



Jessica Saia checks out life in the city's "coziest" apartments



Whether it's a closet-esque studio or the short-straw bedroom in an apartment, San Franciscans have evolved to forgo sofas and square footage for some of the "coziest" living spaces in the country. I talked to the inhabitants of seven spaces registering toward the "speck of dust" end of the size spectrum to learn about the good and the bad of micro living.

beau bergeron

49 SQUARE FEET (OF ROOM)

YEARS HERE
1½

RENT
A third of what other people are paying

HOOD
Mission Dolores



Have you always lived in small spaces?
No, but this was a very deliberate choice to attempt minimalism, and I love it. SF is so expensive so I'm glad to be saving money on rent.

What's the most frustrating part of living with little space?
Frustrating? You're always on the border of insanity! I find packing a suitcase is the thing that makes me go crazy. But I've learned to pack in the hall.

What's the best part?
I have some very hoard-y tendencies in my family, so this room keeps me in check. And of course climbing up into my loft bed always kinda feels like a tree house adventure.

How have you adapted to the space?
I worked with two Task Rabbit carpenters to plan out three zones in my 49 square feet: chilling, working, and sleeping. Unfortunately, I mostly do one of those!

How do people react to your place when they first see it?
People enter the room at normal room-entering speed and then are surprised to find so little.

jackie hancock

250 SQUARE FEET

YEARS HERE
2½

RENT
Started at \$975, now \$1,100

HOOD
Tenderloin



What's the most frustrating part of living with little space?
Keeping it organized. It's easy to just throw things when I come and go. You have to get creative – good thing I had Tetris training as a kid.

What's the best part?
No roommates.

How have you adapted to the space?
Shelves and bins and just not being too serious.

What did you have to sacrifice when you moved in?
Not having to fold up my bed when I have company.

Is storage an issue?
I make it work. Example: I keep my mannequins (photography props) in my bathroom.

Do you think one day it will get to you?
Yep. And then I'll move.

Do people ever remark about the place when they first see it?
All the time. They think I'm a hoarder until they enter all they way, then they realize it is just really fucking small.

