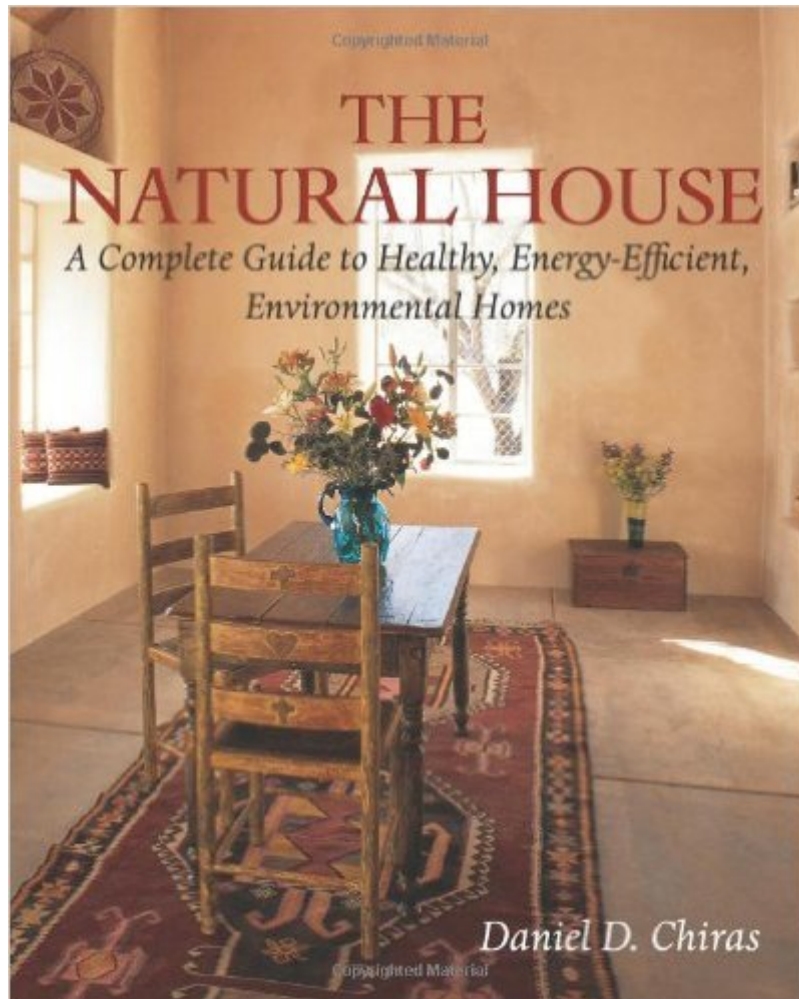


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# The Natural House: A Complete Guide To Healthy, Energy-Efficient, Environmental Homes



## Synopsis

The Natural House is a tour of the construction, costs, and pros and cons of fourteen natural building methods. Straw Bale, Rammed Earth, Cob, Cordwood, Adobe, Earthbags, Papercrete, Earthshipsâ |whatever the method, the common goal is to create a house that is economical, energy efficient, nontoxic, soothing to the soul, kind to the environment, and pleasing to behold. This comprehensive sourcebook offers in-depth information that will guide your search for the perfect sustainable dream home. It is a must for home builders, contractors, and architects. Author Dan Chiras shows how you can gain energy independence and reduce your environmental impact through passive solar heating and cooling techniques, solar electricity, wind power, and micro-hydropower. He also explains safe, economical ways to obtain clean drinking water and treat wastewater, and discusses affordable green products. While he's an unabashed advocate of natural building techniques, Chiras takes care not to romanticize and to alert readers to avoidable pitfalls. His detailed, practical, and ecologically sound advice can save tens of thousands of dollars, whether you are buying, building, or renovating a natural home.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

If you're interested in building a natural home (cob, rammed earth, straw-bale, earthship, whatever), this is your primer. The author has done his homework and presents the description, pros/cons and pitfalls of each type of construction. He is very honest about just how "do-it-yourself" each type can be, and how much it will cost you. He also covers passive and active solar design, natural water

capture and other alternative technologies to go with your natural home. This is an excellent overview on all these subjects. The best thing about this book is that he refers you to other sources for more detail - books, videos, newsletters and organizations that will support you, give you a workshop or just give you more detailed information than belonged in this primer book. I highly recommend this as the first book you read on the subject. Once you know which type of house you are interested in, you can pick up some of the other books he suggests on that building type.

Being an architect already, I found that the book was an excellent introduction, even for me, to the various alternative building techniques emerging. It gave the author's honest opinion about many of the techniques, which was very appreciated. Don't expect it to be a precise how-to guide for any of the methods. It is an excellent overview, though, that can help you evaluate which building techniques you would like to explore further. The references at the end are vast and helpful. However, I found that for a book about the "Natural House", it often suggested many un-green building materials (OSB, polypropylene bags). Sometimes their "ungreenness" was mentioned, sometimes not.

Dan Chiras has done a number of things I really like in this book. The first part of his book provides a chapter on each of several natural building technologies with enough information to help novice readers understand what is involved. Moreover, he adds a pro and con table at the end of each to help readers compare and contrast them - and to make a decision about which is best for their particular situation. Chiras also provides an ample helping of "food for thought" material to help potential natural builders understand the "why" of their prospective natural building projects, an essential process for anyone who is contemplating an out of the ordinary building project. Chiras serves his readers well by acting as a "fair broker" of natural building as a concept as well as each of the technologies he presents. This allowing his readers to make their own informed judgements about which natural building method, if any, they will use. Chiras additionally provides numerous references so that readers can find more detailed material for further research and project planning. I would strongly recommend this book to anyone who is in the process of considering or planning construction of a natural home, especially to those who are not already familiar with conventional construction materials and methods and at least reasonably familiar with natural construction alternatives. It's easily worth the price.

An indispensable guide to natural building and sustainable systems. This book discusses 14 natural

building techniques, helping readers understand the pros and cons of each one. It also covers an assortment of topics that will help you create truly sustainable shelter, including green building materials and alternative systems to provide energy, water, and waste treatment. The up-to-date, comprehensive resource guide at the end of the book is worth the price of the book itself! It also contains a listing of the author's Web site with a comprehensive list of workshops and links to other useful sites. You'd need to read 40 books on natural building and a roomful of builders to acquire the information you find in *The Natural House*.

After reading *The Natural House*, I not only regretted not having been able to have drawn on its extensive resources during the (just finished) construction of my own house (a passive solar straw bale in VT) but actually got enticed to think about a new building project (yes it was more work, took longer and cost more than planned!) but with the help, ideas and guidelines Dan Chiras provides, I feel refreshed enough to tackle the next project (maybe an earthbag foundation with a light-clay wall). Appetizing and compelling, informative and inspiring. Well done.

My husband and I are building a new house and we were looking for a good resource for information about eco-friendly options for our home. This turned out to be an excellent resource, but a little outdated. There have been so many advances in various eco-friendly technology since this book was written and it would be great if Daniel Chiras would update this book to show that. However, this book did provide us with the basic information we needed to make most of the decisions for our house. I would definitely recommend it to anyone wanting to build green or do a green remodel to their house. In addition to this, I would recommend getting a subscription to *Smart Homeowner Magazine* and/or *Mother Earth*, both of which will provide you with the latest in green products and technology, along with a lot of other valuable information. They make a great update to *The Natural House*.

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