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This chapter gives practical information for the region. For details on specific parts of the southwest, turn to the relevant county chapter.

ACCOMMODATION

As varied as the weather in an English summer, there's somewhere to sleep to suit all tastes in the southwest. From lighthouses to luxury estates, from chintzy B&Bs to camping barns, from boutique hotels to bijou cottages. Pampered or primitive, it's all here; the best is detailed throughout this book.

We often split sleeping sections into three price bands: budget (under £60), midrange (£60 to £130) and top end (more than £130). These rates are the full price during high season for a double room. In general you get what you pay for: some of the budget options are very basic, while you'll be cosseted and coddled at the luxury end. Overall standards

are good. In many places prices and demand rise in the main tourist season, broadly Easter to October, with a peak during the school holidays of July and August. Irritatingly in some cities, Bath for example, you often have to pay more at weekends throughout the year. Some sleeping options are only open in the holiday season – we've noted it where this is the case.

Accommodation in the UK is graded by stars (five being superplush). In general it's a reasonable gauge to what's on offer, but it can't be a guarantee of good service. Equally, as hotels and guesthouse have to pay to be classified some excellent but small gems don't bother. The **regional tourist board** (☎ 0870 442 0880; www.visitsouthwest.co.uk) is a good central resource; it also lists ecofriendly places to stay and those accessible to people with disabilities.

B&Bs & Guesthouses

More personal than a hotel but more comfy than camping – that's the great British B&B (bed and breakfast), and it's alive and well across the Westcountry. B&Bs range from larger, professional affairs to eccentric enclaves where your presence appears to come as a surprise to the proprietor. Styles vary from crisp white linen in smart city streets through to rustic rooms in remote villages and clashing carpets in kiss-me-quick resorts. Some still have shared bathrooms but the surge towards the en suite can mean everything's been crammed into an unfeasibly small space, providing great comic potential; you may have a toilet – but is that the only place to sit? Most B&Bs serve the kind of belt-busting breakfast that means you don't have to eat till the evening.

BOOK ACCOMMODATION ONLINE

For more accommodation reviews and recommendations by Lonely Planet authors, check out the online booking service at www.lonelyplanet.com. You'll find the true, insider lowdown on the best places to stay. Reviews are thorough and independent. Best of all, you can book online.

PRACTICALITIES

- Measurements are mixed in England: miles are driven and walked, but map heights are in metres.
- Order a pint (beer or cider) in a pub, but fill your car with litres of petrol.
- Shop goods are labelled in metric (kilograms), but people think in pounds and ounces.
- Brits don't weigh themselves in pounds (US style); instead they use stones (bizarrely a unit of 14 pounds). Clear up confusion with our conversion table inside the front cover.
- Luckily electricity is simple: three flat pins connect to the 240V (50Hz AC) power supply.

Prices vary wildly. Expect to pay anything from £40 for a double with shared bathroom, to £60 for a double room with a private bathroom. Rates can go beyond £95. Single travellers normally face a premium paying up to 75% of the double rate.

Here are some more B&B tips:

- Some don't take credit or debit cards and instead require cash or cheque.
- Advance bookings are a good idea and are essential in busy places during peak periods.
- In most towns there's an area where B&Bs cluster – search it out then play spot the 'Vacancy' sign.
- In cities, some are for long-term residents or those on welfare only.
- Rates may rise at busy times, but some places cut prices for longer stays.
- When booking, check where the B&B is actually located. In country areas, postal addresses often include the nearest town, which may be up to 20 miles away.

Bunkhouses & Camping Barns

Basic, budget places to bed down for the night, bunkhouses and camping barns are aimed primarily at hikers and cyclists and are normally in gorgeously rural locations.

Facilities vary but bunkhouses tend to have more to them; expect dorm-style accommodation as well as bathroom and cooking facilities, but you'll still need to bring a sleeping bag. Camping barns are more primitive, often just a sleeping platform with cold running water and a flush toilet. So bring all your camping kit except the tent.

Rates for both categories are normally around £6 to £15. Some are run by the Youth Hostels Association, some are independent – we give details in the county chapters. They are concentrated in Dartmoor (p205) and Ex-

moor (p116); contact the **Dartmoor National Park Authority** (DNPA; ☎ 01822-890414; www.dartmoor-npa.gov.uk) and the **Exmoor National Park Authority** (ENPA; ☎ 01398-323841; www.exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk). The **YHA** (☎ 0870 770 8868; www.yha.org.uk) also has information.

Camping

There's nothing quite like waking up at 4am with your face squashed up against a flysheet and your feet in the open air; camping either appeals or it doesn't. If it does the southwest has some stunning sites – from farmers' fields equipped with a toilet, a tap, views of the sea and nothing else to facility-laden sites (think bouncy castles and pools) within striking distance of resorts. In this book we quote prices per camp site for two people – regionwide costs range from £5 to £20.

On Dartmoor you can experience wild-camping at its best. Pitching a tent on certain parts of the open moor is allowed, provided some simple rules are followed. These are largely to do with choosing a sensible place to camp, avoiding damage and dealing with waste; the DNPA produces a free leaflet. If you'll be fiddling with flysheets a lot, consider joining the **Camping and Caravanning Club** (☎ 0845 130 7632; www.campingandcaravanningclub.co.uk). Membership is £33 a year and you get the guide *Your Big Sites Book* free.

Hostels

Be they official or unofficial, the southwest is peppered with hostels offering a cheap 'n' cheerful sleeping experience. They range from funky backpackers in city centres, through to surfers' crash pads in Cornwall and dignified old houses in rural Dorset. In the summer they're popular places so book ahead, conversely some close in the winter so check before turning up.