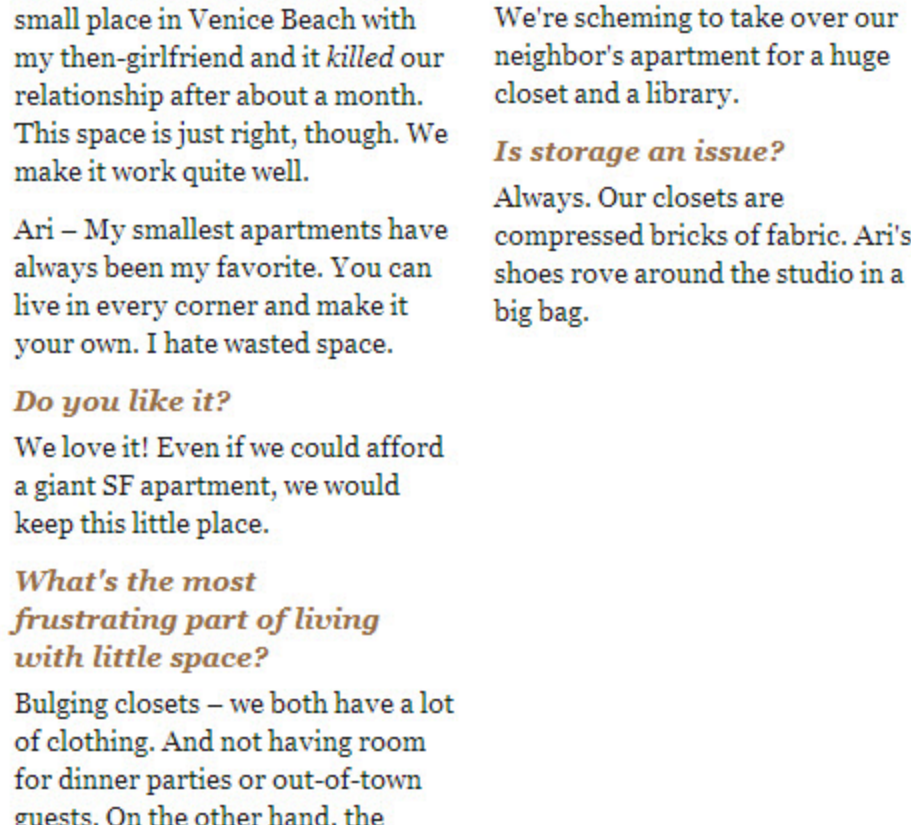
jacob palmer & arianne gelardin

350 SQUARE FEET

YEARS HERE
3

RENT
\$1,200

HOOD
Lower Haight



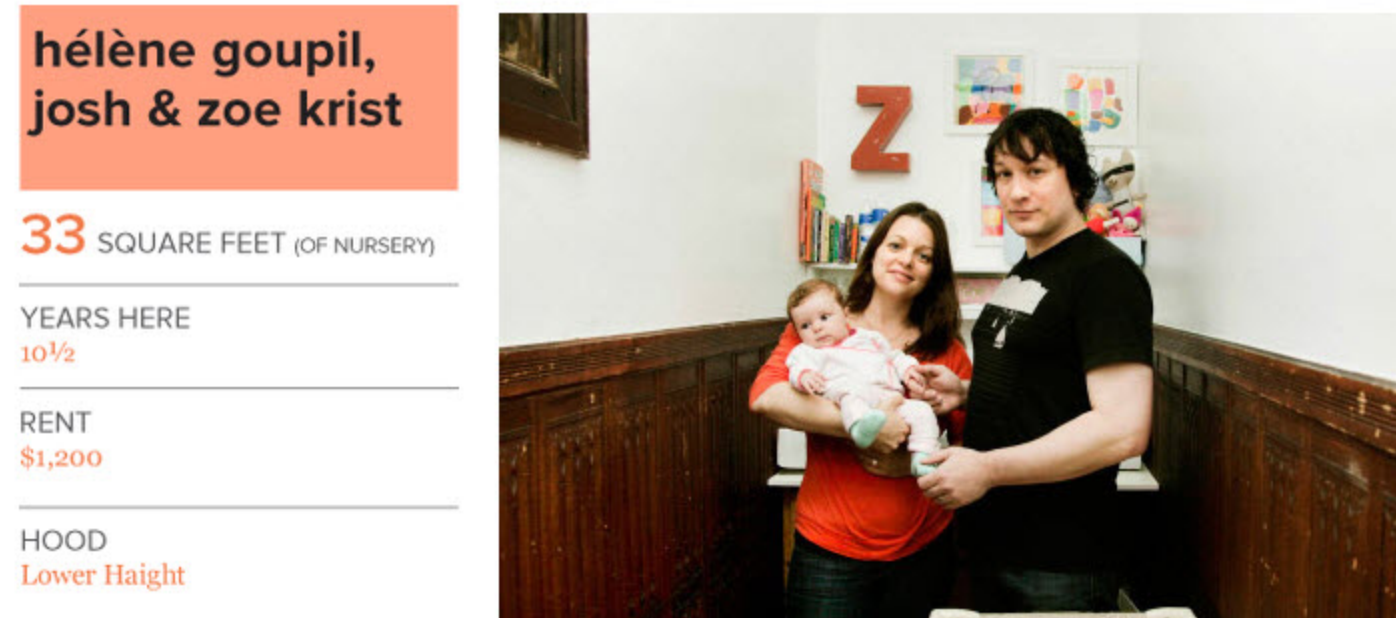
Have you always lived in small spaces?
Jacob - I lived in one other really small place in Venice Beach with my then-girlfriend and it killed our relationship after about a month. This space is just right, though. We make it work quite well.

Do you like it?
We love it! Even if we could afford a giant SF apartment, we would keep this little place.

What's the most frustrating part of living with little space?
Bulging closets – we both have a lot of clothing. And not having room for dinner parties or out-of-town guests. On the other hand, the small apartment gets us out around town more. We spend a lot of time stretching our legs in Golden Gate Park.

Do you ever fantasize about having a larger space?
We're scheming to take over our neighbor's apartment for a huge closet and a library.

