

EV Guide on How to Search for Housing in the U.S.

Welcome to your J1 Exchange Visitor program with Odyssey! Finding suitable housing is an essential step to ensuring a comfortable and enjoyable stay. **It is absolutely crucial that you arrive prepared with enough funds to sustain you for at least one month before you receive your first paycheck.**

Here's a comprehensive guide to help you navigate the housing search process:

1. Determine Your Needs and Budget

Assess Your Needs

- Location: Proximity to your workplace, city center, or public transportation.
- Type of Housing: Apartment, studio, shared housing.
- Duration of Stay: Short-term (less than 6 months) or long-term.
- Amenities: Furnished or unfurnished, laundry facilities, internet access.

Set a Budget

- Rent: Typically, you should allocate about 30% of your monthly income for rent.
- Utilities: Consider additional costs like electricity, water, gas, and internet.
- Security Deposit: Usually one to two months' rent, refundable at the end of your lease.
BE SURE YOU HAVE ENOUGH MONEY FOR A DEPOSIT WHEN YOU ARRIVE.

2. Start Your Search Early

Online Resources

- We highly recommend starting your search BEFORE YOU ARRIVE.
- Ask your host company what their suggestions are in terms of location and where previous EVs have stayed in the past. You can find their contact information in your Training Plan.
- Housing Websites: See below
- Employer Resources: Verify if your host company provides temporary and/or permanent lodging.
- Social Media Groups: Join Facebook groups or other social networks where people post about available rentals.

Local Listings

- Newspapers: Local newspapers often have rental listings.
- Community Boards: Look for bulletin boards in community centers, libraries, or cafes.

3. Contact Potential Landlords or Roommates

Prepare Your Introduction

- Introduction Email/Message: Introduce yourself, mention your purpose of stay, and inquire about availability.
- Questions to Ask: Rent, lease terms, utilities included, security deposit, and house rules.

Schedule Viewings

- Virtual Tours: Use video calls if you can't visit in person.
- In-Person Visits: If possible, visit the property to inspect it yourself.

4. Evaluate the Neighborhood

Safety and Convenience

- Safety: Check crime rates and neighborhood safety.
- Proximity: Distance to public transportation, grocery stores, and other essentials.

Community Feel

- Walk Around: Spend time in the area to get a sense of the community.
- Talk to Locals: Ask residents about their experiences and opinions.

5. Review the Lease Agreement

Important Clauses

- Lease Duration: Start and end dates.
- Rent Payment: Due date and payment method.
- Late payment fees: You will receive a monetary fine if you do not pay your rent on time.
- Maintenance: Responsibilities for repairs and maintenance.
- Termination: Notice period and penalties for breaking the lease.

Understand Your Rights

- Tenant Rights: Familiarize yourself with local tenant laws and rights.

6. Finalize the Arrangement

Secure the Housing

- Sign the Lease: Ensure all terms are clear before signing.
- Pay the Deposit: Provide the security deposit as specified.

Prepare for Move-In

- Utilities: Set up or transfer utilities to your name if needed.
- Furnishings: Plan for any necessary furniture or household items.

7. Additional Tips

Stay Organized

- Documentation: Keep copies of your lease agreement, payment receipts, and correspondence.
- Calendar: Mark important dates like rent due dates and lease expiration. You will be responsible for any late fees.

Seek Help

- Support Services: Utilize support services provided by your host company and/or your landlord.
- Legal Advice: Consider seeking legal advice if you have any concerns about your lease or rights.

Plan for Cultural Adjustment

- Embrace the experience of living in a foreign country by exploring local culture and customs.

