

The *real* micro condo experience

By Kara Kurylłowicz

Micro-condos are becoming a reality in Canada's major urban centres and while some might question the livability of spaces that start at 300 sq. ft., I know you can love living in these tiny homes, because I've done it.

I myself lived in a 150-sq.-ft., just-renovated studio in the Latin Quarter in downtown Paris a decade ago, long before "micro condo" was a true term. Tucked into a centuries-old, three-story structure built around a cobblestone courtyard and hidden behind a protective façade that ensured both serenity and safety, my brand-new-to-me studio was minutes by foot from every imaginable amenity as well as several Metro stations.

I could walk virtually everywhere and anywhere, which helped me saunter off the wine, chocolate and croissants but more importantly, it helped me get to know one of the world's most extraordinary cities at street level. Outdoor markets, bistros, museums, boulangeries, mosques, department stores, gardens, hammams, and the Seine were all footsteps away.

Today's worldwide reality is that if you want quick, easy access to everything that represents the best of any urban centre, chances are





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you're going to pay downtown or up-and-coming neighbourhood prices. Unless you're fabulously wealthy, that also means you'll happily sacrifice square footage to put convenience, accessibility and a city's cultural smorgasbord at your toe tips.

My studio on Rue de la Clef may have been tiny, but it was truly perfect. When interior designers and developers are challenged to cram everything into such a small space, their creativity has to coordinate between functional layouts to the selection of multipurpose appliances, furniture and accessories.

Be flexible, be adaptable and you can successfully entertain in your small home. Twenty years my junior, my neighbour Zuzannah from Budapest and I hosted a romantic soiree for four, serving the appetizers at my place, taking two steps across my threshold to her mirror-image unit for the main course and back to mine for dessert.

Solo, I even welcomed six new friends (France, Sweden, the U.S., Yugoslavia, Spain) for a multi-course

and incredibly cosy, but still memorable dinner without ever leaving my own studio.

If you're considering one of the new micro-condos coming on-stream in Toronto, know that the city outside your front door may matter more than the square footage that lies behind it.

My small space forced tidiness and put the kibosh on the random acquisition of unnecessary odds and ends which freed up both time and money. As importantly, it ensured I rarely gave in to my hermit tendencies and pushed me out the door and into everything that the City of Light had to offer day to day.

Was there a downside? My heart says "No!" but my head remembers "Yes!"

My splendid studio didn't feel quite as spacious or the lofty ceiling seem quite as high once I'd deployed precise foot placement to climb the narrow ladder to my double bed. Its original, exposed wooden beams became a little less charming each time I whacked my skull wriggling under the duvet or sat up in a panic after a dead-of-night visit from the hostile spirit resident. Soaping an ankle guaranteed my rear end would pop out of the steamy shower stall into the cool winter air and the novelty of resting my head in the sink while on the commode soon paled.

Would I choose to live small today? Absolutely!

Small studios in superb cities like Toronto can deliver adventure, freedom and inspire a curiosity and sense of adventure that can lead to a brand new world of wonder.