

On ya wagon

Sarah Stanley has added an extension and glazed veranda to a wheeled wagon to create a unique retreat with quirky Western-inspired interiors.



STORY: DEBBIE JEFFERY
PHOTOGRAPHY: UNIQUE HOME STAYS



Original and only use high quality materials



In brief

Project Extended wagon
Location Cornwall
Cost Land already owned – valued at approx £80,000
Spent £19,800 for wagon and £55,000 on building work
Worth £175,000+

“Try to be original and only use high quality materials.”

SARAH'S TOP TIP

“When Sarah Stanley spotted a large shepherd's hut in a client's garden she was keen to find out more. The owner had hand-built the timber structure himself as a studio, cladding it in corrugated sheeting, and Sarah was fascinated by the building.

“I loved the quirky, curved roof and some years later, when the hut was still standing unused in their garden, I offered to buy it,” says Sarah, the founder and director of Unique Home Stays, which offers some of the most extraordinary and luxurious holiday homes in the UK.

“The original hut was around 10m long, and I thought that by extending it we could make a little holiday home in the grounds of our farm cottage at Trebudannon, for visiting friends and family as well as to rent out,” continues Sarah. “The owners were happy to sell, and we then needed to organise how to transport the structure eight miles to our home.”

Sarah and her partner, Andy Davey, planned to locate the hut in their small paddock, and paid £500 to hire a crane which would deposit it at the top of their narrow lane. From there a tractor towed the hut to the paddock, but the driver was unaware that during the process the metal-clad roof had been caught in branches and was ripped off.

“The hut is 3.8m high to the crest of the roof, and the flue for the wood-burner was removed for transit, but it still didn't prevent us from losing part of the roof,” says Sarah. “It was such a shame and we needed to replace the galvanised steel straight away, as well as preparing and painting the metal using etch primer and activator.”

Initially, it was possible to use the wheeled hut as a simple garden building, where Andy and Sarah would go to relax, but to create a dwelling by building an extension



KITCHEN

Handmade cabinets were painted in Farrow and Ball's Down Pipe and fitted with cup handles and beech worktops.

and modifying the structure required planning permission.

The couple designed a one-bedroom property with all mod cons. Relocating the hut slightly on the plot would create enough space for a single-storey 6m x 4m extension on one side to accommodate a bedroom, bathroom and utility area. The original hut would connect to this, and contains an open-plan living/dining/kitchen space with doors onto a raised deck.

“There was already a cottage within the field, which helped with our planning application, says Sarah. “We wanted to keep the lovely old original wheels and the curved roof of the shepherd's hut,

“We wanted to keep the lovely old original wheels and the curved roof.”

and to create a king-sized bedroom and a sleek en suite bathroom in the new extension rather than trying to cram in several smaller rooms.”

A doorway would connect the new and old structures, with steps down from the shepherd's hut into the lower bedroom, where french doors open onto a side patio reached by a set of external timber steps. Beside this, a spacious en suite, containing both a bath and shower, overlooks the rear of the plot through a double-glazed window.

Revisions were made to the plans with the help of a local planning advisor and Jess Clark, a designer who works closely with Sarah's company and who sketched out the original designs. A utility room was added to the extension to contain a washing machine, and planning permission was approved for the building to be used as a holiday home.

Most of the new extension has been built in timber and stands on wooden stilts set into concrete pad foundations. The highly insulated structure is double glazed and was clad in galvanised steel to match the wagon, with sections of rusty metal found around the couple's farm giving a distressed, vintage feel. Internally, locally-sourced macrocarpa timber has been used for flooring and wall cladding in the extension.



EXTERIOR

The original shepherd's hut has been extended in timber to one side, with a glazed entrance veranda creating a sheltered indoor/outdoor space.

“I wanted to keep the essence of the property rustic and simple, then the individuality lies in the dressing and accessorising,” says Sarah. “I reuse and recycle pre-loved materials and furniture whenever I can because I like the imperfections on pieces that tell a story of their past.”

Andy is a builder by profession, and his company, Davey Construction, completed all building work over a two-month period – later adding an enclosed, timber-framed veranda on wooden stilts with a glass roof. This creates a stunning entrance and provides a sheltered seating area from which to enjoy views of the garden.

“Covering in the original deck means that it can be used all year round, and is a great addition,” says Sarah. “In some ways I wish we'd built this at the start because it's such a useful space, which everyone loves.”

In detail

PROJECT

Designer Jess Clark, Unique Home Stays: 01637 881183
Planning and development advisor Peter Wonnacott: 01288 352047
Builder Davey Construction: daveyconstruction.co.uk

STRUCTURE

Timber, glazed connecting sunburst door, various reclaimed items Kernow Coppice: 01841 532141
Double glazed timber windows

Sundance is available for holiday rentals with Unique Home Stays: 01637 881183; uniquehomestays.com

JJ Smith and Co Joinery: jsmith-joinery.com

Galvanised steel Mole Valley Farmers: molevalleyfarmers.com

FIXTURES AND FITTINGS

Sofa sofa.com
Throws, rugs, cushions Nkuku: nkunku.com
Music system Sonos: sonos.com
Wagon wheel Kernow Coppice: 01841 532141
Reclaimed radiators Timbertrack Architectural
Salvage: 01726 861119



“We wanted the garden to be as natural as possible, and in the spring it looks gorgeous. Later, Andy built a deck and excavated a wildlife pond.”