Is storage an issue?
Always. Our closets are compressed bricks of fabric. Ari's shoes rove around the studio in a big bag.



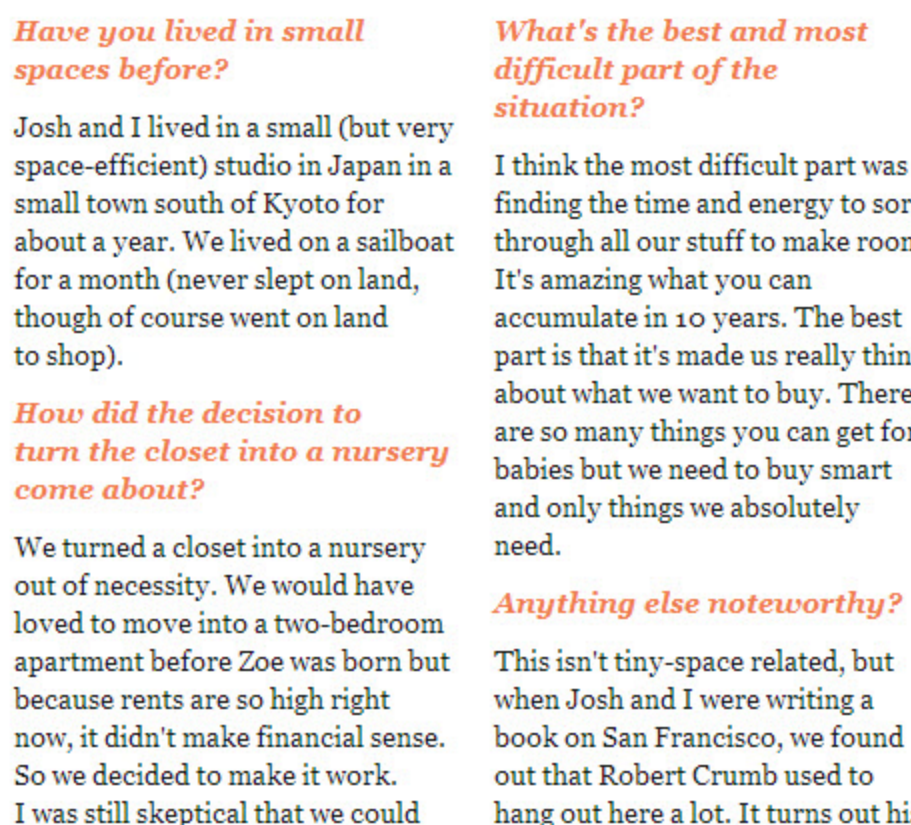
hélène goupil, josh & zoe krist

33 SQUARE FEET (OF NURSERY)

YEARS HERE
10½

RENT
\$1,200

HOOD
Lower Haight



Have you lived in small spaces before?
Josh and I lived in a small (but very space-efficient) studio in Japan in a small town south of Kyoto for about a year. We lived on a sailboat for a month (never slept on land, though of course went on land to shop).

How did the decision to turn the closet into a nursery come about?
We turned a closet into a nursery out of necessity. We would have loved to move into a two-bedroom apartment before Zoe was born but because rents are so high right now, it didn't make financial sense. So we decided to make it work. I was still skeptical that we could do it but Josh kept reminding me that if we lived in Japan, we'd probably do with even less space.

What's the best and most difficult part of the situation?
I think the most difficult part was finding the time and energy to sort through all our stuff to make room. It's amazing what you can accumulate in 10 years. The best part is that it's made us really think about what we want to buy. There are so many things you can get for babies but we need to buy smart and only things we absolutely need.

Anything else noteworthy?
This isn't tiny-space related, but when Josh and I were writing a book on San Francisco, we found out that Robert Crumb used to hang out here a lot. It turns out his brother lived in our apartment for years and Robert Crumb would give our landlord some of his drawings. Josh wrote him to ask about his time in SF and in our place, and Robert Crumb sent us a handwritten letter back that we still have on the wall.

