

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

Level 2: Intermediate

1 Warmer

a. According to a business magazine, 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).

- a. London
- b. Hong Kong
- c. New York
- d. Paris
- e. San Francisco
- f. Zurich

2 Key words

a. Find the following words in the text. The paragraph numbers are given to help you.

1. a noun meaning *a space where things can be kept* storage (paragraph 1)
2. a verbal adjective meaning *quickly increasing to a very high level*
soaring (paragraph 3)
3. an adjective meaning *wanted by a lot of people but not easy to get*
sought-after (paragraph 3)
4. a verb meaning *make something old look new again by repairing and improving it*
renovated (paragraph 4)
5. a noun meaning *the amount of money you must spend to buy something or to start a new business or project* investment (paragraph 7)
6. a noun meaning *a person who rents a flat* current tenant (paragraph 5)
7. a verb meaning *become smaller* shrinking (paragraph 8)
8. an adjective meaning *higher than it/they should be* inflated (paragraph 10)
9. an adjective meaning *capable of continuing at the same level for a long time*
sustainable (paragraph 11)
10. an adjective meaning *designed to be thrown away after you have used it once*
disposable (paragraph 11)

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- 1 Imagine living in just 7 square metres. There would just about be space for a bed, a toilet and shower, a sink, a microwave and some storage. But no room for a kitchen to cook in, a place to store equipment for hobbies, or to have anyone round to visit.
- 2 This is life in London's smallest microflat. Located in east London, it is thought to be the smallest to have gone on the market in the capital. The minimum price is £50,000, but it will probably sell for more as it was bought for £103,500 in May, 2017.
- 3 The flat is an example of a growing phenomenon of tiny homes, caused by soaring rent and property prices. Microflats are becoming more sought-after and even smaller.
- 4 The flat has recently been renovated and has a large window. To maximize space, it has a bed above storage space and cupboards. The space between the bed and the wall is about wide enough to spread your arms in, and there's a foldout table for eating or working on. A toilet and shower are in a separate wet room.
- 5 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 as it is closer to work.
- 6 The price is a powerful symbol of how expensive housing has become. Stuart Collar-Brown, the director of the company which is selling the flat, said that although it was the cheapest flat on the market within ten miles, he expected it would be bought by an investor rather than a first-time buyer, as banks will not lend on properties below 30 square metres.
- 7 With rental income estimated at about £10,000, investors would get their £50,000 outlay back within five years, he said. Suitable tenants would not spend much time at home and would be people who lived elsewhere and needed a place to sleep, he said. For instance, doctors or nurses working in a nearby hospital, or workers in the financial district.
- 8 Microflats are becoming more popular and their size is shrinking, according to research by Philip Hubbard, a professor of urban studies at King's College London. One in 15 apartments in London are below the national minimum standard of 37 square metres for a one-bedroom home, while the average size of UK properties below the space standard fell by one square metre to 29 square metres in 2022.
- 9 Hubbard recommended that buyers look for flats above 37 square metres since fewer windows and not being able to separate living, working and leisure space have a negative effect on sleep and mental health, and smaller properties are more expensive per square metre.
- 10 Julia Rugg, a research fellow at York University's Centre for Housing Policy, said the Clapton sale reflected the "inflated nature of the housing market in London" and said it would be a "worrying development" if microflats were seen as a solution to housing affordability.
- 11 "This is accommodation that is hardly suitable as a hotel room and is not a sustainable living space. The property is uncomfortable and forces tenants to rely on disposable items. The neighbourhood may well be 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. Are these statements True (T) or False (F) according to the article? Correct any that are false.

1. The microflat in the article has a small kitchen and bathroom.
2. More and more people want to buy microflats.
3. The increasing number of tiny homes is caused by rising rents and property prices.
4. The current tenant spends most of their time in the microflat.
5. The director of the company selling the flat expects a first-time buyer to buy it.
6. An investor would get their outlay back in ten years.
7. A suitable tenant would be someone who worked nearby and just needed somewhere to sleep.
8. Living in a small space is good for sleep and mental health.
9. Tenants in microflats rely on disposable items.
10. Spending time in the bars and cafés of the local area is a good way of saving money.

4 Key language

a. Complete the phrases from the text using these prepositions.

to below within between for on (x2) per

1. go _____ the market
2. _____ the minimum standard
3. a negative effect _____ mental health
4. more expensive _____ square metre
5. a solution _____ a problem
6. enough space _____ a bed
7. _____ ten miles
8. the space _____ the bed and the wall

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5 Discussion

a. Discuss these statements.

- "It is better to rent a flat than to buy one."
- "Living in the country and working in the city is the best solution."

6 In your own words

a. Use the internet to find the average cost of a two-bedroom flat in the centre of your country's capital city. Compare the cost with two other capital cities in different countries. Report your findings to the class.