

Accommodation

When you first arrive here there are good short-term options for accommodation.

Accommodation London, based in Willesden Green and Queens Park, let studio flats out by the day, week and month. They offer Martin Ward Anderson candidates their first night free when booking in for a week www.accommodationlondon.net

Foxtons have high street offices across the capital with letting and buying services www.foxtons.co.uk. For further details about this bespoke service you can download a Foxtons area guide at www.martinwardanderson/accomodation.com

There is a plethora of accommodation options in the UK:

Share house Living
Letting a studio flat

Letting a one bedroom flat
Letting a whole house – either to share with friends or family

Prices for accommodation vary greatly. Flats can also vary greatly in terms of quality, ranging from shocking to luxurious. To some extent, the quality of a flat depends on its location. Some areas have higher standards than others. Similarly, there are differences between areas in terms of what kind of people live there and what shops are available locally. To get a really good feel for an area including appropriate accommodation costs visit www.upmystreet.com

Share House Living

This is the most common option for travellers living in London. You can either take a vacant room within an existing house or get a group of friends or like-minded professional travellers together and find a vacant house. Depending on the location, size of room and size of house being rented, sharing individuals can pay anywhere between £50.00 - £250.00 per week.

Popular areas for antipodean / international residents include;

North
Camden
Ealing
Islington
Willesden

South
Battersea
Clapham
Southfields

West
Acton
Barons Court
Earls Court
Fulham
Shepard's Bush

East
Mile End
Shoreditch
Stratford
Whitechapel

Good websites and sources to look for share house living include:

www.thegumtree.com
www.tntmag.co.uk
www.aussieinlondon.com
www.moveflat.com

www.loot.com
www.intolondon.com
www.easyroommate.com
www.flatshare.com

Letting a studio flat

A studio flat is essentially a large one-person room where the bedroom, lounge and kitchen form one single space. Studio flats should be fully self-contained there should be no shared facilities with a studio flat and you should have your own lockable entrance door. It is possible to let studios for short, mid and long-term periods.

Short term refers to any flexible stay longer than one week. Mid term is usually 3-6 months and long term is for 6 months to one year. The shorter the stay the more expensive it is and more flexible, as longer stays have contracts and notice periods to be aware of.

Letting a one bedroom flat

A step up from a studio flat is the one-bedroom flat, which normally suits one or two persons. It is usually part of an apartment block or a converted house, with a separate bedroom, lounge, kitchen and bathroom. There are also a variety of two, three and four bedroom flats available.

Letting a large flat or house

If you have a group of friends or a family renting a whole house or large apartment could be the way forward. In this case you are most likely going to have to sign a minimum lease of 6 months where you will have to go through a credit checking process. Because of this it helps if you have bought copies of bank statements showing steady payments of rent, previous rental agreements and landlord references from home with you.

Viewing flats / houses

If it's possible, try to go to a property viewing with someone else even if it's just you renting. As an extra precaution, particularly if you're renting from a private landlord rather than a letting agency, tell a third party where and when you're meeting, and when you expect to be home.

When viewing a flat in a new area take note of the following features:

Local Vibe: Try and show up slightly early to allow yourself a look around and feel for the neighbourhood, and of the exterior of the property itself.

Safety: Is the general area well lit? Does it look like a well-populated and safe environment or would you feel isolated and vulnerable?

Local Amenities: How close is your nearest shop, park, bus stop, cash-point, garage etc, and, where relevant, are their opening times suitable?

Parking: If you're a driver, how easy is it to park in the area? Are you likely to have to park far from your front door? Is it a safe place to leave a car?