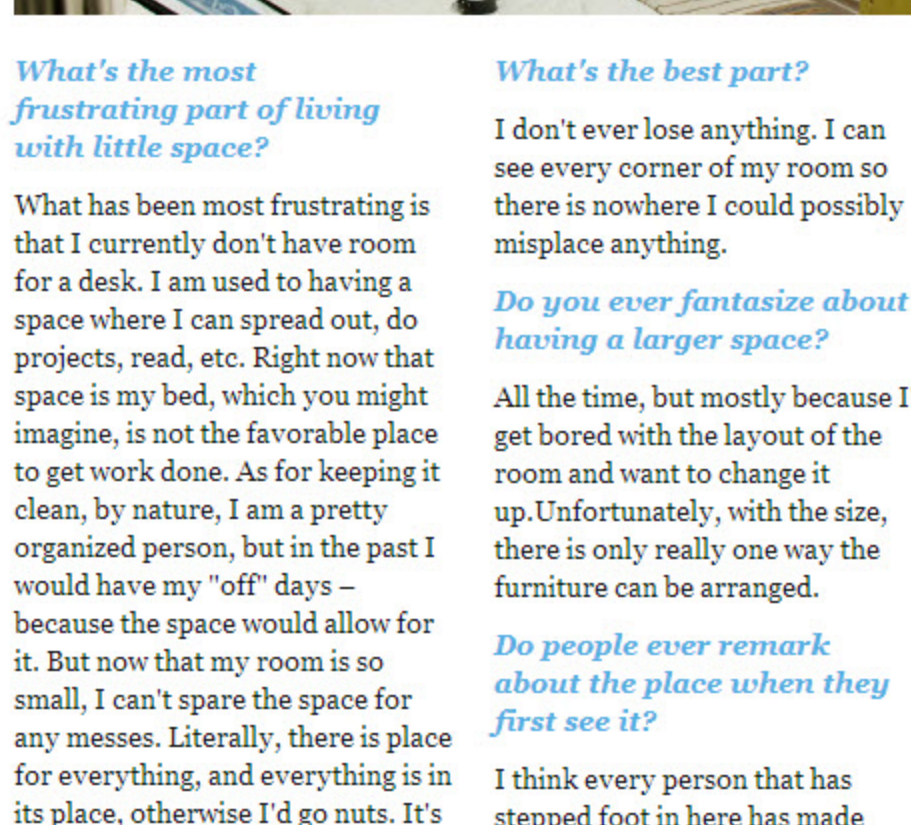
sophie mosgrove

? SQUARE FEET

YEARS HERE
1

RENT
\$780

HOOD
Mission, bitches!



What's the most frustrating part of living with little space?
What has been most frustrating is that I currently don't have room for a desk. I am used to having a space where I can spread out, do projects, read, etc. Right now that space is my bed, which you might imagine, is not the favorable place to get work done. As for keeping it clean, by nature, I am a pretty organized person, but in the past I would have my "off" days – because the space would allow for it. But now that my room is so small, I can't spare the space for any messes. Literally, there is place for everything, and everything is in its place, otherwise I'd go nuts. It's actually almost easier to clean because there isn't enough room for a broom; I just wipe a rag on where the floor is exposed and voilà.

What's the best part?
I don't ever lose anything. I can see every corner of my room so there is nowhere I could possibly misplace anything.

Do you ever fantasize about having a larger space?
All the time, but mostly because I'll get bored with the layout of the room and want to change it up. Unfortunately, with the size, there is only really one way the furniture can be arranged.

