

Moscow Dacha Zone Challenging for Renters

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May 30, 2011



A road in the Noginsk district, near Moscow. The joy of having a dacha can be offset by the commute to reach it. **Vladimir Filonov**

In a popular children's book, the hero steps off a bus in a village and sets off in search of a house to live in. Within minutes he finds the perfect home — with a stove that takes up half the kitchen, a dog house, a garden and a television set. Best of all, it's free.

Going to the countryside for the summer remains popular among Moscow residents, but getting the ideal country house is no easy task. Now even Uncle Fyodor would need some tips from experts to navigate the competitive but pricey market for summer dachas.

Realtors recommend looking for a dacha in the spring when there are more options and owners are willing to negotiate the price.

The demand for rentals doubles or triples between March and May, said Dmitry Tsvetkov,

director of the suburban property department at Penny Lane Realty. But even if you have not started the hunt yet, you can still find offers through Internet bulletins, such as Slando, or real estate agencies.

The rental price will depend on the house type, lot size, quality of facilities, proximity to rivers or forests, and distance from the Moscow Ring Road.

Prices are highest in the direction of the Rublyovo-Uspenskoye Shosse, followed by the Novorizhskoye, Kievskoye, Mozhaiskoye and Dmitrovskoye directions, said Anya Levitov, managing partner at Evans Property Services. Rent for houses 30 kilometers or more from the MKAD is considerably lower.

“It is not realistic for 30,000 rubles [\$1,000] to rent something near Moscow,” Levitov said. “There will be very few amenities.”

Elite houses within 20 kilometers of the MKAD cost 180,000 rubles per month to rent, wrote finance consultant Yulia Zubkova in an article on the Moi Plan portal. Houses in a gated community with city-quality facilities go for 60,000 to 140,000 rubles. Houses with hot water and indoor bathrooms that are 50 kilometers from the MKAD rent for 30,000 to 60,000 rubles per month, while houses with limited facilities can cost as little as 10,000 to 15,000 rubles per month.

The cheaper houses, which tend to be farther away from the city, are traditionally in high demand, but now there could be even more competition as residents recall last summer’s smog.

“I think that last year’s heat and fires will influence the renters’ current activity,” Tsvetkov said. “The demand for dacha rental in the summer has moved to areas farther outside Moscow. Now properties located on the boundaries of the region, 100 kilometers from MKAD, are attractive.”

Cheaper houses are usually rented through private ads without the help of realtors. Agencies tend to offer houses that cost \$1,500 to rent per month, although the smaller brokers can have listings for houses with rent from \$500 to \$1,000.

Searching for a house on your own can often get you a better deal. Experts suggest going to the villages that you like and posting notices there that you are looking for a dacha. Another option is to ask friends whether they know anyone renting out their home for the summer.

The dacha rental season is from May to September. Owners generally aren’t interested in renting out their house for a short time, but if you only need the house for a month or two, you can try to offer double the rental price and a large security deposit.

Renters of all types should be aware of the risks.

Levitov suggests making sure that the rentor has the proper title and other key ownership documents; checking who the neighbors are; testing how long the commute to Moscow takes and locating nearby construction zones. Tsvetkov warns that renters are responsible for their own safety, but added that life in the countryside also has its benefits.

“They can fully immerse in the exotics of real village life and all summer buy fresh milk at a neighbor’s house,” he said. “On the lot there may be a real Russian banya. Nearby, a well or a spring.”

If you get really lucky, you won’t even have to pay through the nose for such a bucolic adventure.

Ivan from the Kashirskaya area is offering his dacha for the low price of 10 rubles a month — as long as the temporary resident is willing to look after his four dogs and take care of his 5,000 square meters of land.

Original url:

<https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2011/05/30/moscow-dacha-zone-challenging-for-renters-a7291>