

Introduction to Load-Bearing Straw Bale Building & Earth Plasters

Join me for this 5 1/2-day course ***Introduction to Load-Bearing Straw Bale Construcción and Clay Plasters***; this Course/Workshop is being held in Palafrugell, just 10 minutes (by car) from the beaches of the Costa Brava in the Province of Gerona, Catalunya, Spain!

You will learn to raise load-bearing straw bale walls, and all the carpentry details necessary for this. You will also learn how to make Earthen Plasters from scratch and apply them to the walls. All this, while enjoying the food and sun of the Costa Brava, and learning to work as team with the rest of the international students.



The workshop is being held in [L'Horta de La Viola](#) – and organic vegetable farm and home to two straw bale buildings (one a [small vault](#) and the other a [two-storey, 200m2 farm](#) and home). So at the same time you are learning, you can see some finished structures...

In this course we will use a “kit” to build a 3m x 3m load-bearing building, which will be taken apart after the course. This is beneficial, because there will be no pressure to “build more.” We can take time to answer questions and learn the Why behind each technique we learn... not only How. This allows you to better understand what you are doing, and will permit you to improvise when building your own home- not just follow the steps blindly.

The teacher of this course, Rikki Nitzkin, been working with Straw since 2002 and teaching straw bale building and clay plastering since 2006. She has taught over 50 courses and participated in the building of over a dozen structures. She is the co-author (together with Maren Termens- the owner of the Horta de la Viola) of a Spanish Language Strawbale Building Book ([Casas de Paja: una guía para autoconstructores](#)) and is the coordinator of the [Spanish Strawbale Network](#) . You couldn't be in better hands! She was born and grew up in the US, although she has been residing in Spain for over 20 years, so here english is fluent.

Camping and all meals are included in the full price.

All the information at: www.tallerconco.org/en

At a Glance: general information

When: 10-15 July 2017

- arrivals on Monday the 10th
- workshop starts at 15:00, on Monday 10th of July.
- We may have an afternoon off to visit the local area and beaches mid-week.
- Workshop finishes Saturday Evening (to be followed by a party!)
- departures are expected after breakfast on Sunday the 16th.
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Where:

L'Horta de La Viola (Palafrugell, Gerona): [map](#), [web](#)

What:

In this 5 1/2 day course I hope to teach you everything you need to know about how to manipulate bales and place them in load-bearing walls, and the carpentry needed for raising them. You will also become comfortable with how to mix earthen plasters from scratch and apply them to Straw Bale walls.

We will also learn to how to work as team: listening, sharing, taking care of each other. Please bring instruments, games, ideas, photos of stuff you've done... we will make time for getting to know each other.

Who (the course is for):

- People who want to participate in the building of their homes, or be self-builders.
- Technicians and professionals who wish to broaden their knowledge about some of the most popular eco-building techniques in Europe.
- any person (from the building sector or not) who is interested and wants to learn!
- No previous building knowledge necessary.

What (goals):

- Learn everything you need to know to build load-bearing straw bale walls and plaster them with clay.
- Learn what you need to know to adapt the rest of the build (foundations, roofs, etc.) to straw bales.
- Gain enough confidence to enter the adventure of building from an intelligent and realistic viewpoint.
- Share the experience of working in a team and learn tricks to make this go smoothly.
- Meet other people with the same concerns as you (living and building more ecologically and coherently).
- Learn to view the path of creating a home as living apprenticeship... not just a building.
- Empower yourself by learning to meet your own needs and do things you weren't sure you were capable of (before).

How (practice and theory):

Work times: approximately 40 hours of learning, doing, and sharing.

- about 5 hours of practical work a day
- 1-2 hour theoretical talks each day

Workshop /Course Program content:

Hands on Practice: about 32 hours

1. The Straw Bale

- what makes a good building bale?
- How to measure and manipulate bales

2. Load-Bearing Straw Bale walls:

- carpentry for Loadbearing walls
- wall-raising
- wall-straitening
- wall plates
- compression of walls

3. Preparing for plastering:

- shaving the bales
- filling in the gaps
- preparing the joints between wood and straw

4. Earthen Plasters:

- preparing the ingredients
- how to get the right proportions for a mix with natural ingredients (clay earth, sand, straw)
- making the different types of earthen plaster we need

5. Plastering with Earth:

- priming the walls (layer 1)
- filling in the gaps with straw-clay
- body coat (layer 2)

6. Decorations:

- sculptural relief
- shelves integrated in the walls

Theoretical Content:

- Introduction to Straw bale building: history, building styles, examples
- Before building: how to prepare the building site, design issues.
- Foundations and stem-walls: cement-free options
- Load-bearing Straw Bale Walls: things to remember, design details
- Roofs, Plumbing and Electricity: what you need to know
- Clay Plasters part 1.