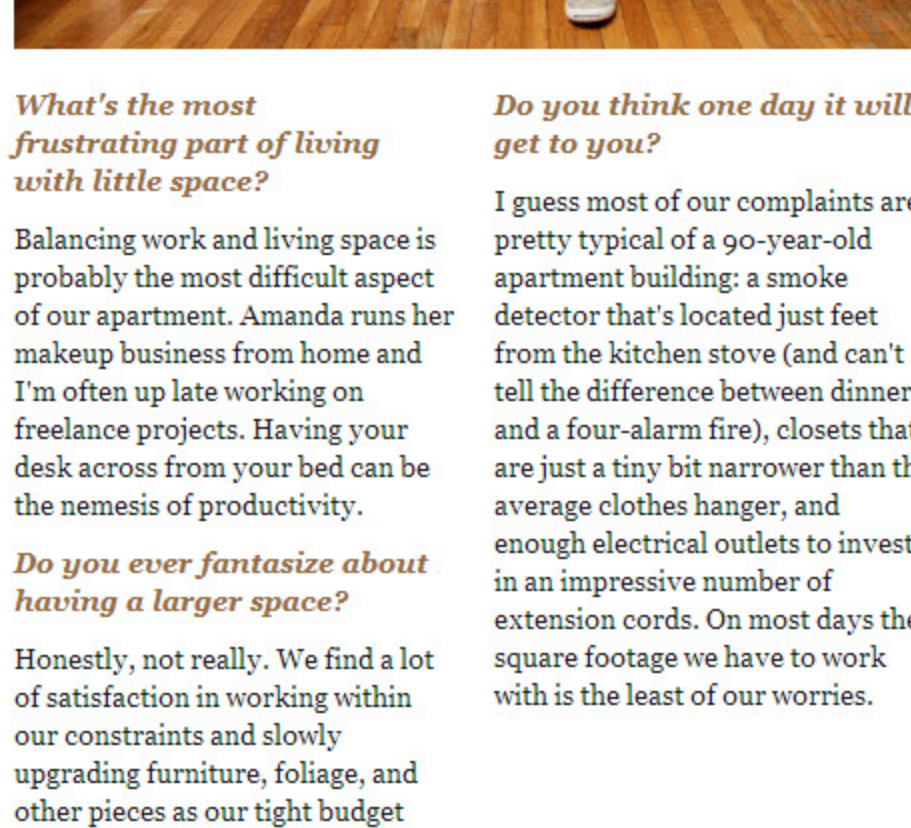
Do people ever remark about the place when they first see it?
I think every person that we stepped foot in here has made some comment about how tiny the space is, even after several warnings. I once dated a guy who refused to stay here because the room was too small. To his credit, he was a giant, so I guess I get it.

wes mitchell & amanda nicole

400 SQUARE FEET

YEARS HERE
2

HOOD
Where the Lower Haight, Hayes Valley, and the Mission meet. We affectionately call it Taco Bell Heights.



What's the most frustrating part of living with little space?
Balancing work and living space is probably the most difficult aspect of our apartment. Amanda runs her makeup business from home and I'm often up late working on freelance projects. Having your desk across from your bed can be the nemesis of productivity.

Do you ever fantasize about having a larger space?
Honestly, not really. We find a lot of satisfaction in working within our constraints and slowly upgrading furniture, foliage, and other pieces as our tight budget allows.

Do you think one day it will get to you?
I guess most of our complaints are pretty typical of a 90-year-old apartment building: a smoke detector that's located just feet from the kitchen stove (and can't tell the difference between dinner and a four-alarm fire), closets that are just a tiny bit narrower than the average clothes hanger, and enough electrical outlets to invest in an impressive number of extension cords. On most days the square footage we have to work with is the least of our worries.

alyona pakhnev

400 SQUARE FEET

YEARS HERE
8

HOOD
Nob Hill



What's the best part of living with such little space?
It's just so cozy. That's the best part. People naturally like things that are small and cute, and that perfectly describes my apartment. All my furniture is small too, so it's like living in this miniature world that's all mine.

What's the most frustrating?
Counter space is definitely a problem. I am already missing the cooking gene, and learning to cook while trying to balance the cutting board on the teeny tiny space between the sink and dish rack – not ideal.

How have you adapted to the space?
My closet is so small that I switch the clothes out seasonally and store the rest at my parents' house. Also, I use the microwave as a plant stand.

Do you ever fantasize about having a larger space?
I fantasize about it a lot. Closets, couches, and counter space.

What did you have to sacrifice when you moved in?
Being able to host out-of-town guests, and also having a couch that's not also my bed.

Is storage an issue?
Definitely. Like Carrie in *Sex and the City*, there have been times when I've stored sweaters in my oven. Good thing I can't bake if my life depends on it!

