

HOUSING GUIDE FOR VISITING SCHOLARS 2016-2017



Housing Guide for CES Visiting Scholars 2016-2017

Although the Center for European Studies does not directly provide housing for visitors, in order to assist you with your search we have compiled the following guide and list of online resources. If you have any questions regarding housing, please contact CES Program Coordinator Roumiana Theunissen at rtheunissen@fas.harvard.edu.

1. Planning & Timelines

You should begin to plan your housing search soon after you confirm your plans to come to Harvard. In order to successfully find housing in the Cambridge area, you should have knowledge of the local housing market and you must give yourself plenty of time to search. If your eventual landlord requires a letter confirming your appointment at Harvard, you may contact Roumiana Theunissen, who will issue the required letter.

1.1 Before Your Arrival

We encourage you to become familiar with the Cambridge housing market before planning your arrival. The links provided in the resources section of this document will give you access to apartments, classified ads and to Harvard University housing offices.

You should not *expect* to locate housing before coming to the United States, as it is sometimes challenging to secure housing in Cambridge while still overseas. Making attempts to do so, however, is strongly encouraged. If you are successful, you may save a considerable amount of time.

1.2 Timing Your Search

Prepare yourself to devote time to your housing search, even if that means temporarily putting off your academic work. If you have children under five years old who will be living with you, you should probably allow even more time for searching due to the necessity of finding a de-leaded apartment.

The majority of apartments in the Cambridge area become available on September 1st, whereas January 1st and June 1st are major dates for leases to end. Due to the large student population in the area, looking for an apartment for September 1st can take considerable effort. Landlords often rent apartments for September 1st from mid-July through early August, so you should plan your arrival date accordingly. Desirable apartments do not stay on the market for very long. Please refer to section 5 on temporary housing for information on where to stay during your search.

2. Types of Housing

2.1 Harvard-Owned Housing

CES visiting scholars are eligible to apply for housing through the Harvard University Housing (HUH) office's website at <http://huhousing.harvard.edu/> provided that they have an active, full-time affiliation through March 1, 2017. You may apply online and select an available unit (from studios to three bedroom units) that meets your needs. **Please note that the application deadline is May 1, 2016 in order to be included in the HUH lottery**, which is where most of the inventory gets selected. Please list all accompanying dependents on the application form; this is very important as applicants with children will get preference in the lottery. **There is no guarantee of securing accommodation through Harvard University Housing as their demand typically exceeds supply.** There is a limited inventory available throughout the year but the majority of their inventory gets selected in May/June.

If you are not yet in the University's database at the time of application for Harvard Housing (which is the case for most visiting scholars), you may be asked to provide a letter or email from CES confirming that you will be a full-time affiliate through March 1, 2017. Please forward such requests to the CES Program Coordinator, and she will write directly to the HUH office to confirm your affiliation.

For those visiting scholars who are not full-time and eligible to apply for Harvard Housing, the following link <https://www.harvardhousingoffcampus.com/> lists non-Harvard owned apartments. These units are not verified or endorsed by HUH so applicants will need to perform their own due diligence. Please see section 4 below for more information.

2.2 Off-Campus Housing

There are several types of off-campus housing that can be located in the Cambridge area:

You can find studio apartments with one bedroom, a kitchen area and bathroom, as well as single-bedroom apartments, two-bedroom and even three bedroom apartments typically including a living room, dining room, kitchen and at least one bathroom. Apartments are often rented out furnished, but you can sometimes find unfurnished apartments. Unfurnished apartments are almost always cheaper than furnished apartments, although keep in mind the cost and effort involved in furnishing an apartment. Utilities, with the exception of water, are usually paid for by tenants. Heat and hot water are occasionally included in the rent you pay, so be sure to inquire. Oftentimes apartments with multiple bedrooms make the cost of renting one bedroom cheaper. Consequently, visiting scholars with no family members accompanying them who wish to reduce costs might do well to group together in a larger apartment.

Single bedrooms are also available in shared apartments. This does not mean that you would have to share a room with a stranger; this means that you would be able to pay for your own single bedroom within an apartment. These rooms are often listed under the category of "Rooms/Shared." This is the most affordable type of accommodation in the area, although keep in mind that apartment quality is always something to investigate. Whereas each apartment mate almost always has his or her own bedroom, everyone would have to share a living room,

dining and kitchen area, and likely bathroom. Apartment-mates would also split the cost of the utilities. Fortunately, apartment-mate situations are often more flexible arrangements than those of renting one's own apartment; nonetheless, make sure to sign a lease agreement. If you are bringing a spouse or other family members, however, you would probably want to look into renting your own apartment.

