

Home!

California? No, Surrey!

Who needs a traditional stone cottage in the country when you can have a modernist four-bed just an hour outside London?

REPORT

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PHOTOGRAPHS

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Clockwise from this image: polished plaster wall; exterior of the house in its 5-acre plot; the indoor pool with graphita tiles and back wall that opens onto the garden





Many dream of waking up to birdsong in a country bolt hole. For Katarina Ericsson and her husband, Frédéric Laurent, that dream became a reality. They just never imagined that it might be in commuter-belt Farnham of all places.

"In my head," explains Ericsson, "I had this idea of a traditional country cottage in classic Cotswold stone, but when we were shown this house four years ago on a cold, sleety January day, with no heating and no electricity, we fell in love with it straightaway. Its large windows and open-plan layout meant that it was full of light even when it was so miserable outside."

Growing up in Sweden, Ericsson had always hankered after more outdoor space, especially once her two daughters came along. "I wanted a trampoline in the garden and for the girls to be able to run about outdoors." The family travel to Surrey from London every weekend and live there during the summer holidays, when Laurent, a partner in a private equity fund, and Ericsson, CEO and creative director of Tricouni, a heritage label specialising in luxury outerwear made from high-tech fabrics, commute to the capital. The fact that London is only an hour's train journey away also means they can invite friends to lunch and Ericsson is not required to be a weekend-long hostess.

The modernist, four-bedroom house is perched on a small hill in the middle of a five-acre plot, with no buildings as far as the eye can see. It was designed by Archplan, a north London architecture practice run by a husband and wife who had lived there before selling up. Structurally, there was little to be done, although Ericsson and Laurent have



The dining area in the open-plan kitchen. Top left: Katarina Ericsson