

# Lunar lander tiny house architect is having a blast on the Columbia River

By JANET EASTMAN  
*The Oregonian*

Naval architect Kurt Hughes has been building nerdy stuff since he was in high school, but his latest, greatest project has taken off: A 250-square-foot tiny house on the Columbia River in Eastern Washington he designed and built somewhat as a replica of NASA's lunar module spacecraft.

Elevated on steel legs, the Lunar Lander Dwelling has porthole windows, rescued from boats, and custom triangle windows, inspired by those seen 50 years ago during the first moon landing. Glass openings frame river and mountain views. Topping the compact home is a steel geodesic dome with clear panels in which to see the stars.

Hughes is a catamaran designer in Seattle who uses this futuristic getaway to relax. But don't think it's cartoony or crude: The aesthetics are out of this world.

A breakfast nook has a parquet wooden table from the first boat Hughes built and starship sleek bench seats in which to peer out of the planet-shaped glass. Hughes calls this his "Captain Nemo window," a nod to one of his favorite childhood books, Jules Verne's "Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea."

The tiny house is a smooth blend of seafaring practicality and retro Space-Age cool with eco-friendly features that could guide us into the future.

Some of the dwelling's environmental features: Its small size, use of repurposed materials, energy-saving extra insulation, ductless heat pump, on-demand water heater and LED lights. If that weren't enough, there's a photovoltaic panel above the outdoor deck. Heating bills are \$25 a month in the winter.

The mighty, tiny house was made of structural insulated panel (SIP), high-grade plywood and Foamular structural foam, and bonded by fiberglass with the strength of steel and sealed in epoxy. "There's no mold or moisture intrusion," Hughes said.

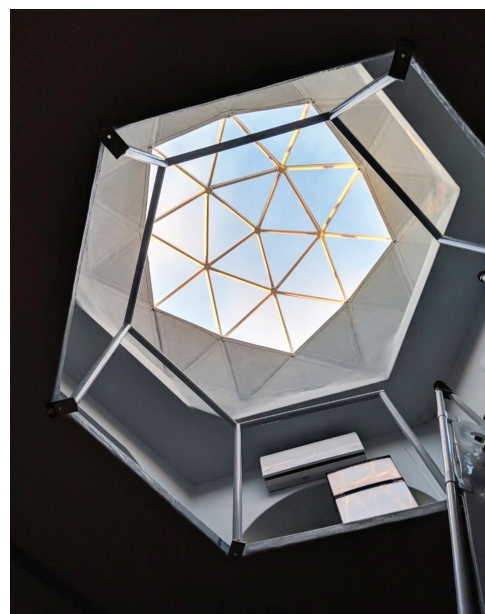
Hughes spent weekends, over a six-year period, building the house in parts, then driving the pieces in his truck to the riverfront property he bought in 2003.

Weighing about 2,500 pounds, the bitty abode was once lifted by a mini tornado and blasted 130 feet away. Hughes' neighbor tethered it to a forklift to keep it from becoming airborne again.

The house has also withstood forceful



**LEFT:** Naval architect Kurt Hughes has been building nerdy stuff since he was in high school, but his latest, greatest project has taken off: A 250-square-foot tiny house on the Columbia River in Eastern Washington he designed and built as a replica of a lunar lander. **RIGHT:** The house has all the comforts of home: An all-electric galley kitchen, bathroom with a sink, toilet and shower and, reached by descending a 7-foot-long steel ladder, a queen-size bed plus storage bins. On top is a see-through geodesic dome.



Photos by Kurt Hughes



**LEFT:** A breakfast nook has a parquet wooden table from the first boat Hughes built and sleek bench seats in which to peer out of the planet-shaped glass that Hughes calls his 'Captain Nemo window,' a nod to one of his favorite childhood books, Jules Verne's 'Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea.' **RIGHT:** Elevated on steel legs, the Lunar Lander Dwelling has porthole windows, rescued from boats, and custom triangle windows, inspired by those seen 50 years ago during the first moon landing. All glass openings frame river and mountain views. Topping the tiny house is a steel geodesic dome with clear panels in which to see the stars.



winds — it can take on more than 100 m.p.h. gusts — a wildfire last summer that burned the land but didn't scorch the self-extinguishing epoxy-covered walls as well as attention from tiny house fans and sci-fi geeks all over the world.

Hughes welcomes visitors to the site at

18374 Shore Dr. in Beverly, Washington, off Highway 243. If he's not there, he's posted a QR code that links to his The Mars Outpost website and the construction blog [lunarlanderdwelling.tumblr.com](http://lunarlanderdwelling.tumblr.com). Easier: Just Google [lunarlanderdwelling](http://lunarlanderdwelling).

Tiny House Giant Journey's video tour

of the "spaceship home" has been viewed almost 90,000 times.

The make-believe moon lander has all the comforts of home: An all-electric galley kitchen, bathroom with a sink, toilet and shower, and, reached by descending a 7-foot-long steel ladder, a queen-size bed plus storage bins.

Biggest cool factor: Apollo astronauts trained about 25 miles from here, which is near Hughes' childhood home.

Hughes, who says he's "picky" and wanted to create a tiny house that was "mind-blowing, or why bother," has met with developers who dream about building a tract of Lunar Lander Dwellings in the desert or along the Columbia River. "Who knows? We'll see," he said.

Hughes designed his suspended structure to rest on any terrain — the legs are adjustable — or even float. After all, his intention was to use advanced boatbuilding methods to create a home.

Wherever the lookalike Lunar Lander Dwellings land, let's hope they have glowing floors (made when glow powder was mixed into the epoxy), which Hughes likens to the Milky Way, and a rugged landscape illuminated by glow-in-the-dark pebbles that Hughes says creates the look of a "star field."

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