Do you think one day it will get to you?
There are only so many times in your life you want to push the clothes in the closet with all your might just to be able to extract that one dress you wanted to wear. I think fairly soon. I will be ready for a bigger place, where I can host out-of-town guests, store all my shoes and clothes at once, and not have to pick between a toaster and a juicer.

lindsay mayott

400 SQUARE FEET

YEARS HERE
1

RENT
\$1000

HOOD
Lower Nob Hill / Tenderloin



Have you ever lived in a smaller space than this one?
The smallest space I've ever lived in was where I lived before this studio; it was the tiniest studio I had ever seen. It was in a building at the top of Nob Hill, which afforded the best views of the Golden Gate Bridge, but I literally had a foot wide path to walk through in my living area because everything was so jammed into the space.

Do you like it?
I love my studio now - compared to my last place this is a mansion!

What's the most frustrating part of living with little space?
STORAGE. I have a walk in closet, but it is stuffed to the gills with all of my stuff. I walk in there to get something and walk right back out because sometimes I just can't deal with having to find stuff in there. Also, entertaining is next to impossible. I hosted a birthday brunch for myself a few months back, and twenty-something people were scattered all over the floor; my cat was getting into everyone's plates and I'm sure at least 5 glasses of champagne were spilled. It was a mess.

Do you think one day it will get to you?
My boyfriend and I are moving to NYC in August and we will be finding a place together. NYC is the wrong city to move to if you're looking for larger spaces! But, as cheesy as it sounds, it's not really the size that matters but the energy you create within a space that makes it "home." Mostly, I just want to have a garden someday! The closest I have to a garden now is some dying plants on a fire escape.

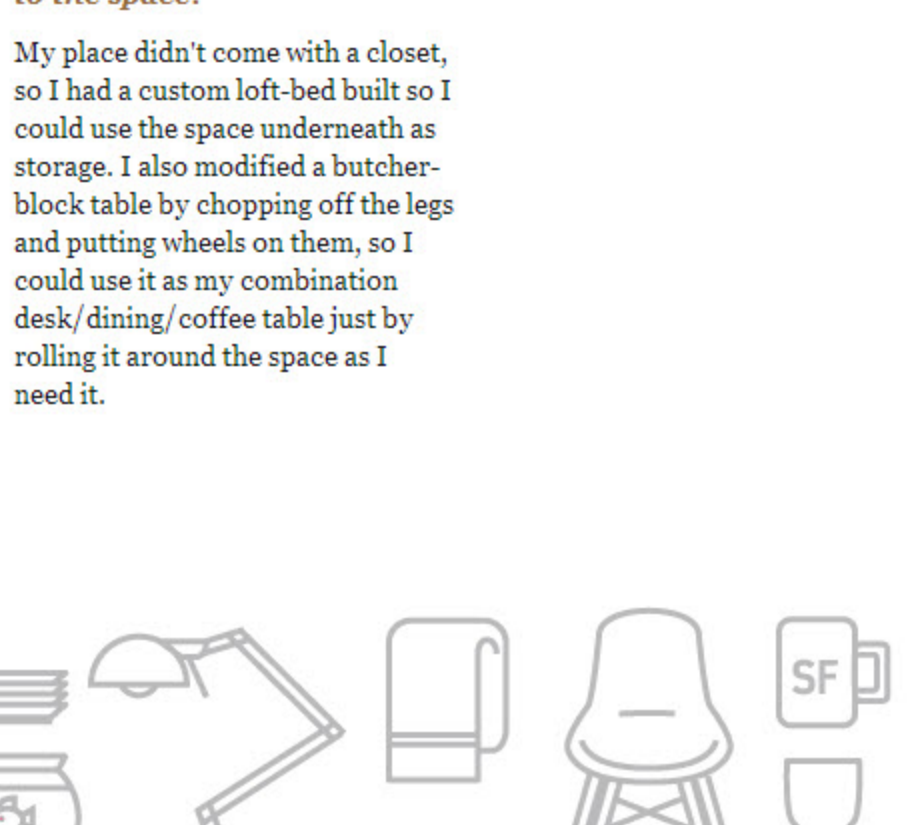
Anything else interesting or noteworthy?
Well as I'm writing this, the loud it is outside my window. Living on Geary is a mistake! It is the LOUDEST street in SF!

