



Accommodation

There are many things to remember when choosing your accommodation - location, eating requirements, sleeping arrangements, facilities, etc.

So...we've put together a few important factors to consider, helping you make the right decision for your holiday...



Decide what you want

Before you can begin your search, you need to decide what kind of holiday accommodation you are looking for. Are you seeking a crash pad for a city break, looking for a holiday cottage in the UK, or a hotel/apartment for a summer holiday? Are you looking for budget options or do you prefer to relax in the lap of luxury? Once you've decided on your holiday priorities, it will be easier to find the right accommodation.

Location vs cost

If you want to be in the heart of a city or have a beach front view, then there will likely be a fair cost attached to this. However, if you book simply based on the cheapest options available then beware that you may be situated a little out of the way. On the other hand, accommodation located out of the centre may also be quieter and less crowded.

If you are planning to stay in private accommodation, it is advisable to view the property before handing over any money. Obviously prices will be highest during peak times – as a guide, prices are generally up to 20% higher in summer, but it is not unusual for some hotels to double in price. One way round this is to search the Internet for special offers, which can often considerably undercut such rates.

Eating and drinking

Before booking your accommodation, it is important to think about where you plan to eat and drink – do you want to stay around the resort or is your accommodation simply a base for exploring? If you plan on spending a lot of time within the resort, an all-inclusive package could work out cheaper. The only problem you may face is if you are a fussy eater, as you could end up paying twice as much if you don't like the food they serve. All-inclusive is often provided at destinations where holidaymakers are advised to stay within the resort for safety reasons, but you should not worry about being restricted for choice, as there are usually a wide selection of cafes, bars and restaurants for guests to choose from.

If you enjoy dining in different restaurants or don't plan to stay around your accommodation all of the time, then self-catering may be a good option for you. There are no meals provided, but if you are staying in an apartment, you will often have a kitchen and so have the option of preparing your own meals, if you wish. If you are trying to stick to a budget, self-catering may be a good choice for you, as by purchasing food and drink from the local supermarket and cooking your own meals, you could save a considerable amount on eating out.

Budget accommodation

Perhaps not for everyone, but budget accommodation can provide you with a convenient base in the heart of your destination without breaking the bank. Whether this is in the form of a hostel, bed and breakfast or perhaps a caravan, you don't necessarily have to spend a fortune to have a great holiday. If you are considering budget accommodation though, be aware that you may have to share your accommodation with noisy students and rowdy backpackers!

Bucking the trend

Hotels and apartments are ideal for the majority of holidaymakers, but what happens if you fancy staying somewhere a bit different? There are several options available, from hiring out entire properties, such as mansions and stately homes, to staying in a barn or an eco-lodge. Another option is taking part in a home exchange. This is where two families agree to swap homes for a vacation and can work out a lot cheaper, with many companies now offering this service.

Reviewing your options

It is important to look for quality when researching somewhere to stay, so check to see if the accommodation has been given an award or a rating from an independent organisation. There are also a number of websites that feature visitor reviews that are worth browsing, as these allow you to see the experiences and comments of people who have stayed there previously, as opposed to the marketing copy on the accommodation's own website.

If you have visited a travel agency and seen a holiday you like, don't book it straight away. Take down the details and do a bit of research on the resort or destinations yourself. This may seem rather time consuming, but a few extra minutes will be more than worth it if you find the dream holiday destination.

Managing your booking

The Internet makes searching for accommodation much easier, but there are things you need to be aware of before booking online. Take the time to shop around using price comparison websites, as this can save you a considerable sum. Booking in advance or at the last minute are generally the best times to get a good deal, but if you are leaving it until the last minute, make sure you are flexible on dates.

When booking online, it is a good idea to make sure the website is reputable – a good indication of this is if it is a member of ABTA – if so, it will have the logo at the bottom of the webpage. Make sure you read what is and what is not included in the price and only enter your credit/debit card details if there is a secure booking page. When you receive your confirmation of booking email, make sure you print it out and take this with you as proof of purchase.

Attention to detail

Whether booking online or offline, make sure that you double check that the names of your party, your address, dates of birth and all booking information is correct. Online companies often charge you an administration fee to amend such details and as travel agencies promote holidays offered by tour operators, often if you have to make any amends, not only will you have to pay an admin fee to the travel agency, but you may have to pay a fee to the tour operator and airline as well.