If you will only be in the U.S. for three or four months, it might be more practical to sublet as opposed to rent an apartment or room. You can research sublets in the same way you would research renting apartments: by visiting the websites provided under "Apartments" in section 7 below. The Harvard Housing Office is another resource you could use. If you choose to sublet an apartment, make sure to read the section on leases to understand the legal conditions surrounding subletting.

3. Costs

3.1 Funds Needed to Secure an Apartment

Housing in the Cambridge/Boston area can seem prohibitively expensive. Thus, it is recommended that you be fully prepared for the high rents required to secure an apartment. **In order to secure an apartment, some landlords, at the signing of the lease, may require payment of at least three or four times the cost of the monthly rent.** This figure includes your first and last month's rent, a security deposit which is legally held in an escrow account and returned to you at the end of the lease term and a "finder's fee" paid if you have had a real estate agent assist you in locating the apartment. Here is a sample breakdown for potential fees on a Cambridge one-bedroom apartment rental:

First month's rent:	\$2,000
Last month's rent:	\$2,000
Security deposit:	\$2,000
Finder's fee:	<u>\$2,000</u>
	\$8,000

Although this amount might seem extreme, note that your security deposit should be returned to you at the end of the lease term, considering you do not incur any damages on the apartment. It is advisable to rent directly from a landlord (through classified ads and Harvard housing listings) as opposed to hiring a realtor. On your search, you may inquire as to whether no-fee or half-fee apartments are available, but keep in mind that these apartments may be of lower quality. It may also be worthwhile to ask if the fee is negotiable. As you will likely be staying only a year or less, it is suggested that you at least try to avoid paying a fee.

Even if there is a possibility of securing an apartment requiring only three months rent, it is encouraged that you be prepared for stricter demands. **Be aware that you may have to put down up to four months rent in order to secure an apartment in the Cambridge/Boston area.**

3.2 Approximate Costs by Apartment Size

The following figures are estimates for apartments in Cambridge proper and are by no means definite. Please check the web sites listed in the resources section for more detailed listings and prices. Keep in mind that the low prices provided by real estate agents rarely represent true values, unless they are associated with a specifically described apartment. While there are apartments available for lower prices, they would likely take time, effort and luck to locate.

Estimated costs:

Studio	\$1300-\$1800+
One-Bedroom	\$1600-\$2400+
Two-Bedroom	\$1800-\$2800+
Three-Bedroom	\$2000-\$3000+

Apartments on the cheaper side of these ranges may be found in the areas surrounding Cambridge. Many of these areas can be as pleasant to live in as Cambridge itself, and nearly as close to Harvard as Cambridge proper. **The Inman Square and Porter Square sections of Somerville are very close to the Center, while the towns of Arlington, Belmont, Allston, Brookline, Watertown and areas of the city of Boston itself are conveniently located and moderately close.** The best way to get an accurate sense of the cost of renting an apartment in a specific town is to examine the average prices listed in apartment classified ads. Scanning through websites such as www.padmapper.com will give you the best idea of the market. You should also consider the availability of public transport (MBTA service) from these towns by subway, commuter rail or bus to Cambridge. It may be helpful to review the public transit maps http://www.mbta.com/schedules_and_maps/ and consider the cost of a monthly travel pass http://www.mbta.com/fares_and_passes/passes/.

3.3 Cost of Utilities

In addition to rent, you should expect to pay anywhere between \$200 and \$500 a month for utilities, including electricity, heat and hot water. The cost truly depends on your family's lifestyle and may vary from season to season. The figure also fluctuates depending on the type of heat the apartment uses (electric, natural gas, oil, etc.) and the age of the building. Apartments whose rent includes the cost of heat and hot water can help you save money, especially during drafty and chilly Boston winters. Basic telephone service (not including the cost of long distance telephone calls) is usually about \$35 a month. Keep in mind that phone, internet and cable can contribute as much as \$200 a month to overall utilities costs. Tenants are responsible for contacting companies to set up utilities for their apartments. Before you investigate electric companies on your own, however, you might want to ask the former tenants of your apartment what companies they used and how reliable they were. Sometimes the landlord will also have suggestions as to which companies to use.

Some locally used companies are as follows:

Electricity & Gas:

EVERSOURCE

Tel: 1-800-592-2000

<https://www.eversource.com/Content/ema-c/residential>

NATIONAL GRID

Tel: 1-800-322-3223 (electricity) or 1-800-233-5325 (gas)

<https://www.nationalgridus.com/masselectric>

Cable, Internet & Phone:

XFINITY/COMCAST

1-800-266-2278

<http://www.comcast.com>

VERIZON

1-800-837-4966

<http://www.verizon.com/?lid=//global//residential>

RCN

1-800-746-4726

<http://www.rcn.com>

4. Harvard Resources

The Harvard Housing Office is a great local resource for finding an apartment once you have arrived in the United States:

<http://www.huhousing.harvard.edu/HarvardUniversityHousing/index.aspx>.

