



# [u•to•pi:a]

18 epic stories of dreams (almost) come true

PHOTOS: CARLO BEVILACQUA

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# Utopia

is a combination of three Greek words; Eu (good), Ou (not), and Topos (place).

Utopia translates as “good no-place”.

It is important to remember that, being Utopia located in a “no-place,” it is virtually impossible to reach it. As American artist Steve Lambert wrote, “the reason we imagine utopias is to provide a point on the compass that orients us on our travels. Without utopia, we’re lost – we are traveling without direction, guessing and hoping that we are moving forward. The purpose of utopia is not a destination, it is to give us a specific direction so we can progress”.

Between the 1960s and the 1980s, men and women from all countries got together in several nations in order to build something – a city, a village, a community or simply a way of life – that would enable them to reach (or at least, get as close as possible to) that route of progress and that unreachable destination. In many cases those efforts paid off, at least temporarily. But those were different times. Today, those communities that have survived face brand new challenges under very different premises.

These are 18 stories that tell how those communities changed, and how close they got to making the original utopia they were founded on come true.

## USA, West Virginia - Greenbank

In the mountains of West Virginia, in the heart of the National Radio Quiet Zone that houses the Green Bank Telescope (the world's largest fully steerable radio telescope), lies a village where any type of electromagnetic emission is banned





## USA, New York - Ithaca Ecovillage

It is a vibrant community built 400kms North-west of New York that includes cohousing neighborhoods, small-scale organic farming, land preservation, green building, the use of alternative energy and a hands-on education program that integrates proven social and environmental alternatives into a living model







## ITALY - Damanhur

Damanhur is an ecovillage and spiritual community founded in Northern Italy in 1975, which has now branches in Europe, America and Japan. It was born under the inspiration of Oberto Airaudi who in 1978, at the age of 24, began building a massive underground temple, keeping it a secret









## CANADA, Vancouver ISLAND - Freedom Cove

On the northwest coast of Vancouver Island, in the sheltered waters of Cypress Bay, half an hour's boat ride from Tofino, Wayne and Catherine have built "The Bower", a giant houseboat painted in green and magenta floating in the middle of the bay





## USA, NEW MEXICO - Earthship

In 1972, Mike Reynolds, a young American visionary and an architect with innovative ideas, built his first zero-impact home in Taos, New Mexico. It was made of a special mixture of mud combined with beer cans, aluminium, tires, glass and other exhausted material: he named it the Thumb House.

From that very specific first experience, a community of friends, colleagues and anyone else who believed in Reynolds' ideas was born. It was called "The Greater World Earthship Eco-sustainable Community"









