

SMALL WONDERS

By Katie Roberts, Monica Pitrelli and Jess Smit



It's fair to say that many of us downsize when we move to Singapore, but that's not always a bad thing. Here are a few expats who were willing to open their homes – all of which are under 1,000 square feet – and share their tips and tricks for fitting everything in.

Home #1

Size: 600 square feet
 Type: Condo – Parc Emily
 Location: Mount Emily Road
 Who lives there: Thai-born Thicha Srivisal (43), who owns Breathe Pilates Studio and has lived in Singapore for 16 years.

Her take on the space:

"The apartment has high ceilings and is on the top floor. It's hard to find a one-bedroom place with this much space. I bought it for the flexibility it offered in the renovation and its unbeatable location. I'm used to small spaces, so to me this is normal; I'm happy with the size, but small spaces mean you must be very creative."

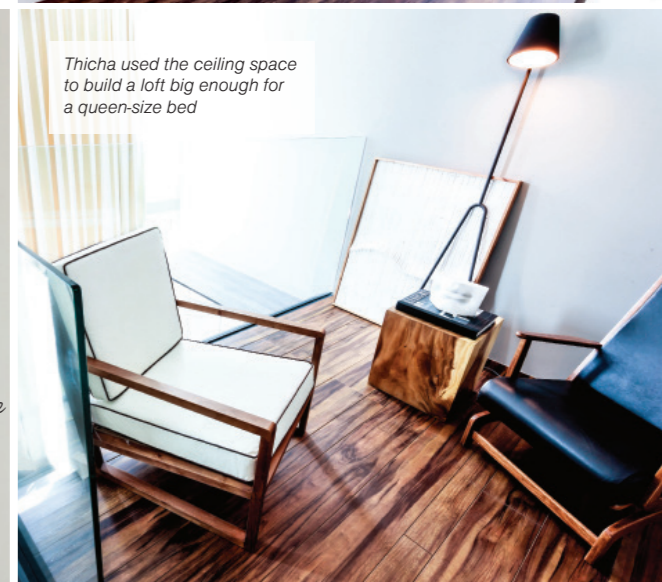
Too small, too large or just right?

"The space is just right for a single person or a couple."

Tip: Remove walls and replace them with glass dividers and windows. Large mirrors are decorative and create the illusion of space.



Thicha used the ceiling space to build a loft big enough for a queen-size bed

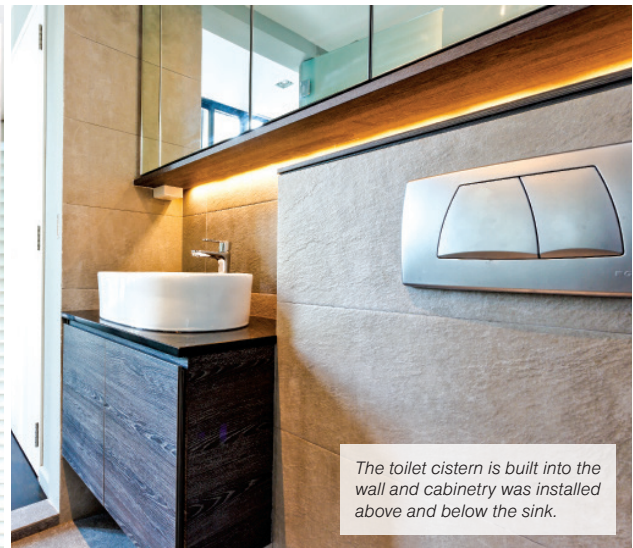


Tip: Remove stair rail to save space



Tip: Use the space under the stairs. Install built-in cupboards or place a chest of drawers, a console or a small wardrobe for storage.





Thicha's top choice for carpentry: Project File – projectfile.com.sg

Thicha's plan for her next place: Thicha's fiancé popped the question just as she had finished the renovation, changing her plans to move in. She imagines the home she and her fiancé choose will be a bit bigger, but still in a central location.

► No room for a dining table? Pull up a few bar chairs around PR Interiors' Washington Alabama **bar stand** to create an informal eating area. Its weathered oak frame can be folded into smaller sections when you're finished eating and houses internal storage space (whether for liquor or linen!). \$2,445; houseofanli.com



▲ Make the most of every inch of wall space in your living room with Montana's **television console**. Available in 42 colours, this storage system is fully customised, so you're guaranteed a perfect fit. Price on request; danishdesignco.com

Steal Thicha's space-saving style



◀ If glass dividers aren't an option, use **mirrors** to create the illusion of space, like this oversized one with antiqued silver frame. \$595; Taylor B; 9651 0700

▼ Even the area under the stairs works hard. This **Elise credenza** from Ralph Lauren is a perfect place to dump your keys and handbag in a hallway or entrance. And, it's mirrored too. \$3,595; Taylor B; 9651 0700



▲ Instead of one big sofa, Thicha has arranged two **chaises longues** to maximise the space in her living room. This classic Shepparton design won't date, and its feather-down seat is as about comfy as they come. From \$1,500; danovel.com

Home #2

Size: 800 square feet
 Type: Condo – Southbank Soho
 Location: Lavender, Kallang River
 Who lives there: British space-saving furniture entrepreneur Matt Levin (41), with his partner.

His take on the space:

"I moved from a London terrace house, so this is definitely smaller than my previous place but it's bright and airy. This space doubles as my office, so I find it inspiring to look at the view across the city from the 19th floor. I get a smug satisfaction knowing that as it's my bedroom and office, I have taken advantage of something others don't see as useful."

Too small, too large or just right?