- Harvard Off Campus Listings: <http://huhousing.offcampuslisting.com/>
- Harvard Roommate Opportunities:
<http://huhousing.offcampuslisting.com/roommate/>

For visiting scholars who are NOT eligible for Harvard-affiliated housing, Harvard has extensive listings for non-affiliated apartments, sublets and roommates, with no associated realtor's fee. The office also provides a wealth of information about the local housing market and should be one of the first stops in your search for housing. New listings are posted every day, so you should be sure to check frequently, especially in August, a very busy time of year. The office is located at 1350 Massachusetts Avenue and the phone number is 617-496-7827.

A vast majority of scholars succeed in securing housing before arriving stateside, and the web sites listed in the resources section of this guide are the best way to begin your search overseas.

There are obvious risks to renting an apartment that you have not seen from a landlord you have not met. **Due to the fact that lease agreements are binding, we encourage you to scope out the details of your apartment and landlord as best you can before signing on.**

Make sure you read your lease thoroughly and take note of its implications. Breaking a lease can be very difficult, time-consuming and costly. Further information can be found in the leases section of this document.

5. Temporary Housing

If you plan to conduct your housing search stateside, you will need to find temporary, local accommodations. As is the case with permanent housing, finding temporary housing can be expensive and should be planned in advance.

The main options for temporary housing are hotels, inns and bed and breakfasts. Links to lists of temporary accommodations in the area can be found in section 7 below. If you plan to stay in a hotel for a long period of time, inquire as to whether the hotel has a reduced weekly rate, as extended temporary stays in hotels can be costly.

6. Leases

A lease is a legal, binding, written agreement between landlord and tenant which gives the tenant the right to occupy the property of the landlord in exchange for monetary compensation. A lease specifies the beginning and end dates of tenancy and the amount of rent and security deposit paid. Leases usually last a year. The lease obligates the landlord to keep the apartment in good condition, and both tenant and landlord must abide by the terms specified by the lease. By signing a conditions statement for the apartment, it is less likely that the landlord will deduct damage charges from your security deposit. **It is important to read your lease thoroughly before signing.** Any changes made to the lease should be initialed by both tenant and landlord. If you are close to signing a lease, it may also be helpful to do a little online research about the potential landlord, as many people blog online about bad experiences.

Make sure to get a copy of your lease for your records (the landlord is required to send one to you within 30 days). It is best to pay your rent with a check; if you must pay in cash, get a written receipt. Keep records of all you transactions with the landlord, including your rent payments.

Although it is possible to have an arrangement between landlord and tenant that does not involve a written agreement, it is to your advantage to sign a lease. Being a tenant-at-will means the landlord can stop renting to you with only 30 days notice, and without a lease, there are very few regulations governing the renting process.

In the case of subletting, the tenant of an apartment essentially becomes your landlord, meaning you would pay rent to the tenant, not the landlord. A sublet is usually arranged by the tenant holding the lease. The tenant generally needs the permission of the landlord to sublet, and you may be required to sign a sublease. Sublets are often arranged informally, but again, a formal sublease gives you more protection under the law.

Further information on the legal aspects of renting an apartment can be found in the resources section below.

7. Useful resources

GENERAL RESOURCES

Harvard University Housing Office
<http://www.huhousing.harvard.edu/>

Harvard International Office
<http://www.hio.harvard.edu>

City of Boston Rental Housing Resource Center
<http://dnd.cityofboston.gov/#page/BostonRentalHousingCenter>

Massachusetts Office of Consumer Affairs and Business Regulation (for legal aspects of renting)
<http://www.mass.gov/ocabr/>

MAPS

Harvard University Map
<http://map.harvard.edu/>

MBTA (Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority) for public transit
<http://www.mbta.com/>

APARTMENTS

Harvard Apartment Source (You must create a free account)
<http://huhousing.offcampuslisting.com/>

Airbnb (You must create a free account to complete a booking)
<https://www.airbnb.com/>

Sabbatical Homes
<http://sabbaticalhomes.com/>

Padmapper
www.padmapper.com

Boston Globe--Renting
<http://www.boston.com/realestate/renting/>

Sublet.com
<http://www.sublet.com/>

Apartments.com
<http://www.apartments.com>

BostonApartments.com
<http://www.bostonapartments.com/>

Charles Associates Real Estate (Furnished Cambridge Apartments)
<http://www.bostonapartments.com/mari.htm>

