

London's smallest microflat up for sale at £50,000 for 7 square metres

Level 1: Elementary / Pre-Intermediate

1 Warmer

- a. These are the six most expensive cities in the world in which to rent a two-bedroom flat. Put them in order from 1 (the most expensive) to 6 (the least expensive).
- London
 - Hong Kong
 - New York
 - Paris
 - San Francisco
 - Zurich

2 Key words

- a. Fill the gaps in the sentences using these key words from the text.

foldout

investment

renovate

storage

wet room

- _____ is a space where you can keep things.
- If you _____ something old, you make it look new again by repairing and improving it.
- A _____ table is one that you keep in a small, flat space when you are not using it.
- A _____ is a small space containing a shower and a toilet.
- An _____ is something that you spend money on because you hope you will get more money from it in the future.

disposable

elsewhere

rely on

suitable

tenant

- A _____ is someone who rents a flat or a house.
- If someone or something is _____, they are right for a particular situation.
- If you live _____, you live in another place.
- A _____ item is one that you throw away after using it once or just a few times.
- If you _____ something, you need it very much.

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- 1 Imagine living in just 7 square metres. There would just be space for a bed, a toilet and shower, a sink, a microwave and some storage. But there would be no room for a kitchen or for you to have any visitors.
- 2 This is life in London's smallest microflat. It is probably the smallest flat that has ever been on the market in London. The minimum price is £50,000, but it will probably sell for more because the last buyer paid £103,500 for it in May, 2017.
- 3 The owner renovated the flat recently. There is storage space and cupboards under the bed. You can just spread your arms wide in the space between the bed and the wall and there's a foldout table for eating or working on. A toilet and shower are in a separate wet room.
- 4 The owner has already got their investment back by getting £800 in rent each month. The current tenant lives elsewhere for most of the time and spends just a night or two each week in the flat because it is closer to work.
- 5 The director of the company that is selling the flat said that he expected the buyer would be an investor and not a first-time buyer because banks will not lend money on properties below 30 square metres.
- 6 The income from rent will be about £10,000 a year so an investor would get their £50,000 back in five years, he said. Suitable tenants would be people who lived elsewhere and needed a place to sleep, he said; for example, doctors or nurses working in a nearby hospital.
- 7 Microflats are becoming more popular and they are getting smaller, according to Philip Hubbard, a professor of urban studies. One in 15 apartments in London are below the national minimum standard of 37 square metres for a one-bedroom home.
- 8 Hubbard said that buyers should look for flats above 37 square metres because fewer windows and living, working and relaxing in the same small space have a negative effect on sleep and mental health.
- 9 Julia Rugg, of York University, said "This is accommodation that is not even suitable as a hotel room. It is uncomfortable and forces tenants to rely on disposable items. The neighbourhood is full of bars and cafés but if you rely on these for living space, it makes life very expensive," she said.

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3 Comprehension check

a. Answer the questions using information from the article.

1. How big is the microflat in square metres?
2. Is there a kitchen in the flat?
3. Where are the cupboards?
4. Where are the toilet and shower?
5. How much rent does the current tenant pay?
6. Why will the buyer probably be an investor and not a first-time buyer?
7. How long will it take an investor to get their money back?
8. What kind of jobs would suitable tenants have?
9. What can have a negative effect on sleep and mental health?
10. According to Julia Rugg, what makes life in a microflat very expensive?

4 Key language

a. Complete the table using words from the text.

1. invest _____
2. invest _____ (person)
3. buy _____ (person)
4. store _____
5. own _____ (person)
6. visit _____ (person)

5 Discussion

a. Discuss this statement, giving reasons for your answer.

- It is better to...
 - a. live in the countryside and work in the city.
 - b. live in the city and visit the countryside.

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6 In your own words

- a. Imagine that you work in the centre of a large city, but you live 150km away so you have to live in a microflat, which is only 7 square metres in size. Apart from the wet room (with a toilet and a shower), what five important items would you need in the flat to have a comfortable existence? Give reasons for your choice. Share your ideas with the class.