The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Time Is Running Out to Rent a Dacha

By Irina Filatova

May 14, 2012

Summertime in Moscow for many means spending weekends out of town. **Vladimir Filonov**

Those wishing to rent a dacha in a picturesque neighborhood outside Moscow should hurry up, since the number of high-quality options is declining as the summer season comes into full swing.

"The first requests for summer cottages started to come in late January, while the first supply options appeared a month later," said Maria Zhukova, first deputy director of MIEL-Arenda, a consulting company.

In the following months, the demand grew steadily amid a slight contraction in supply, she said in e-mailed comments.

Overall demand for cottages outside Moscow jumped 45 percent month on month in both February and March, with April showing a 32.5 percent increase from a month earlier, according to the company's estimates.

"April was a turning point in this regard. Demand increased compared with March, ... while supply declined a bit," Zhukova said.

A total of 11.5 percent of tenants looking for a cottage to rent asked for short-term summer options in April compared with 8.5 percent a month earlier, while the share of cottages to be leased out for the summer season stood at 15.5 percent of the overall supply volume, down from 18 percent in March, she said.

With tenants' activity peaking in April, the number of available options has decreased this month, said Tatyana Varvarina, head of a division of INKOM-Nedvizhimost at Prospekt Mira.

"The most interesting options have been sold out," she said by telephone, adding, however, that it's still possible to find a cottage for the summer season, which lasts till October.

Tenants' activity has accelerated this year due to a recovery in people's incomes after the 2008 crisis, Varvarina said.

Notably, tenants of high-end property with average rates between $10,000 and $15,000 per month — a segment that has not shown high activity in recent years — have come back to the market, she added.

Zhukova said rates for summer cottages remained at last year's level, with most dachas being offered at 30,000 rubles ($1,000) to 90,000 rubles per month.

Tenants with this budget can count on a high-quality house of 150 square meters to 200 square meters made of brick or wood and located 30 to 40 kilometers outside of Moscow, she said.

But she warned that prices might go up this month because some landlords who had sought to lease out properties for a long term are likely to change their strategy and decide in favor of a short-term lease, which guarantees an income for three to five months.

Short-term leasing of property involves more risks than long-term leasing, since tenants living in a cottage for just a few months tend to treat it less carefully than those staying longer.

"Tenants will have to cover those risks by paying a higher rental rate," Zhukova said.

For example, in Malakhovka, 10 kilometers southeast of Moscow, a cottage offered at 50,000 rubles a month for the whole year will cost 60,000 rubles a month to rent during the summer season, she said.

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