jennifer villamin

373 SQUARE FEET

YEARS HERE
3

HOOD
Border of Tenderloin and Hayes Valley



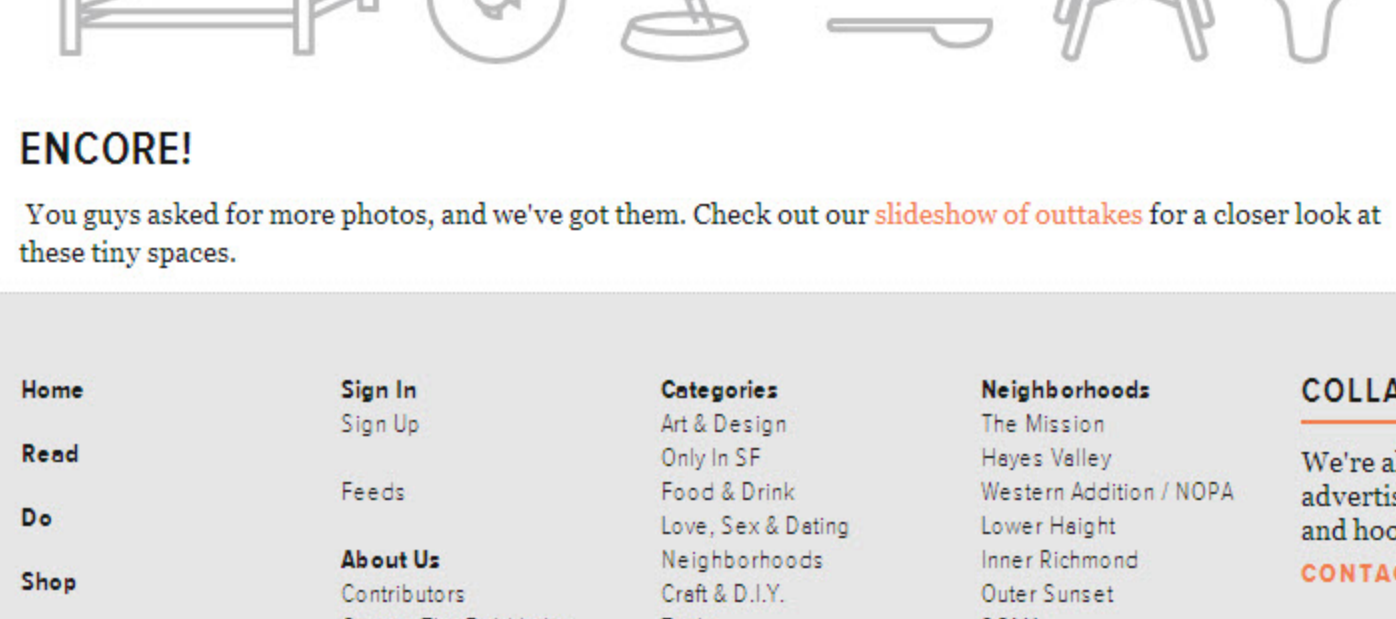
Have you always lived in small spaces?
Only in San Francisco...

What's the most frustrating part of living with little space?
Clutter builds quickly and easily. I'm always trying to find creative ways to create storage.

What's the best part?
It's easier to clean, and makes me restrict any impulse shopping.

How have you accommodated/adjusted to the space?
My place didn't come with a closet, so I had a custom loft-bed built so I could use the space underneath as storage. I also modified a butcher-block table by chopping off the legs and putting wheels on them, so I could use it as my combination desk/dining/coffee table just by rolling it around the space as I need it.

What did you have to sacrifice when you moved in?
I had a pretty big book collection since college, along with a pretty big video collection (both VHS & DVD). I didn't have enough room for both collections, so I donated all my books to the SF Library...but kept all my videos.



ENCORE!

You guys asked for more photos, and we've got them. Check out our [slideshow of outtakes](#) for a closer look at these tiny spaces.