



PdOC Accommodation guide

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Introduction

OK, so you've just been offered a postdoc in Cambridge and you need to find a place to live. If you were a student here you may be used to living in College accommodation, unfortunately, as a postdoc, this will probably no longer be an option for you. If you are new to Cambridge, it can be a bit confusing as to what your options actually are? Either way, this short guide is designed to (hopefully) answer some of your questions.

The bad news is that property prices in Cambridge are currently rocketing (see <http://www.cambridge-estateagents.co.uk/> for a list of local estate agents). As a result you have probably already discovered (and if not you soon will) that the rent in Cambridge is expensive, indeed it is not that much cheaper than London. You should expect to pay *approximately* the following (as of 01/10/06) or maybe even higher:

Single room in a shared house	£360-£400 a month + bills
Studio flats	£350 – £450 per month + bills
1 bedroom properties	£450 – £600 per month + bills
2-3 bedroom properties	£600 – £900 per month + bills
4 bedroom properties	£1000 – £1300 per month + bills

The good news is that there are generally a lot of options to choose from, depending on what you and your partner/family are looking for. In general there are no really rough areas of Cambridge (although some people do prefer to avoid the Mill Road area) and with a little digging around you should be able to find something suitable.

As a brief aside, one point bearing in mind is that you or your supervisor/PI, are applying for grants, it is possible to try and include a Cambridge weighting to the full economic costing if you include Cambridge house price details in the proposal. For instance, it may be possible to apply for normal funding for 36 months but then to pay a postdoc slightly higher wages for only 32 months.

Short term accommodation

If you are new to Cambridge it really is worth trying to find short term accommodation in or near the city centre so that you can get your bearings and find out where everything is when you first start. There are several places where you could stay whilst sorting out your permanent accommodation for your time in Cambridge.

- Cambridge Youth Hostel. This is at the corner of Devonshire Road and Tenison Road (very close to the train station, and a ten minute walk from the town center). Phone (01223) 354601.
- Cambridge Sleeperz hotel. This is right next door to the station, it's a bit basic but is cheap and clean. See <http://www.sleeperz.com/> or e-mail info@sleeperz.com for more information.
- YMCA. On Gonville Place on East Road, phone (01223) 356998
- Bed and breakfasts. Cherry Hinton Road has many, but others can be found closer to town:
 - ABA Guest House, 55 Tenison Road (01223) 352355
 - A & B Guest House, 124 Tenison Road (01223) 315702
 - Regency Guest House, 7 Regent Terrace (01223) 329626
 - Mayfair Hotel, 146 Tenison Road (01223) 360246
 - Lensfield Hotel, 53 Lensfield Road (01223) 355017
- The website <http://www.visitcambridge.org/visitors/wheretostay.php> also has lots of information on places to stay in Cambridge.

Alternatively, you can try some of the Colleges. Although as a postdoc you do not usually get automatic College affiliation Colleges can still be a good port of call for short term accommodation when you first arrive. The best person to talk to about this is probably your supervisor. They will most likely be a member of a College and may have the contacts needed to be able to get you assigned a room there for a few weeks while you get yourself settled. If your supervisor is not a member of a College it can be worth

contacting them direct. By telephoning the Porters lodge it is often possible to rent College guest rooms for a few nights while you find somewhere to live. These have the advantage of being reasonably cheap and usually fairly central. A list of College websites is available at <http://www.cam.ac.uk/cambuniv/finding/addresses/college.html>

Incidentally, if you are lucky enough to have a junior (or even senior) research fellowship at a College then it can really be worth making the most of it accommodation wise. The bigger Colleges especially are likely to offer you accommodation at a subsidised rate and they often also help out their fellows with buying their first house. In a related note, at the time of writing (September 2006) the Graduate Union is attempting to get the Colleges to list their surplus accommodation on the University Accommodation Service website.

In fact, speaking of the University Accommodation service, this should be one of your first ports of call for all accommodation questions. It can be found on Silver Street (Tel 01223 353518 and 01223 338099; fax 01223 338098, web <http://www-accommodation.admin.cam.ac.uk/>). They will be able to give you a list of places with rooms to rent and contact numbers, all for the cost of photocopying (about 30p once all the addresses you want are organized on A4 paper). There are two types of single room lists: those where you live in a shared house and those where the landlord will also live in the house. Details of flats and houses to rent in Cambridge can also be found here and the affiliated Newcomers and Visiting Scholars group (http://www-accommodation.admin.cam.ac.uk/Content/Document.aspx?document_id=10), who are contactable through the Accommodation office, may also be able to help you find something.

