

outside too. Water comes from a nearby creek and electricity from solar panels. In an effort to preserve energy, Basich adheres to a routine of waking up with the first light of day as the sun rises and retiring for rest as night descends upon the landscape.

The stones laid into the path leading up to the 200-square-foot (18-square-meter) property are evidence of the grueling five-year build—they're carved with messages of goodwill from everyone who chipped in to help. Basich first lived in a teepee on his 40 acres (16 hectares) before beginning construction, to get a feel for weather patterns and the area's distinct personality. "I figured it out as I went," he says. "If I had shown up and started building right away, I would have been out of sync with the land. I wanted to build on the hilltop for the view, but also the wind helps me keep the snow off the roof. The sun keeps me warm with my large south-facing windows, meaning I need less firewood and storage space. I realized the best thing you can do is listen to nature. Up here, nature always wins." To say Area-241 is off the beaten track is an understatement—it's five miles to the local grocery store and ten from the storied railroad town of Truckee. "No one's showing up with a delivery truck out here, so everything took much longer," he says. "I had to hand-mix cement myself, gather water, and move 175 tons (159 tonnes) of rock by hand."

Still, the payback is priceless. "I get to see the stars without smog," he says. "I've learned so much about how we move with the sun. Building off-grid has given me gratitude wherever I go now—it's not often someone stays at your house and thanks you for having hot water. Living here has made me realize how out of balance we are with the Earth." From his vertiginous vantage point, Basich can see a storm rolling in miles away, alerting him to imminent snowfall and another chance to snowboard directly from his front door. If that sounds tempting, Basich has some advice for anyone looking to build their own off-grid aerie: "Don't think too hard," he says. "I see people all the time overthinking whether they can do it or not. I fail every day. It's the best way to learn. And tomorrow's a new day."



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