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Class Revolt Populist Peyser Subletting for Profit

GET  
OUT OF  
TOWN  
A Solve-All-Your-  
Problems Travel  
Planner

APRIL 26, 2004

# NEW YORK

## SMART CITY

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### What Makes Sammy Sublet?

HOW TO ENJOY THE INTERNATIONAL JET-SETTER  
HOMELESS-GUY LIFESTYLE. BY ANONYMOUS

**Y**ou think of your apartment as a place to live. I think of mine as a revenue stream. As you make your summer plans, please consider: Failure to maximize this most crucial of all New York resources is profligate to the point of unseemliness. What are you doing with your apartment while you're gone? If you're leaving it empty, you're throwing money away. Tsk-tsk.

In the past year or two, thanks to short-term subletting, I've outsourced virtually my entire New York existence. My "international jet-setter homeless-guy lifestyle," as I refer to it, has allowed me to save while working and playing in Spain, Germany, Mexico, Australia, and Bali—that's just in the past seven months. I no longer "live" in New York, but periodically cycle through town for a week or two to collect checks, pay bills, "take" meetings, catch up with friends—then disappear again.

It all started four years ago when I met a Realtor who specialized in short-term leases. I began to sublet my tiny downtown studio (rent: \$900) to offset the cost of business trips. It made sense: I'm single, I'm self-employed, and I make my own schedule. Most important, I have debts. I want them dead. Poof.

I list with several services now, but my favorite is New York Habitat ([newyorkhabitat.com](http://newyorkhabitat.com))—it's fun and businesslike at the same time. I've sublet for as short a period as two days (not worth it) and for as long as three months. For five-to-fourteen-day stays, I net about \$110 a night. For a month, I take in about \$1,450. The Realtors take 25 to 35 percent commissions.

If I'm leaving town for an odd time frame (the 7th through the 25th, let's say), the most flexible option is to advertise through [craigslist.org](http://craigslist.org). There are pros and cons: You get to pick your dates, you're not paying commission,

but you have no idea who you're going to get.

I've more or less stripped my apartment of valuables, and I'm good at spotting psychos. If someone repeatedly e-mails me in capital letters, or writes three times before I've written once, he's history. If they're high-maintenance at first, they'll be that way till the end.

The hardest thing is simply getting my apartment clean and my bags packed in time to hand off keys. It always feels like preparing for a moon shot: If you don't get everything right, it's awfully hard come launch time to reverse the countdown, and you're off to the airport with unresolved crises in the making. Not fun.

Most sublets, I suspect, take place under the table (or *abajo del agua*, as they say on the Mexican beach from which I write, coconut in hand). This raises issues. I tend to be honest with the IRS—it's not worth getting on their bad side. As for the landlord, short-term sublets are easy to pass off as a cousin or a college friend. My favorite excuse for Europeans (far less picky than Americans, by the way) is to explain that they're my "brother" or "sister" from that, uh, high-school foreign-exchange year.

Now I've turned on half my building to the joys of short-term sublets. If the landlord comes snooping, they've got my back. And if a plumbing disaster strikes, I have three people within ten minutes to act as my proxy. So far, any problems have been handled as well as if I were at home. ■

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