

You could cook while on the toilet: a night in one of Tokyo's micro-apartments

Level 1: Elementary / Pre-Intermediate

1 Warmer

a. Which things are necessary in a flat? Add any other ideas of your own.

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> a bed | <input type="checkbox"/> a fridge-freezer |
| <input type="checkbox"/> a bedroom | <input type="checkbox"/> an oven |
| <input type="checkbox"/> a wardrobe | <input type="checkbox"/> a kitchen area |
| <input type="checkbox"/> a toilet | <input type="checkbox"/> a sofa |
| <input type="checkbox"/> a sink | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ windows |
| <input type="checkbox"/> a shower or bath | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> a living room | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> a home office | |

b. Could you live in a tiny flat (smaller than 32 square metres)? Why? Why not?

2 Key words

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

afford

fashionable

kitchenette

location

square

1. A _____ is a small area used as a kitchen.
2. If you can _____ something, you have enough money to pay for it.
3. _____ units are used for measuring the area of something.
4. If something is _____, it is popular at a particular time.
5. A _____ is the place or position where someone or something is.

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commute

ideal

ladder

occupied

rural

6. If something is _____, it is perfect for that situation or moment.
7. If a flat is _____, someone is living in it.
8. A _____ is a piece of equipment for reaching high places.
9. If someone lives in a _____ area, they live in the countryside, away from big cities.
10. A _____ is the journey to and from work every day.

b. Complete the sentences with words from task A.

1. The area where I live is becoming _____, and more people are moving here.
2. Do you have a _____? I need to get that book on the top shelf.
3. The hotel room had a small _____ with a fridge.
4. I can't _____ to live in the city centre – it's too expensive.
5. Look at this fantastic house! It's _____ for large families.
6. This room is twenty _____ metres.
7. The flat on the ground floor is not _____. It is available to rent.
8. I wouldn't say I like the city. I want to live somewhere _____.
9. Most people's _____ is over an hour.

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Justin McCurry

20 March, 2023

- 1 From the door, you can see the whole flat (except the bed). On the right, there is a small shower. It's next to a toilet, which you could sit on while making dinner in a kitchenette 50cm away.
- 2 I spent the night in Shanti Casa, in Tokyo, a solution for young people who can't afford the capital's high rents. Each micro-apartment is just nine square metres with white walls, a large window and a 3.6-metre-high ceiling. It is one of 100 buildings opened in Tokyo by the company Spilytus.

A need

- 3 Rents for micro-apartments can be only ¥50,000 (\$376) a month, or up to ¥80,000 in more fashionable locations. Keisuke Nakama is the president of Spilytus. He says micro-apartments give people a chance to save money while they think about their futures.
- 4 "A lot of younger people these days don't have many possessions and not that much money, so these apartments are ideal for them," said Nakama. 98% of his 1,500 micro-apartments are occupied.
- 5 They are a good option for people who are moving to Tokyo from outside the city. Many people stay in these flats for two or three years. Then they move to a bigger place, maybe after they've met a partner.

Small but good

- 6 I stayed in one of these flats for 24 hours. I spent the night alone. I was afraid of falling from the bed to the floor, but it didn't happen. I rested better than in my own flat, which is almost four times bigger.
- 7 People in Shanti Casa's 30 flats live on three floors. Each flat has a ground-floor living space, shower and toilet, and an upper-floor "bedroom" that you get to on a ladder. About 60% of the people who live there are men, and most are in their 20s or 30s.

'Saving for somewhere bigger'

- 8 Nakama got the idea for the micro-apartments after he moved from rural Oita to Tokyo and found that a flat costs four times as much there.
- 9 Tired from his long daily commutes, Nakama imagined a flat with just enough space to eat, sleep and keep a few things, and in locations where you could walk or cycle to work.
- 10 Reina Suzuki lives in a micro-apartment in Tokyo. Suzuki, 30, says, "I'm going to save up for somewhere bigger. When I moved in, I felt tired a lot of the time, but now I quite like the place."

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4 Key language

a. Reorder the words to form statements about the news article.

1. on / you / cook / could / the / toilet / while

2. whole / can / from / the door, / see / you / flat / the

3. they are / young people who / a solution / for

4. ¥50,000 a month / micro-apartments / only / rents for / can be

b. Now complete the sentences so they are true for you.

1. I can't afford to live in _____.
2. Flats usually cost _____ where I live.
3. I **have** / **don't have** a large kitchen.

5 Discussion

a. Discuss these questions.

- Would you like to live in a micro-apartment to save money? Why? Why not?

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6 In your own words

- a. You will create a micro-apartment building for your town or city. Draw a new one that students or young people can live in.

Look back at the Warmer task to help create your design. Name each area and give as much detail as possible.

- b. Present your design to your group.

Useful language

This is the ...

You can ... there.

You can't ... because ...

You could ... in the ...