

# How To Avoid Paying Rent And Still Have A Place To Live

Rent does more to empty the pocketbook than any other single expense—except perhaps medical bills. For it reoccurs on a monthly, or sometimes even a weekly basis, and takes the largest share of your income. And for what? A sometimes leaky roof over your head, or a house or apartment that the landlord doesn't take much interest in fixing up—through greed, or because he or she thinks that if the place is repaired, some present or future tenants might damage it.

So, after you've paid your rent, you have nothing lasting to show for it, and if you miss a time or two, you and your possessions will be out in the street. So why torture yourself this way? Just find a way to live rent-free and you'll be much better off.

Probably the best thing to do, if you are in the country, is to trade caretaking services for living quarters—and sometimes board and a small wage (utilities are usually included). And this is usually when there is an absentee owner—or someone who has another residence wants his or her second

home protected from vandalism. However, sometimes a place in the city needs someone to look after it. If you look around, sometimes you can get an apartment with utilities out of the deal, perhaps just for staying there at night or maybe living there so people know that someone is around most of the time—even though you might be allowed to work at your regular job or come and go as you wish.

Last year I needed to go to a large city to get medical treatment, so I found a free guest house conveniently located—and got to live there just because the lady of the house was an alcoholic and often drank to excess and passed out, so the husband wanted someone on the premises while he worked, just to be there in case of emergency.

At present, I'm occupying an apartment over the barn to caretake a ranch owned by a well-to-do person who has a business in the city. And I do several chores such as yard work, housecleaning, irrigating and such things for which I am paid.

Last summer, I lived in a camper—with an electric hook up, and acted as driver for an elderly couple. For the man had to have cataract operations and recover from them—and the lady didn't know how to drive, and they lived out in the country a good ways. So this brings to mind another way to get free rent—live with the elderly who want to stay in their own homes. For they like to do their own housework usually, if they are able, and just need you for the heavier tasks—and to pacify relatives who might worry if they are living by themselves. Also, perhaps most important, they need someone there in case of emergency (some of these older people have quite spacious houses or mobile homes, so if you live with them you often have good accommodations, meals thrown in—and sometimes a small salary. Also, if they don't drive any more, you often have use of their automobile—which is a big plus.)

If you like the country and perhaps need isolation to read, write or invent things, you might enjoy residing at a seasonal camp ground, trailer park, resort or similar establishment and doing maintenance. And although during the busy time of the year you wouldn't have much free time, you can look forward to everyone going off and leaving you alone before long. Of course, the only drawback is that you will have to put up with spending the summer in such places as Arizona and Florida and the winter in places where you may be snowed in or have to endure blizzards. (If you are interested in this sort of set up, you might send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to The American Camping Association, Bradford Woods, Martinsville, IN 46151, to see if they can advise you on finding a position, or if you know of a camp in your area then go there and apply in person.)

Don't forget your friends and relatives—or friends of friends. For perhaps someone would give you room and board to be there at night in case the children are home alone—while the parents work—or maybe the householder is busy and would like to have you around to straighten the house and get the meals or perhaps to do the laundry and keep up the yard.

In all of these situations, honesty and dependability is your key to rent-free living—and if you don't have a friend to vouch for you, you will be asked to give references. For people are—or should be—particular about who they trust in their homes and with their property.

If you work on a farm or ranch, you might be furnished with housing as part of your job—or a trailer space and hook-ups. Or you might be put in a bunkhouse—which might be much fancier than what you see in the movies—with TV and microwave ovens as part of the furnishings, as well as washing machines and telephones.

The tried and true method, used by generations of students, is working in a private home for rent and board. And this can be either very good or very bad—depending on the situation, and the householders. But if you have a clear understanding of your duties—and they aren't slave drivers—this might be the right situation for you if you are willing to give up entertaining at home and can meet your friends somewhere else.

If you work in a group home for the handicapped, sometimes you will be asked to stay on the job day and night for up to three-and-a-half days or longer. But you will have to have some place to put your things, and find some place to go the other three-and-a-half days—which may or may not be a chore.

There was a time when I was a squatter, when my children were small and I had little income, for I took my family to live in a deserted house in the country and even had electricity hooked up. And we lived there for some time—until our finances improved. Similarly, of course, we hear about people who live in abandoned buildings in the city—although some of them are dangerous. But in an emergency you do need shelter, and it is often not available when you are broke and desperate—so you might want to take drastic measures and live in some unusual place.

About ten years ago, my 11-year-old son and I went to caretake an old gold mine in the desert. And since there was no electricity for cooling, so far out, he and I spent the summer in the mine tunnel, with all the conveniences of home—books, furniture, lamps, etc.—and a continual 72 degree temperature—while we watched the heat waves outside and felt good to be protected from the temperatures which sometimes went up as high as 120 degrees. However, for winter, we had a snug cabin—with a wood-burning stove and all the comforts of home—which we really enjoyed. That year, I remember well that my income was \$900 for the whole year, a fact which didn't bother us in the least, since the owner brought out groceries and the mail each week as we were 75 miles from town.

If you have a camper or trailer, you can usually camp on federal or public land—particularly if you are hidden from view and keep a low profile. In some places, the Bureau of Land Management is assessing a \$25.00 a season fee for a permit, and at times authorities ask people to move on after two weeks. But if you hide well enough, on public or private land—and no one knows you are there, you might never be asked to move.

You might want to read "VONU: The Search for Personal Freedom," by Rayo—which is edited by Jon Fisher and available from Loompanics Unlimited, P.O. Box 1197, Port Townsend, WA 98368. (Send for their catalog. It's wonderful.) Then, too, you might wish to subscribe to LIVING FREE, which can be gotten from Box 29, Hiler Branch, Buffalo, N.Y. 14223. (A sample copy costs one dollar.) It's very informative.



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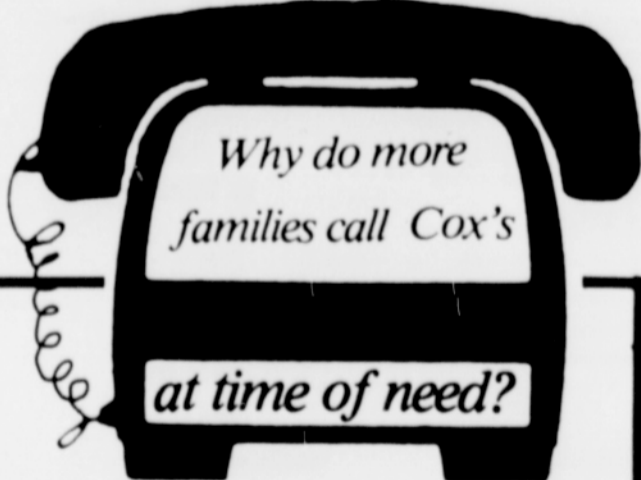
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