had initially planned these in our build, but decided to take them out at the last second after speaking to a window professional who talked us out of it.
- The addition of a rooftop deck. They're just too cool!

Did you have cash in hand to complete your build, pay as you go or take out a loan to construct your house?

- We saved up enough cash to complete the build without a loan.

Have friends and family been skeptical or supportive of your ideas?

- We've received mixed reactions from various family members. Some have been supportive the entire time, and some have always thought we're nuts. But we're okay with that!

Is there anything else you would want other people to know about your house and build?

- Once our tiny home is completed, we're planning to start a second build as a retirement home for one of our mothers.
- Eventually, we'd also like to build tiny house bed-and-breakfast in the mountains of north Georgia, offering folks a unique, relaxing experience with a view. We can just picture it now. Ahhhh.....