



Melody Wren en route to Gaultois island, Newfoundland

Benefits of “Renting”

€50 a night for a bijou apartment in the Montmartre district of Paris?

By Melody Wren

No way! Travelers often assume that renting a private house or apartment requires a long commitment and lots of cash. But you can rent a flat in London, a centrally located apartment in Florence, a converted stable in an English village or a former pool house in Cyprus—even if you’re short on time and money.

It’s the most pronounced trend in travel and many companies are flourishing because of the skyrocketing opportunity of such alternative accommodations. I prefer to rent when I travel enjoying a fabulous Florence apartment in the square directly across from the market, a cozy flat in the Montmartre area of Paris for a brief but memorable three nights at a fraction of the cost of a hotel and so refreshing.

I have reaped the rewards of someone else’s clever renos and refurbishments in a tiny converted pool house in Cyprus; a cottage in rural Southwest France; an upscale renovated stable in Norfolk, England, a unique former police station, and a five floor walkup in London.

Last year, we rented a rustic manor house in Yorkshire, England sharing with nine family members. There was lots of space for everyone to sprawl out and we came together at the breakfast table to discuss the daily plans.



The same year we shared a villa on the Mediterranean coast in Spain with 8 friends – recipe for disaster? Not in the least. We all had our own bedrooms and bathrooms, and what could have been an expensive villa worked out economically sharing the costs with like-minded friends.

We took turns cooking, shared rental cars and had lots of adventures exploring the area intermingled with lazy days lounging by the pool.

Why choose a rental over a hotel or guest house?

Live and feel like a local, even for three nights; shop at markets and cook your own meals. You’ll meet friendly neighbors who are the best resource for places to go and sights to see. It improves the quality of the holiday immeasurably.

As you are renting from owners, it’s surprising what they will include. When we rented a 200-year-old



Author Melody Wren enjoying the garden in a rented cottage in Cornwall, England

cottage in a small village in Cornwall, the owners let us use their sports car for the month for no extra charge.

In exchange, we took care of their massive vegetable gardens, not only in the back of their property but several allotments sprinkled throughout the village as well as a greenhouse. We were inundated with fresh veggies at every meal. We made friends with the neighbor to such a degree we regularly had dinner together.

Accommodations can include apartments, cottages, shared houses, B&Bs and housesitting arrangements.

Websites have filters allowing you to search by price, location, style of property and you can add details such as rural, central or beachfront. Print and online newspapers often list properties for rent, most of them privately owned.

Usually, the cost depends on the time of the year and flexibility can pay off. The weather is beautiful in Florence in October but the tourists

are gone and prices are down. A property might be listed for only one time period but if you are interested in going earlier or later, contact the owners and ask anyway.

Lower prices require flexibility in other ways: for example, at that pool house in Cyprus, we heard someone cleaning right outside our windows very early every morning.

Do your homework: find out if linens and towels are included. You will likely need to bring shampoo and soap and I always make sure to bring large roll up bags for market shopping. I usually pack my own tea bags and bring pre-measured gluten free cereal to be ready for the first morning.

Melody Wren is a freelance writer because she believes that work and fun should not be mutually exclusive. She writes about travel, food and green living.

For further travel stories, check out Melody's website and blog: www.melodywren.com.

Start your search here:

sabbaticalhomes.com: Private homes in many countries are available for rent, exchange or housesitting. I have rented through this site several times and rented our house out as well.

holiday-rentals.co.uk and **vacationrentals.com:** For holiday rentals, prices vary but there are a few deals. Read the details closely. If a car is required, this means the property is secluded.

florenceapartmentscentral.com: San Lorenzo Apartments offers family-owned apartments in the Old Town Centre of Florence, accommodating two to six people.

caretaker.org: Housesitting and caretaking opportunities around the world, mostly rent free.

Simply Chateau: the company we rented the incredible manor house in rural Yorkshire offers wonderful, personal service, with links to rentals in England and France: www.simplychateau.co.uk