83 Brattle Street Apartments (Furnished Cambridge Apartments)
<http://www.radcliffe.harvard.edu/about-us/conference-services-housing/brattle-street-apartments>

Leeder Management Company (Craigie Street and Concord Ave apartments with heat included, no fee)
<http://leedermanagement.com/>

Chestnut Hill Realty (Properties they manage nearby are Charles Chauncy Apartments and Wendell Terrace)
<http://www.chr-apartments.com/>

Apartment Hub
<http://www.apartmenthub.com/>

Trulia
http://www.trulia.com/for_rent/

Zillow
http://www.zillow.com/homes/for_rent/

REAL ESTATE AGENTS

Disclaimer: CES does not endorse any of the following persons, agencies, or services; they are provided only to serve as informational aids in your housing quest.

Bayside Realty
<http://www.baysidecambridge.com/>
843 Massachusetts Avenue
Cambridge, MA 02139
(617) 868-7979
info@baysidecambridge.com
Area: Cambridge, Somerville

Channing Real Estate
<http://www.channingrealestate.com/about>
111 Mt. Auburn Street
Cambridge, MA 02138
(617) 864-6900
Area: Cambridge, Somerville, Arlington, Belmont, Watertown

Century 21 Avon

<http://www.century21avon.com/>

1675 Massachusetts Avenue

Cambridge, MA 02138

(617) 661-8400

homes@century21avon.com

Area: Cambridge, Somerville, Belmont, Arlington, Watertown

Maven Realty

<http://mavenrealty.com/>

402A Highland Ave

Somerville, MA 02144

(617) 868-0100

Area: Cambridge, Somerville

Oxford Street Realty

<http://www.oxfordstreetrealty.com/>

Jacqueline White

1644 Massachusetts Ave

Cambridge, MA 02139

(617) 354-3535

jackie@oxfordstreetrealty.com or

info@oxfordstreetrealty.com

Area: Cambridge, Somerville, Arlington, Belmont, Watertown

Sweeney & O'Connell Real Estate

www.sweeneyandoconnell.com

Dawn Marshall

1189 Mass Ave.

Arlington, MA 02476

(781) 643-7478

dmmarshallre@verizon.net

Area: Arlington, Cambridge

Tory Row Real Estate

<http://www.toryrow.com/>

Arthur Horiatis

1762 Massachusetts Avenue

Cambridge, MA 02140

(617) 864-9779

Arthur.Horiatis@ToryRow.com

Area: Cambridge, Arlington, Somerville, Watertown, Allston, Boston

APARTMENT-MATES

In picking apartment mate(s), you should seek out people with your same housing values. You may start investigating by using the Harvard Housing Office "Roommate Connections"

link: <http://huhousing.offcampuslisting.com/roommate> (You must create a free account).

The following websites list rooms available in shared apartments and these apartments are listed under "Roommates Wanted". In order to advertise yourself as in need of apartment-mates, you may post a "Roommate Needed Ad" if the site allows this.

BostonApartments.com

<http://www.bostonapartments.com/>

RoommateClick.Com (You must create a free account).

<http://roommateclick.com>

Roommates USA

www.roommateusa.com (You must create a free account).

TEMPORARY HOUSING

Airbnb (<https://www.airbnb.com/>) and Sublet.com (<http://www.sublet.com/>) are particularly useful for finding shorter-term or temporary accommodation. In addition, here is a list of conveniently located hotels, bed and breakfasts, and inns in the area.

A Bed and Breakfast in Cambridge

1657 Cambridge Street

617 868-7082, DoanePerry@yahoo.com

<http://www.cambridgebnb.com>

A Cambridge House Inn at Porter

2218 Massachusetts Avenue

617-491-6300, innach@comcast.net

<http://www.acambridgehouse.com>

The Charles Hotel at Harvard Square

One Bennett Street, Cambridge, MA 02138

617-864-1200

<http://www.charleshotel.com/>

Harding House Bed & Breakfast Hotel

288 Harvard Street, Cambridge, MA 02139

617-876-2888

<http://www.harding-house.com/>

Harvard Square Hotel

110 Mount Auburn Street, Harvard Square, Cambridge, MA 02138

Phone: 617-864-5200 or 800-458-5886 (reservations only)

Fax: 617-864-2409

<http://www.harvardsquarehotel.com/>

The Irving House at Harvard

24 Irving Street

617-547-4600

<http://www.irvinghouse.com>

Parkside on Ellery

74 Ellery Street

617-492-5025, info@parksidebb.com

<http://www.parksidebb.com>

