



Survival Guide

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Directory A-Z

Accommodation

There's a vast choice of accommodation in Mediterranean Europe, ranging from world-famous five-star hotels to modest family rooms.

The cheapest places to stay are camping grounds, followed by hostels and student dormitories. Guest houses, pensions and private rooms often offer good value, as do rooms in religious institutes. Self-catering flats and cottages are also worth considering for group stays, especially for longer sojourns. You can also bunk down in a B&B, stay on a farm or crash on a couch.

Unless otherwise stated, prices in this book are high-season rates for rooms with private bathrooms. All listings are ordered according to preference with the author's favourite place listed first.

Some general tips:

» High season rates apply at Easter, from June to August, and over Christmas and New Year. Prices are also high in April and May in many of the region's big cities. Conversely, many city hoteliers drop rates in August to lure punters away from the coast.

» Book ahead for peak holiday periods and year-round in big destinations such as Paris, Rome and Madrid – at least for the first night or two. Most places can be booked online, and many require credit card details in lieu of a deposit.

» It's often worth bargaining in the low season as, although they may not advertise the fact, many places reduce their rates.

» Many accommodation options on the coast close over winter, typically between November and March.

» Most airports and many large train stations have accommodation-booking desks, although they rarely cover budget hotels. Tourist offices can generally supply accommodation lists and some will even help you find a hotel. There's usually a small fee for this service, but

if accommodation is tight it can save you hassle. Agencies offering private rooms are also worth considering.

» In some destinations locals wait at train stations or ferry terminals, touting rented rooms. Don't necessarily reject these out of hand, as in some places they're genuine offers. Before accepting though, make sure the accommodation isn't in a far-flung suburb or an outlying village that requires a difficult journey, and don't forget to confirm the price.

» It's always worth checking hotel websites for last-minute deals and discounts.

B&Bs

B&B accommodation is widely available across the region and usually provides excellent value. There's a huge selection of places, ranging from traditional B&B set-ups (private homes with a guest room or two) to smart boutique-style outfits offering quality accommodation at midrange and top-end prices. As a general rule, a B&B room will be cheaper than a hotel room of corresponding comfort.

Most B&Bs will give you a key, allowing you to come and go as you like, although some places might insist that you're back by a certain time. Most smarter B&Bs will have private bathrooms; in some you might have to share with other guests or the host family.

When booking, make sure you're happy with the location. City B&Bs are often not central, so check local transport connections; if it's in a remote rural spot, work out in advance how it fits in with your plans.

BOOK YOUR STAY ONLINE

For more accommodation reviews by Lonely Planet authors, check out hotels.lonelyplanet.com. You'll find independent reviews as well as recommendations on the best places to stay. Best of all, you can book online.