

Sam Forbes ~ My life In London's Houseboat Slums

theguardian.com. Febr.23, 2014. Where do you live if you cannot afford London's soaring rents? I took the only home I could find: a tiny, mouldy room in a freezing barge on the Thames. And there are many desperate people in the same situation. Most Londoners will know someone suffering from the extortionate expense of finding a place to live. For those trapped in the rental market, the outlook is particularly bleak. In 2011 the Resolution Foundation reported that the price of securing a tenancy can be over £2,000 in upfront costs, while other figures have shown that one in three tenants now spend half their takehome pay on rent. As more and more areas of London become unaffordable to anyone but wealthy professionals, where will essential workers go to live: the people who clean the streets, and cook the food and keep the city ticking over? They can stay at home with relatives, or sublet from people with existing tenancies, but some do not have these options. When I found myself in this position, I went to the only place I could: the slums of the Thames.

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