There is also a new development of apartments on the "West Cambridge Site" (near the Cavendish Laboratory) which is sometimes let to short-term visitors. There is a website at <http://www-building.arct.cam.ac.uk/westc/eforum/residences.html> for this but it may be worth ringing the Accommodation Service directly. NB: Please note that this link (and some others in this document) may be University of Cambridge access only I'm afraid.

Long term accommodation

Living outside Cambridge

Many members of Staff live outside Cambridge. There are two main options for this;

Option 1 – living near Cambridge

It is possible to find cheaper accommodation if you are prepared to travel and do not mind the area you live in. For instance, rooms in houses in Arbury can be as low as £40 per week. However, this is a twenty-minute cycle ride from Central Cambridge and it also has a reputation as being a rougher area.

Some people also live in the small villages just outside and around Cambridge (particularly those situated along the mainline rail service). Examples include places such as Girton, Litlington and Ely. This can be a good move if you have a family, as the prices are lower and the scenery is nice. You will obviously need to commute in to work if you chose this option, usually by bike (parking is limited in most parts of Cambridge). The downside is that it can be difficult to get home if you want to have a night on the tiles in Cambridge town centre. Places such as Camborne do have good bus links to Cambridge though so it's worth checking all these out in advance.

Option 2 – living away from Cambridge

A slightly more extreme option is to consider actually living somewhere in, or just outside, north London and then commuting to Cambridge via car or, more likely, rail. Drastic as this sounds, I know people that do it quite happily. The fast mainline rail service from London King's Cross to Cambridge takes just under 50 minutes. The downsides are crowded trains and expensive season tickets (around £2500.00 for 12 months). The University does operate a Travel to Work loan scheme to help you afford a

ticket. You will need to fill in form PD35, which is available from the Personnel Division (<http://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/offices/personnel/>).

Living in Cambridge

If you decide to live in Cambridge, be prepared to spend time looking around to find the best deal. There are a number of resources you can use for this.

University related resources

To find more long-term accommodation, particularly shared housing, in Cambridge itself the first place to try is the University Accommodation Office website at:

<http://www-accommodation.admin.cam.ac.uk>

Once you have registered on the site you have access to all the rooms/properties listed on the website (there is usually a big choice) and you can search by a variety of factors such as price bracket and location. Quite a few postdocs, including myself, have used this in the past and it's not half bad.

The next two best bets are probably the Cambridge University Accommodation newsgroup and the Brett Ward Cambridge Accommodation notice board. These are both separate from the Accommodation Service and both offer listings by private individuals, not agencies.

The Cambridge University accommodation newsgroup website is at:

<http://www.cam.ac.uk/cgi-bin/wwwnews?grp=ucam.adverts.accommodation>

This not as advanced as the accommodation office site but it does have a lot of good places on it. I found my house through this site and I am very happy there.

The [Brett Ward Cambridge Accommodation notice board](http://www.brettward.co.uk/canb/) website is at:

<http://www.brettward.co.uk/canb/>

This quite an advanced site that again lets you search with a variety of criteria. It is usually not worth ringing anyone about accommodation that hasn't been posted in the last day or two as it will often have already gone.

Non university based resources

If you prefer the private sector then there a number of local property agencies in town. PdOC does not recommend any specifically but the Cambridge Property Database offers combined rental listings for several local agents. The website is at:

<http://www.cambridgepropertydatabase.co.uk/>

There is also a database of Cambridge letting agencies at:

<http://www.cambridgeletting.co.uk/>

Letting Agencies will find you somewhere for a fee of about £100. You may also need to collect references from your bank, which will cost you even more money. It is important to shop around the agencies to find the best deal and make sure you get a receipt for any payments you make. Also note that they cannot charge you for a list of available accommodation or for circulating your name(s) to landlords (although some may try).

Other resources include the following:

- Newspapers, such as the *Cambridge Evening News* (the most extensive ‘To Let’ listings), the *Cambridge Weekly News* and the *Town Crier*.
- The University center, ‘Grad Pad’, off Mill Lane, has a notice board which often has details about rooms to rent. However, these can be rather expensive.
- Departmental notice boards may carry the odd advert.
- *ADHOC* magazine, or the website www.adhoc.co.uk/cambridge may have some information.

We hope this helps you get started. If you have any more questions please don’t hesitate to contact PdOC (<http://www.cam.ac.uk/societies/pdoc/>) and we will do our best to help.

Best regards and happy house hunting.

The PdOC team.

