

Volga House

Alexino Village, Konakovsky District,
Tverskaya Region, Russia

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Photography: Alexey Knyazev

Operable windows allow for natural circulation, and cork panelling in certain sections of the roof and walls provides a sustainable form of insulation.

The 'green' credentials of wood (grows naturally, renewable, recyclable, stores carbon, low embodied energy) seem obvious, and yet these clear benefits are often overlooked when it comes to selecting building materials. This is not the case with the Volga house, however.

Located near the famous Volga River in Russia, this neat little three-storey house fits a lot into its relatively compact 133 square metres (1430 square feet). Built on a pre-existing stone block base, the house is constructed of various types of locally sourced wood treated and used in a range of interesting ways. The exterior patchwork-style woodwork, with its squares and rectangles of overlapping panels, harkens back to the *dacha* (country house or villa) style houses of the Soviet era when, because of a scarcity

of materials, houses would be constructed of practically whatever could be found, with the result being dachas that reflected the patchwork nature of the various materials they were made of.

To create an interesting effect, the wooden panels have been painted various shades of brown and angled in such a way to reflect the sunlight in different ways. Some of the wood panelling consists of oriented strand board (OSB), a form of wood panelling made from layered strands of wood compressed and bonded together with wax and resin. When fast-growing, or sustainably forested, tree species are used it is an environmentally-friendly and efficient process that wastes very little timber and uses substantially less energy in its manufacture than many other building materials.

Strategically-placed windows allow a quite surprising amount of daylight to penetrate the house, lightening the tone and mood of the dark wood interior while dramatically brightening those parts of the house lined with lighter-coloured wood. Natural light also enters in interesting forms via the slits in the wood panelling. Operable windows allow for natural circulation, and cork panelling in certain sections of the roof and walls provides a sustainable form of insulation.

Dense and light, rustic and urban, traditional and modern, the Volga House is rich in contradictions and style without treading too heavily on the landscape.





Second floor



First floor



Ground floor

- 1 Summer veranda
- 2 Living
- 3 Dining
- 4 Kitchen
- 5 Guest room
- 6 Bathroom
- 7 Bedroom
- 8 Wardrobe
- 9 Office
- 10 Sauna