Public Transport: How far is the nearest stop? Will it be a safe route to walk in the dark? How frequent and reliable is the service and does it operate in the evenings and at weekends? How much is a weekly ticket - have you factored the commuting cost into your monthly outgoings

Important points to note when letting;

- You will need a minimum of 4 weeks rent as a returnable deposit plus one months rent in advance
- Advertisements for flats often give the price on a per-week basis, although payment is usually monthly. The common way to calculate rent for a property is on a per-calendar-month basis. This means that if the estate agent quoted the rent as £150 a week, the monthly rent will not be £600 (4 weeks x £150), but rather, £642.85 (£150 x 52 weeks / 12 months). Over the course of your tenancy, you will pay rent monthly, usually by standing order, cheque or bank transfer.
- Furnished flats are common. They will include living room furniture, fridge, cooker, kitchenware and utensils. Kitchenware usually includes only enough items to cook basic meals.
- On top of your rent, you will also have to factor in the cost of council tax, a TV license and utility rates. There are strict and expensive penalties for not paying your council tax or TV license in the UK so it's essential that you ensure you pay them.
- Utility bills include water, gas, electricity and telephone and are generally paid quarterly. It is important that when you move into a new property you ensure that the previous tenant has paid all these bills.
- Council tax varies between areas, councils that provide more services charge more and also is affected by the value of the property that you will be living in. So the nicer your house and area the more you will be paying. Prices can vary a lot depending in which borough you live. For instance Wandsworth (covering such areas as Putney, Clapham Junction) is approximately £650 a year where as Camden is nearer £1200 a year! Quite a difference especially if the bills are split among only a few.
- Ensure that you get a receipt for your deposit and first rent payment. It is also wise to have a legal tenancy contract with the landlord, especially if you have handed over a large deposit. Without a contract you as a tenant have no legal rights and could find yourself out of pocket or on the street! The contract also protects the landlord as well.
- The landlord has the right to deduct from the deposit any rent payments that are due but have not been paid, as well as the cost of replacing items or repairing any damage you may have caused at the property. It is therefore worth keeping the property in good order and cleaning it regularly.
- Never provide your personal or banking information (e.g. credit card number) to a flat mate or landlord over the internet. Once contracts are signed, exchange these details in person and insist on receipts for any money you hand over, especially your deposit.

Leases

When you rent a private property, you will need to enter into a contract, most commonly known as an assured short-hold tenancy agreement. Such a tenancy agreement is usually made out for 6 –

12 months and outlines the terms and conditions of your stay at the property. For 12 month leases you can generally add a “*Breaking Clause*” that allows you (with 1 month’s notice period) to leave the flat earlier than you contract specifies. It is advisable to request this option.

Don’t sign a tenancy agreement until you feel comfortable that all of the above points are addressed adequately. Once you sign, you will be liable to abide by the terms and conditions of the tenancy agreement.

Inventory & checking the property

It is common for a landlord to produce and ask you to sign an inventory of furniture and items that belong to the property before you move in. The inventory will be used to check the property when you leave to ensure that everything is in the same order as when you first entered.

From your part, it is worth doing a similar check on the property before you actually move in or enter into a tenancy agreement. A good time to do this is when an estate agent or landlord first takes you to see the property.

Some basic things to look out for include:

- How is the general state of repair inside and outside?
- Are the windows and front door lock secure?
- Is there adequate heating in each room?
- Is there a fridge and washing machine (ideally)?
- Any mould in the bathroom or kitchen?
- Does the bathroom have a working shower?
- Do you get hot water from the taps?
- Does the toilet flush properly?
- Is there a smoke detector?

If anything is missing or something needs repair, let the estate agent or landlord know straight away so that these can be addressed before you move in.

A truly professional landlord will also provide you with copies of gas and electricity safety certificates for the property, but very few actually do so. Ask your landlord if you wish to see them.

Good websites and sources to look for flats to let in London include;

www.foxtons.co.uk
www.net-lettings.co.uk
www.hotproperty.co.uk
www.propertyfinder.com
www.rightmove.co.uk

Whether you are looking to rent a self contained flat or house, or just a room, there are many ways to find a home to rent. Besides word of mouth, notice boards and classified advertisements in local newspapers and publications such as Loot, you may opt to go to a letting agency.

Accommodation and letting agencies are listed in the Yellow Pages. There are rules about how agencies operate and what they can charge tenants for. They are not allowed to charge you just to register or for supplying addresses and details of accommodation.

Whilst some agencies don't charge tenants at all, it's not unusual for charges to be made for drawing up tenancy agreements or for administrative costs. Remember that letting agencies act on behalf of landlords, not tenants.

Other sources of accommodation are the Capital Radio Flat Share Line 020 7484 8000 or visit the www.capitalfm.com