Food, Lodging & transportation:

Food:

- ovo-lacto vegetarian. Mostly organic. Includes breakfast, mid-morning snack, lunch and dinner. Consult if you have any special needs.
- All meals from Monday the 10th dinner until Sunday the 16th breakfast are included in the cost.
- **No public kitchen available.**

Lodging:

- **Camping:** free. You must bring your own camping gear. Compost toilet.
- **Other options:** local hostels/hotels. You must provide your own transportation to and from the lodgings.

Transportation:

- Gerona Airport + bus to Palafrugell
- Barcelona Airport + bus to Palafrugell
- pickup at Gerona Airport (45 min. drive to farm) = 40€/person (2 people = 20€/person, 3+ people = 15€/person).
- Pickup at Palafrugell bus station = Free

How to get to Palafrugell by bus:

http://compras.moventis.es/PAGINAS/RESULTADOS_TRAYECTOS.PHP

Very recommended: rent or bring a car! L'Horta is about 10-15 min. from the beaches by car, but there is not a good public transportation network. If you want to go to the beach (or sleep in town instead of camp) we recommend you to bring or rent a car. Maybe several students can pool together to share one...

Ride Share: I will create an excel sheet with contact information for all the students to share with all participants; I will only put you on the list if you give me permission to do so. All ride-shares will have to be self-organized.

Costs, Discounts & Cancellation:

Full Price: 530€¹

- 210€/person food, camping and use of the installations.
- + 320€ for the course, materials, & digital documentation.
- Some discounts available, See below.

Discounts: not accumulable between each other

1. **50€ off** in early-registration (payment received before 10 June) = **480€**
2. **Volunteer/ Work Grant**²– maximum two per course = 50% off course fee = 135€ + 210€ (food and lodging) = **345€**

CANCELTATION POLICY:

If you cancel your participation: if you cancel 1 month or more before the course starts, TCC will return all but 25€ of your deposit/payment (per person). If you cancel with less than one month's warning, we will retain 100€ of what you have paid. In both cases, the money which is not returned can be recuperated if you sign up for another TCC course within 12 months of the one you canceled.

If Taller Con Co cancels the course: If for some reason TCC is forced to cancel the course, all of the money you have deposited (except transfer fees) will be returned.

1 you have anything to offer in "trade" besides money, ask about possibilities... we need to cover costs, but after that it will be possible to pay part or all of the course with non-monetary options.

2work grant conditions and application: in return for a 50% discount on the regular cost of the course (325€) you will be required to arrive at L'Horta on Saturday the 8th of July, and help Rikki prepare the course all day Sunday, and Monday morning. You will also be expected to help clean up after the workshop on Sunday the 16th of July. You may be asked to do a bit of help preparing demonstrations and some extra cleaning during the workshop.

In the days before and after the workshop the costs of your meals and stay at L'Horta will be covered by Taller Con Co, but during the workshop you will have to pay the full cost of food and lodging (210€), During the course itself you will participate fully- not missing anything.

Only 2 grants are offered in each course. In order to receive one of them, you must right a "motivational letter" to Taller Con Co, explaining why you want and deserve the grant. You have until the 4th of June to turn in your letter, then the winners will be chosen. If after that date there are still grants available, they will be offered on a first-come, first-serve basis.

Registration & Payments:

THERE ARE TWO STEPS TO REGISTER FOR THE COURSE:

1. **You must fill out the registration form: available from the 10th of May on the webpage: www.cursos.tallerconco.org/en**

2. **To confirm your place in the course:**

you must deposit minimum 100€/persona (you can pay the rest beforehand or in cash upon arrival) to confirm your place in the course. The payments can be made in two ways:

1. Bank transfer to the IberCaja Account: IBAN: ES85 2085/ 2308-21-03-300112-14; BIC:CAZRES2Z

or

2. Pay Pal to the account “rikkinitzkin@gmail.com”

- ✓ Don't forget to put your name on the deposit- sometimes my bank does not register the name of who makes it.
- ✓ Just in case... please send me a copy of the deposit slip by email to: tallerconco@gmail.com
- ✓ The day of registration is the day the deposit is made, not when you fill in the form (this applies to discounts for early registration).
- ✓ If two people sign up, you have to deposit 200€

Please read the information about what happens if you cancel your participation in the course before paying.