



Finding Private Accommodation



Tips

Where to find a house

Try the University Accommodation Service (www.accommodation.cam.ac.uk).

They can provide property lists that are updated frequently, and you can search for a property that meets your criteria. They can also send email alerts. Be aware that looking at the website with slightly different criteria produces different sets of properties.

An alternative is finding a property through a letting agency. This may involve paying a bit extra, but most agencies deal with maintenance problems reasonably efficiently. Contracts are usually for 11 or 12 months and then renewals are more flexible.

Keep your ears to the ground. Word of mouth can be very fruitful. Websites that have proved useful in the past include:

www.brettward.co.uk/canb/,

www.spareroom.co.uk/flatshare/cambridge

www.gumtree.com/cambridge.

How to get organised

Start looking **early**. If you want to share, get a group together. Houses for 3-5 people are easier to find.

Make sure all members of your group have the same criteria.

Don't be too picky. Cambridge is a small city so nowhere is too far to cycle. Some houses are messy, but that could be because messy students have lived in them!

Consider the extra costs such as phone, water, electricity and gas... when budgeting. Make sure you know what is included in the rent.

Houses can be snapped up very quickly, so it is important to be organised.

Tips from past house-hunters have included organising a 'Quick Reaction' to looking at houses. If you are in a group, but can't all go together, get someone to take photos, he/she can share what the house is like with the other members of the group and thus a decision can be made quickly.

Another good idea is to see a few houses before you start looking in earnest just to get an idea of what you can get for your money. Even just seeing where your friends live or asking around can be very helpful.

Use your judgement to filter out ‘shady’ offers (no photos, little information, no clear answers to questions). Always have a look before you sign anything. And make sure that the furniture comes with the house.

We recommend that you check the inventory with the landlord or their agent as soon as you move into the property and point out any defects at that time and send them to the landlord/agent by email so that you have a record. Take photographs too, if you can, to remind yourself of how it was (cleanliness, decoration, damage) when you moved in.

Make sure you read the utility meters (electricity, gas, and water – if fitted) on moving in and share the meter readings with the landlord/agent. Similarly, when you leave at the end of your tenancy.

When you leave, you must inform the utility companies and give them the contact details for the landlord/agent, and your closing meter readings.

Do read your tenancy agreement carefully before you sign it to make sure you know what you are committing yourselves to.

If you are unsure about any clauses, discuss them with the landlord/agent; do not just ignore the terms of the tenancy.

Please let us know if you have any advice to offer.

Happy house-hunting!