BEFORE

The shepherd's hut was originally built as a garden building and purchased by Sarah. The roof was badly damaged during the move.

THE FLOORPLAN

The original wagon contains an open-plan living/dining/kitchen and has been extended to one side with a bedroom, bathroom and utility room. To the other side a new enclosed veranda was constructed beneath a glass roof. basement level.

Mains services were brought from the neighbouring cottage to Sundance which has an electric cooker, dishwasher and fridge. The building is warmed by central heating and a log-burner, and has a utility room with a freezer and washer-dryer.

“Working with a small space meant that we needed to plan carefully to fit everything in,” Sarah explains. “There was already a tiny kitchen in the shepherd's hut, so we extended this and then painted all the cabinets dark grey. There's a handmade barn-style pocket door between the bedroom and bathroom, which slides into the wall and saves space. Certainly nothing feels cramped inside and the ceilings are all lovely and high.”

After initially toying with the idea of commissioning a spiral-shaped shower, it was decided to install a more space-saving rectangular enclosure instead. This was manufactured in painted steel by a local metal



fabricator to precise dimensions and is suspended from the ceiling above a bespoke concrete shower base.

An old roll top bath, positioned beneath the window, was re-enamelled and teamed with reclaimed floor-mounted taps, and other sanitary ware was also reclaimed for the spacious wet room.

Everywhere the American Western theme is in evidence, with a wagon wheel displayed in the sitting room and Sarah's grandmother's saddle wall-mounted in the bedroom.

"I do love interiors, and I think being so involved with such beautiful homes on a daily basis rubs off on you. I've been known to idle away many an hour at a local reclamation yard looking for the perfect piece I didn't know I needed," laughs Sarah, who was also very much hands-on when it came to developing the site to create a beautiful setting for the property.

The wildflower gardens surrounding Sundance burst with ornamental grasses, pink foxgloves and rockery succulents, and French doors lead out onto an enclosed sun trap patio, offering views over the orchard and across rolling Cornish countryside towards the coast at Watergate Bay.

"We wanted the garden to be as natural as possible, and in the spring it looks gorgeous," says Sarah. "Later, Andy built a deck and excavated a wildlife pond, with oak steps leading down into the water for swimming. This year we added a pergola with hanging lights, and the setting is really magical. It's a very calming and relaxing place to be."

BATHROOM

The spacious wet room contains a reclaimed roll top bath and a double walk-in shower with a concrete base and bespoke glass enclosure.



LIVING SPACE

A log-burner in the main living area had been installed by the previous owner and serves to back up the new oil-fired central heating system.



SARAH'S TOP TIPS FOR CREATING A HOLIDAY PROPERTY

- 1** Buy close to – not in – popular areas, as you'll get much more for your money a stone's throw away rather than in prime places.
- 2** Consider facilities at the property and close by. It's nice not to have to use the car.
- 3** Follow your heart. If you think 'wow' then the property is sure to have the same effect on others.
- 4** Be bold with the style you choose. A standout property will generate more interest in terms of bookings and press interest.
- 5** Bolthole properties accommodating just two guests will generate year-round bookings as well as being more cost-effective – from annual updates to weekly cleaning costs – and childless couples have a lot more disposable income!
- 6** Think of the property as your personal retreat and furnish it as such, even if you don't end up spending much time there. Personalise it with a welcome note and include favourite books on the bookshelf and insider guides to the locality. Guests love to have an inkling as to who the owners are.
- 7** Create an inviting outdoor space where guests can relax throughout their stay – whether to enjoy an afternoon tea, drinks at sundown or late al fresco suppers – remember, you're creating a home from home.
- 8** The devil's in the detail and it's all the little touches that make the stay extra special, from a homemade cake on arrival to soft robes to slip into.
- 9** Keep ahead of the game. Even if you have a property that sells well, recreating/refreshing its look annually will revive interest in your home.



The final word

What was the high point? Creating the garden setting and hunting out finds at reclamation yards has been fun. Choosing things like reclaimed radiators is often just as expensive as buying new, once they've been flushed, sandblasted and painted, but the result is worth the effort.

...and the low point? Losing the original roof in transit was a real shame.

Your best buy? Adding the glass-roofed veranda completely changed the look and feel of the building for the better, giving lovely views. Also, re-enamelling the old roll top bath for around £300 was a good investment.

...and the biggest extravagance? The bespoke double shower and luxuries like a Sonos sound system.

