

# Western Balkans Directory

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The regional directory provides a general overview of information applying to the whole of the Western Balkans. It's a diverse region of millions of people, so we've had to generalise a bit. For more specific information, refer to the relevant country directories.

## ACCOMMODATION

For each accommodation listing in this book, we've generally used the currency in which the hostel, hotel or guesthouse quotes their prices; some in local currency and others in euros

### BOOK YOUR STAY ONLINE

For more accommodation reviews and recommendations by Lonely Planet authors, check out [lonelyplanet.com/hotels](http://lonelyplanet.com/hotels) where you'll find the insider low-down on the best places to stay. Reviews are thorough and independent. Best of all, you can book online.

## PRACTICALITIES

- Standard European electricity is used (220V to 240V/50Hz to 60Hz); as throughout Europe, the region uses standard electricity plugs with two round prongs.
- The metric system is used for weights and measures.
- Every country in the region is in the Central European time zone (GMT+1).
- For useful websites covering the region, see p24.

or US dollars. Some establishments quote in one currency but expect or accept payment in another.

Accommodation suggestions and reviews in this book are listed in three broad categories: budget, midrange and top end. Because these vary across the region (Croatia is in a different economic class from Albania, for instance), they are categorised according to local price ranges, not by some regional standard. Within each category, we've ordered reviews according to our personal opinion. This is of course a subjective way to do things; just because Goran's place is listed before Mira's doesn't necessarily mean that there's an enormous difference, but perhaps Goran's is closer to the centre or has a bigger bathroom.

The cheapest places to shack up are camping grounds, followed by hostels and student accommodation. Guesthouses, *pen-sions* and private rooms offer good value and some hotels offer comparably low prices. In some regions, self-catering flats offer fantastic value. Those in cities may need to be arranged well in advance during season and may demand a minimum stay. Countryside cottages may suit people travelling in groups.

Peak holiday periods and major festivals can make accommodation scarce; book ahead. Sometimes even camping grounds fill up, particularly near large towns and cities. Popular destinations such as Dubrovnik and

Hvar can fill up quickly at any time. Make reservations as many weeks ahead as possible, at least for the first night or two. A two-minute international call (or Skype call) seems a more sensible use of time and money than spending a day of your holiday looking for accommodation.

Accommodation-booking desks at airports rarely cover the lower hotel strata; tourist offices generally have more extensive accommodation lists, and the helpful ones will go out of their way to find you a place to hang your hat.

## Camping

There are many camping grounds throughout the region. Even those intended for motorists are often easily accessible with public transport and almost always have space for backpackers with tents. Many camping grounds rent small on-site cabins, bungalows or caravans for double or triple the regular camping fee. Some camping grounds are usefully affiliated with outdoor-activity companies.

The standard of camping grounds varies a lot. Some have pristine facilities, others offer basic squat toilets and sporadic water supply. Croatia's coast has nudist camping grounds galore (signposted 'FKK', the German acronym for 'naturist') in secluded locations for those who don't mind letting it all hang out.

Depending on facilities, location and demand, camping grounds may only be open from April to October, May to September, or perhaps only June to August. A few private camping grounds are open year-round. In popular resorts, bungalows will probably be full in July and August.

You're sometimes allowed to build a campfire – ask first. Camping in the wild is usually illegal; ask locals about the situation before you pitch your tent on a beach or in an open field.

## Guesthouses & Pensions

Small private *pensions* (or *pansions*) are common in the Western Balkans. Priced between hotels and private rooms, *pensions* typically have fewer than a dozen rooms and sometimes a small restaurant or bar on the premises. You'll get more familial service at a *pension* than you would at a hotel, which may come at the expense of a teensy bit of privacy,

though many are run with the unobtrusive efficiency of hotels.

## Homestays & Private Rooms

Homestays are often the most authentic way to experience daily life in the region. Bring small gifts for your hosts – it's a deeply ingrained cultural tradition.

In most countries, travel agencies can arrange accommodation in local homes or you will be approached at train or bus stations by people with rooms to let. This can be good or bad – it's impossible to generalise. Just make sure you check the room and clearly negotiate the price before you commit, and don't leave valuables behind when you go out. When in doubt, arrange rooms through tourist offices, which have lists of places registered for room rental.

The other option is to find a place yourself; look for pleasant buildings marked with signs reading *Zimmer frei* (German), *sobi* (Macedonian) or *room* (English!).

## Hostels

There isn't a hostel scene throughout the whole region as yet; it's in its foetal stages in Albania, Kosovo, Macedonia and Montenegro. Where there are hostels, they are generally cheap, secure and available to everyone – not just card-carrying youths. Many hostels are part of the national Youth Hostel Association (YHA), which is affiliated with Hostelling International (HI). Hostel cards are seldom required but may net small discounts. Cards can be purchased at some hostels, through national hostelling offices or through HI ([www.ihf.org](http://www.ihf.org)); also see p432.

In our experience, most hostels provide clean linen, towels, soap and toilet paper. In extremely rare situations you may be required to bring or hire a sleeping sheet. Hostels generally provide a bed, communal bathrooms

### WHERE BB IS KING

Throughout the region when a building has no official number its address is usually written with the street name followed by 'bb'. This stands for *bez broja* – 'without a number'. Be aware that rural 'bb's might give a village name rather than a street.