****It is important to note that most lease agreements are for 12 months. If your program is shorter or longer than 12 months, you may need to consider alternative options to leasing. ****

Finding **short-term** housing can be crucial for foreign exchange visitors who need flexibility. Here are some popular websites that specialize in short-term housing options:

1. **Airbnb** ([airbnb.com](https://www.airbnb.com))
 - Offers a wide range of short-term rentals from single rooms to entire homes.
 - Filters available for various amenities and duration of stay.
2. **Vrbo** ([vrbo.com](https://www.vrbo.com))
 - Specializes in vacation rentals, often providing entire homes or apartments.
 - Ideal for stays ranging from a few days to several months.
3. **Booking.com** ([booking.com](https://www.booking.com))
 - Known for hotel bookings but also offers apartments, hostels, and guesthouses.
 - Flexible cancellation policies are often available.
4. **HomeAway** ([homeaway.com](https://www.homeaway.com))
 - Similar to Vrbo, focuses on vacation rentals suitable for short-term stays.
 - Offers a variety of housing types including homes, apartments, and condos.
5. **Sublet.com** ([sublet.com](https://www.sublet.com))
 - Dedicated to sublets and short-term rentals.
 - Features listings worldwide with options for both furnished and unfurnished rentals.
6. **Roomster** ([roomster.com](https://www.roomster.com))
 - Allows you to find roommates and shared housing for short-term stays.
 - Listings available globally, catering to a variety of budgets.
7. **9flats** ([9flats.com](https://www.9flats.com))
 - Provides short-term rentals, including private rooms and entire homes.
 - Focuses on providing a local experience with various types of accommodations.
8. **Roomies** ([roomies.com](https://www.roomies.com))

- USA's largest roommate finder.
- 9. **SpareRoom** (<https://www.spareroom.com/roommates>)
 - #1 Roommate finder
- 10. **Furnished Finder** (<https://www.furnishedfinder.com/housing/>)
 - Offers furnished mid-term rentals, for up to 30 days or more

For EVs needing a 12-month lease, the following websites are reliable and offer a wide range of options:

- 11. **Zillow** ([zillow.com](https://www.zillow.com))
 - Comprehensive database of rental listings, including houses, apartments, and condos.
 - Provides detailed information on each listing, including price, amenities, and neighborhood data.
- 12. **Apartments.com** ([apartments.com](https://www.apartments.com))
 - Extensive listings for apartments, condos, townhomes, and houses for rent.
 - Features virtual tours, reviews, and detailed descriptions of properties.
- 13. **Realtor.com** ([realtor.com](https://www.realtor.com))
 - Offers listings for houses, apartments, and condos for long-term rentals.
 - Provides detailed property descriptions, photos, and neighborhood information.
- 14. **Rent.com** ([rent.com](https://www.rent.com))
 - Focuses on apartment rentals but also lists houses and townhomes.
 - Includes a variety of search filters to narrow down options based on preferences.
- 15. **Craigslist** ([craigslist.org](https://www.craigslist.org))
 - Localized classified ads with listings for apartments, houses, and rooms for rent.
 - Exercise caution and verify listings to avoid scams.
- 16. **Trulia** ([trulia.com](https://www.trulia.com))
 - Features detailed listings for houses, apartments, and condos.
 - Provides neighborhood insights, crime maps, and school information.
- 17. **HotPads** ([hotpads.com](https://www.hotpads.com))
 - Interactive map-based search for apartments, houses, and condos.
 - Offers detailed listings with photos, descriptions, and amenities.
- 18. **Apartment Finder** ([apartmentfinder.com](https://www.apartmentfinder.com))
 - Specializes in apartment rentals with extensive listings and search filters.
 - Includes detailed property information, photos, and virtual tours.
- 19. **PadMapper** ([padmapper.com](https://www.padmapper.com))
 - Map-based search tool aggregating listings from various sources.
 - Allows users to filter by price, number of bedrooms, and other criteria.
- 20. **Sublet.com** ([sublet.com](https://www.sublet.com))
 - Offers both short-term and long-term rental listings.
 - Includes sublets, lease transfers, and roommate options.
- 21. **Oodle** ([oodle.com](https://www.oodle.com))
 - Classified ads platform with listings for rentals, including apartments and houses.
 - Offers a variety of rental types and price ranges.
- 22. **Roomi** ([roomiapp.com](https://www.roomiapp.com))
 - Helps find rooms for rent and roommates for long-term stays.
 - Verified listings and background checks for added security.

Be sure to review lease terms and conduct thorough research on the properties and neighborhoods to find the best fit for your long-term stay.

By following these tips and staying proactive in your search, you can navigate the housing market in the USA as a J-1 visa holder more effectively, ensuring a smooth transition and enjoyable stay during your time in the country.