"It's just right if you plan it right. Small spaces can be more liveable than you would imagine."



Tip: Rooms can have multiple uses. The concept of one job in one space is outdated; a bedroom can also be an office.

Tip: Use the stairs as a place to store and display art, especially if you have lots of glass and not enough wall space.



Matt's stairwell acts as an impromptu art gallery, handy for tenants who are not keen to hammer nails into walls.



Tip: Use furniture with dual purposes such as this shelf bed unit.



Tip: Don't waste valuable space with a large dining table. Buy a pop-up table for when guests arrive



Tip: Don't hide the outdoors. A view or just a window will immediately open up a room, so keep the curtains open and furniture against the wall.

Downstairs, the sofa doubles as a guest bed. The coffee table, also shown above fully extended as a dining table, can be stored underneath it.

Matt's top tip for sourcing second-hand furniture, art, kitchenware and more: Hock Siong & Co - hocksiong.com.sg
Matt's plans for his next place: At the end of his lease, Matt intends to move to another condo in a different neighbourhood, with a quest to experience more of what Singapore has to offer. But given his nifty furniture, he's not yearning for anything bigger.

Steal Matt's space-saving style



▲ A **sofa bed** need not lack style. Best upholstered in leather or faux leather, Citadine has a slim arm design and a comfy spring mattress. From \$2,800; danovel.com

▼ **Multi-purpose furniture** is what it's all about. With lift-up leaves and internal shelving, the SM101 can be a six-seater table when you want it to be and nifty storage when you don't. Plus, it's got wheels so you don't need to lug it around. \$2,000; danishdesignco.com



▶ No space is wasted in Matt's apartment. For an organised home, use **boxes** such as these on top of wardrobes, under beds or in cupboards. Kasset boxes; \$5.90 for two; ikea.com/sg

▼ Love the **bed-cum-shelving unit** in Matt's apartment? Slumbershelves is available in single or queen size and is an itsy-bitsy 55cm deep. A nifty rotation reveals the bed or the shelves as you wish – voilà! \$3,300; spacemanstore.com



▲ Matt's office moonlights as a bedroom, but if you simply want a **no-frills desk**, the scaled down Milk Mini is skinny in all the right places and yet has storage, too. \$2,000; danishdesignco.com



Home #3

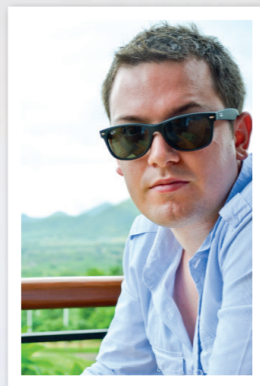
Size: 958 square feet
 Type: Condo - Pavilion 11
 Location: Novena
 Who lives there: British lawyer Anthony McCourt (28), with his fiancée

His take on the space:

"We looked at a number of places - everything from houses to walk-up shophouses - before deciding on this one. Our agent told us that they had a great space to show us - a condo with direct MRT access to the city and an amazing view. We arrived for a viewing around 6pm just as the sun was setting, came in through the lift and were won over by the view of the city skyline at dusk."

Too small, too large or just right?

"This is smaller than what we were used to in London, but that's part of living in Singapore. Occasionally, it feels too small - especially when my fiancée is pissed off at me! It can get cramped when guests arrive, and extra wardrobe space would be nice. But overall, it's not a bad size for two people."



Tip: Go with glass. A glass entranceway leading into the living room allows for a seamless transition from one space to the next.

Tip: Buy hollow furniture. Look for end tables, consoles and coffee tables with hidden interiors.



Tip: In small living rooms and bedrooms, eliminate the need for lamps and end tables by using wall-mounted, ceiling or floor lighting.



Anthony's glass entranceway provides a quirky spot for guests to leave personal messages.



Tip: Make every space count. Bespoke Bookshelving transforms this tiny electrical closet into a cupboard for books, DVDs and files.



Tip: Use the ceilings and walls in utility rooms. Hang brooms and mops on wall-mounted racks, and save precious floor space by hanging a drying rack from the ceiling.



Tip: Rather than a basic matte wall, a glass insert connects the living room and guest bedroom, making both rooms feel larger.



'SWEET DREAMS'

Tip: When guests arrive, drop blinds for privacy.



Tip: Outfit a storage area with shelving, drawers and storage units. The more organised it is, the more it will hold.

Anthony's top tip for home furnishings:

Taylor B for quirky pieces at wholesale prices - 9651 0700

Anthony's plan for his next place:

Though he is unsure as to whether his next home will be in Singapore or abroad, he would like to decorate it in a retro-chic style.

Steal Anthony's space-saving style



◀ ▼ Drawers on either side of the PR Interiors' Queensland coffee table provide the perfect place for hiding your stash of magazines and remote controls, while the egg-like Obo ottoman has a **hidden interior** to store all sorts of belongings. Coffee table, \$1,550; houseofanli.com. Ottoman from \$480 (depending on fabric); danovel.com.



▲ Maximise even the smallest alcove with bespoke **built-in shelving**. The ladder is a slick add-on ensuring your favourite books are always within arm's reach. Price on request; designintervention.com.sg



◀ Outfit storage areas and bedrooms with **shelving, drawers and hanging space** using Montana's customised wardrobe solutions. Price on request; danishdesignco.com

▶ This Portis **wall-mounted drying rack** saves floor space and folds away when not needed. \$29.90; ikea.com/sg



▶ This subtle yet stylish Takeru **wall lamp** eliminates the need for lamps and end tables. \$350; danishdesignco.com