USA, New Mexico - Earthship

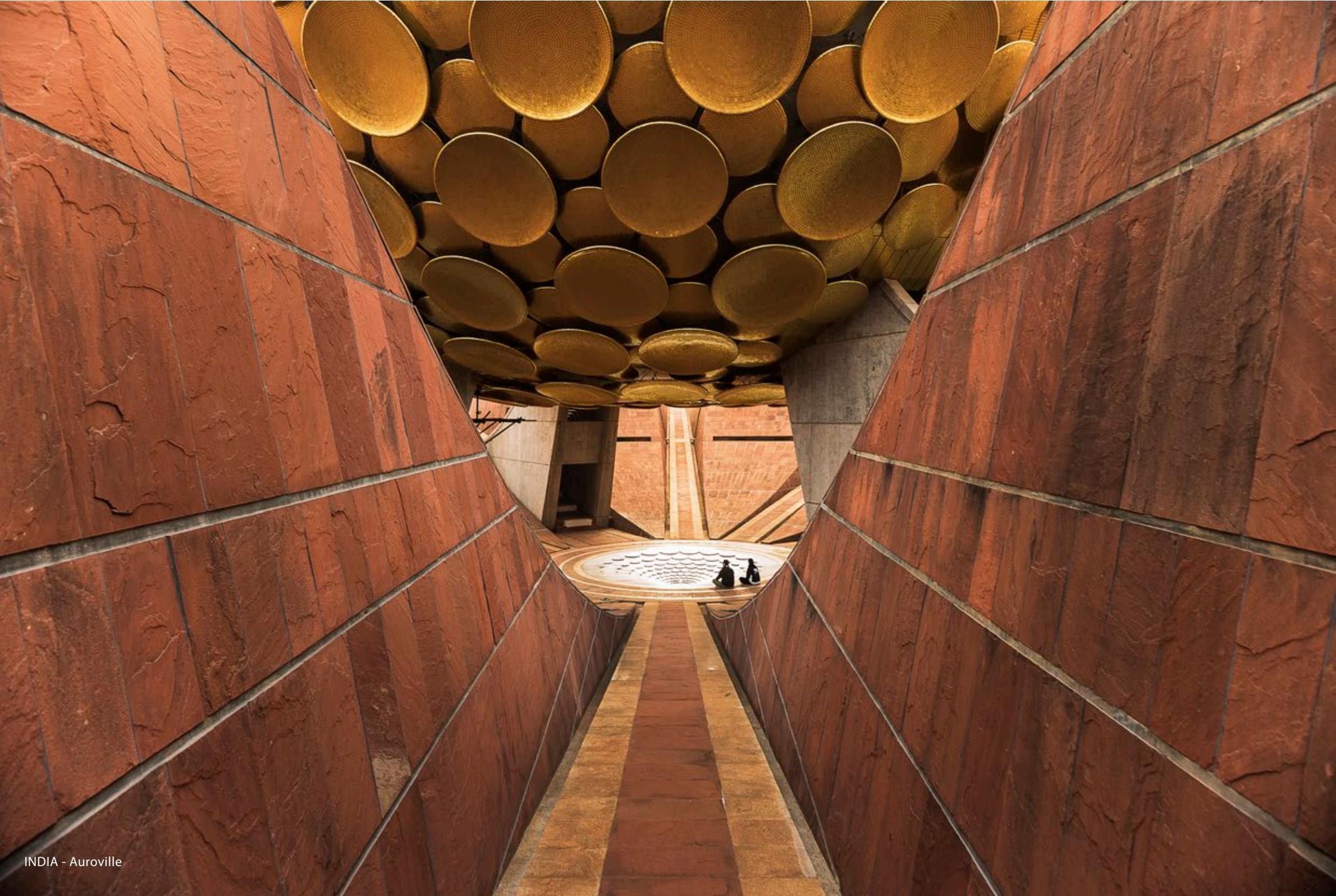


## INDIA - Auroville

Auroville is an experimental township located in the southern Indian state of Tamil Nadu. Founded in 1968 by Mirra Alfassa (also known as "The Mother") and designed by architect Roger Anger,

Auroville is the world's only internationally-recognised centre for research in human unity











## FRANCE - Mandarom

Aumism - a synthesis of a number of religions, with Buddhism at the core - is a minor religion founded by Gilbert Bourdin (1924-1998), also known as Hamsah Manarah, who proclaimed himself Cosmoplanetary Messiah of Synthesis.

Centered on the "holy city" of Mandarom Shambhasalem, some 50 km from Cannes in the French Alps, Aumism counts approximately 400 members



RELIGIONS DISPARUES

MAZDEÏSME

SHINTOÏSME

HINDOUÏSME

ISME UNITE DES RELIGIONS



## USA, Tennessee - The Farm

In 1971, a convoy of 60 school buses, trucks, RV's, cars and other vehicles with more than 300 hippies from San Francisco, came to an abandoned farm in the heart of Tennessee. They had a mission: to follow a peaceful and spiritual path, and help make the world a better place.

In 1990 they went back to social awareness based on the development of the Ecovillage Training Center, that offers today an educational service in new technologies such as solar energy, biofuels, and building techniques with local environment-friendly materials









## SPAIN - Marinaleda

Marinaleda is a Spanish town and municipio in the Andalusian province of Seville. The town is a self-identified social-democratic and cooperative municipality of 2,700 people, based on the socialist utopia and a collectivist economy under mayor Juan Manuel Sánchez Gordillo





EL HUMOSO

TIERRA  
UTOPIA

E



## USA, VIRGINIA - YOGAVILLE

A spiritual centre set in a natural park in rural Virginia. It was founded by SRI Swami Satchidananda, whose fame spread rapidly in the Western world thanks to his participation in the Woodstock rock festival







## USA, ARIZONA - ARCOSANTI

The project started in the 70's as a shared construction site with the participation in different years of more than 7,000 volunteers.

The various buildings and public spaces built to date, in which people live, work, and participate in educational and cultural programs, are only a small section of the original project that continues to move forward thanks to the effort of many men and women who come to Arcosanti







## USA, New Mexico - Eliphante

Eliphante is a kaleidoscopic sculptural village, built near Cornville, Arizona, by artist Michael Kahn and his wife Leda Livant over 28 years, from 1979 until shortly before Kahn's death in 2007









## LITHUANIA - Užupis Republic

Užupis is a neighborhood in Vilnius, the capital of Lithuania. The name means "the other side of the river". The district has been popular with artists since Soviet times, and, due to its bohemian atmosphere, has been compared to Montmartre in Paris and to Christiania in Copenhagen.

On April 1st, 1997, the district declared itself an independent republic, with the official name of Republic of Užupis





## SPAIN - Can Masdeu

Can Masdeu is a social centre, residence and community garden on the outskirts of Barcelona, hosted in a former hospital occupied by an international group of activists in December 2001









## ITALY - Elves of Tuscany

Since the 1980s, the mountains near Pistoia, in Italy, host possibly one of the most peculiar eco-communities: the people of the Elves. At present there are over 15 self-sufficiency nucleuses, some up to an hour's walk apart. The majority of homes have no electricity





## DENMARK - Christiania

The Free City of Christiania was founded in 1971 by a group of hippies who occupied the buildings of an abandoned Navy base in the heart of Copenhagen to live as a community.

Almost 50 years after its creation Christiania, Europe's largest social experiment and stronghold of alternative culture, is now facing new challenges, that have no longer to do with politics, but with society and identity









## USA, Virginia - Twin Oaks

Twin Oaks is an egalitarian, income-sharing community and ecovillage in central Virginia.

Founded in 1967, it is one of the longest-enduring and largest communities in the USA. Approximately 100 people live together following a "clever poverty" lifestyle, in houses which they built themselves on 450 acres of land









## FRANCE - Vieille Valette

Created in 1991 in the French department of Gard, the Vieille Valette is a collective of a dozen residents who carry out a project of social, economic and ecological experimentation.

The base is a dozen stone houses built on ancient terraces, and decorated with castle-like turrets, gargoyles and an arch with stone dragons, goddesses and the motto "Neither God Nor Master"



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PARALLELOZERO, VIA DONATELLO 19/A MILAN - INFO@PARALLELOZERO.COM - WWW.PARALLELOZERO.COM - +39 02 89281630