

off the grid

Opening Statement

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At James and Sara Davis's weekend home on O'ahu, double-height doors open to a lanai-like space at the center of the house. The home's energy needs are met via solar panels set by the entry.



Massive sliding doors connect a Hawaii home to its mountainside surroundings.



O'ahu's North Shore is known for its epic surf, but it wasn't the big waves that drew Sara and James Davis. It was a mountain—specifically Mount Ka'ala, the island's highest peak. The couple and their three children, who live an hour away in Honolulu, dreamed of a getaway in the area's quiet interior. "We're nature people," James explains. "We love to be out on hiking trails, mountain biking, or under the shade of mango trees."

Here, on a 2.5-acre property shaded by 100-year-old banyan trees, Sara, a doctor, and James, who works in real estate development and management, have created an off-grid family retreat where weekends are all about fresh air and living simply. They'd envisioned a modern, 600-square-foot cabin with high ceilings, a loft for the kids, and room for guests. Then, through a friend of Sara's, they met architect Bundit Kanisthakhon, a principal at Tadpole Studio and an assistant professor at the University of Hawai'i, who helped them realize even more.

Kanisthakhon answered their desire for indoor/outdoor living by designing an airy, rectangular volume with a nearly wraparound deck and a double-height living/dining room at its center that opens on two sides—a play on the traditional Hawaiian lanai. (Barn doors slide closed when the Davises aren't in residence and keep out animals and insects.) There is a bedroom on each end, while a ladder leads from the main living space to a loft that's both a play area and guest quarters. The angled roof frames dramatic views of Mount Ka'ala.

Getting materials to the site was no small task. The road to the property crosses a river that is often impassable in winter. But with design-build consultant John Henderson on hand as project manager, the house was framed quickly. Henderson's practical suggestions, like using the same corrugated metal the roof is made out of for the large barn doors, eased construction difficulties. Further assistance came from Kanisthakhon, >

“The roofline is angled so that the clients can wake up in the morning and see Mount Ka'ala.”

BUNDIT KANISTHAKHON, ARCHITECT



The couple incorporated wood-and-glass sliding doors from ETO (top) left over from a home they'd remodeled previously. The dining area (left) is furnished with Indonesian hardwood pieces from Bali Aga and lit by solar lanterns from Goal Zero. The floors are by Trex. "The whole interior can be washed down with a hose," says James, who made the ladder that leads to the loft.

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Sara works in the kitchen, which contains a propane cooktop from Wolf and a propane refrigerator by Dometic. The louvered windows are from the Glass Guru.

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The home's architect, Bundit Kanisthakhon, set the structure above ground as a precaution against flooding. At the Davises' request, he ensured that the house can be disassembled for easy relocation.



who specified plywood and metal sheeting in standard sizes that could be transported and put into place without big trucks or heavy equipment. “Since a lot of the materials are imported, we wanted to make sure there was no waste, or as little as possible,” Kanisthakhon says.

Though the modest cabin they’d first conceived of expanded to 925 square feet, not including the decks, the Davises retained their goal of living off the grid. There’s a propane refrigerator and cooktop, and two 100-watt solar panels provide electricity. A well and a 1,500-gallon cistern keep the home supplied with water.

When cloudy days mean no power, the family takes it in stride. “You’re back in the Laura Ingalls Wilder days of carrying your bucket out to the tank and filling it up so you can do the dishes,” says James. “At night we’ll take our lanterns outside and make a campfire. You see the stars much more clearly, and you just have that camping sort of feel.” ■

• Camp Davis



ARCHITECT **Tadpole Studio**
LOCATION **Haleiwa, Hawaii**

