

## The Cost of Straw Bale Construction

I have received a lot of messages in recent days asking about the cost of straw bale construction.

The basic question is: what does it cost per square foot to build a bale home? It is all but impossible for me to answer this question because there are so many factors involved in calculating cost. What region is the home built in? What design features does it have?

Perhaps the most important question is: What kind of interior finishes will be used? Most people don't realize that the real budget killers are things like plumbing fixtures, cabinets, and lighting.

These items can take an inexpensive house over the top quickly.

The actual cost to build a bale house compared to an exact copy in conventional construction is a bit easier to consider. I tell folks to plan on about a 20% increase in price. This is because the labor to install the bale walls is quite high and the other trades like electricians are impacted by the bales as well. Consider that you will likely see an energy savings of about 75% over a conventional home for the life of the home. This savings more than makes up for the higher initial cost of construction.

### About the Author

*Andrew Morison is a specialist in straw bale and green construction. He has shown thousands of people how to build their own straw bale projects through his comprehensive series of instructional straw bale, concrete foundation, and plastering DVDs. You can check these out at [www.LearnStrawBale.com](http://www.LearnStrawBale.com).*

## **The Greenest Dollar**

Save Money. Save the Environment. Be Happy.

### **Building A Straw Bale Home**

Take a look at the picture on the right. It looks like a cozy, Spanish-inspired home that you'd enjoy spending time in right?



*Photo courtesy of [StrawBale.com](http://StrawBale.com)*

Sure it does. And you'd probably never guess that it's made out of straw.

## **Straw Bale Homes**

Many people have never even heard of straw bale homes, but building with straw is actually one of the oldest ways to construct a house. Straw bale homes built by early pioneers out west are still standing today, which just goes to show how strong they are.

## **The Benefits of Living In A Straw Bale House**

There are tons of benefits to living in a straw bale house.

### **1. Energy Efficient**

Andrew Morrison is a straw bale home builder; he also runs [StrawBale.com](http://StrawBale.com), a comprehensive resource on how to build straw bale homes. According to him, straw bale homes use 75% less energy than traditional homes. The reason is because the densely-packed straw bales are natural insulators. They keep indoor temperatures very stable, and very little energy is needed to heat or cool the inside

### **2. Sound Proof**

Think about it: in a straw bale home, your walls are not filled with fluffy insulation; they're filled with hard packed straw bales. Thick walls= no noise.

Straw bale homes are very, very quiet. If you live by an airport, highway, or close to town, a straw bale home will shield you from all that noise.

### **3. Fireproof**

Ok, this might be met with skepticism by some of you. It's straw right? Wouldn't these homes go up in seconds?

The answer is: no. Andrew Morrison says that it would be like trying to burn a phone book; even though paper is flammable there's no oxygen in between the pages, which makes it almost impossible to burn. Well, the same thing is true in straw bale construction. Because the straw bales are sealed so tightly inside, they're very difficult to burn. Andrew says that straw bale homes have three times the fire resistance of traditional homes.

Case in point: one of his client's homes was exposed to a wildfire outside of Los Angeles. Although the surrounding vegetation was burned, the straw bale home escaped practically unscathed.

### **4. Environmentally-Friendly**

Believe it or not, but straw is considered a waste product. Each year, [200 million tons of straw is burned](#), which puts tons of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere.

By using this "waste product" to build your home, you're reusing something that would otherwise get destroyed. Plus, you're using fewer energy and resources than you would if you built a traditional home.

### **5. Healthy**

Using straw bale means that you don't have to use fiberglass, which has formaldehyde, a known carcinogen (see my post "[Purify Your Indoor Air On A Budget](#)" for more information on this). It also means you don't have to use plywood. The glue that's used to hold plywood together off-gases into homes for years.

### **6. Beautiful**

To put it simply, straw bale homes are beautiful. Because of the small bales, homes can include soothing, curved designs, nooks and crannies, and cozy window seats that aren't often found in traditional homes. They're truly remarkable and soothing to live in.

For people looking for a "green home", straw bale construction is a great choice. They're energy efficient, low impact, and incredibly inexpensive to live in.