

11. Accommodation

Always have a list of several accommodation options, their addresses and contact numbers when you arrive in a new place in case your first choice is full or you find it unsuitable when you get there. Guidebooks will always have details of accommodation options.

You can check out the quality of different accommodation and the value-for-money they give through:

- Guidebooks
- Travel magazines
- Booking websites with accommodation reviews: e.g. www.hostelworld.com www.tripadvisor.co.uk or www.hostelbookers.com
- Online travel forums such as Thorntree: www.lonelyplanet.com/thorntree

When arriving in a new destination and finding accommodation, it can be useful to have a check list of criteria for choosing where to stay. This might include a proximity to a local activity; the offer of free airport transfers; a criteria based on cost and your budget; the opportunity to rent bicycles; breakfast included etc.

It is also important to consider safety and security risks when choosing your accommodation. Check whether your chosen accommodation has smoke alarms and fire escapes (and find out where they are when you arrive); suitable safe storage for baggage should you need to leave it during the day; a night time guard or someone to call in an emergency; whether it is in a safe area and if it has a friendly and welcoming atmosphere.

If your accommodation is arranged through a gap provider, ask them about the type and quality of the accommodation, how much host families will be paid (if applicable), and talk to previous programme participants about their experiences of the accommodation in which they were placed.

Exploratory questions to ask yourself:

- Where will I stay during each phase of my gap experience? Will accommodation be organised by me or by a gap provider?
- Would I prefer to stay in a hostel with the opportunity of meeting other travellers, with a local family to experience the local culture, or with friends in the area?
- What would be the pros and cons of the types of accommodation that I have chosen?
- Does it fit in with my budget?
- What is included in the cost of the accommodation (e.g. food, a towel, transfers from airport)?
- Is this accommodation convenient for the places I want to visit (e.g. location, proximity to good transport links)?
- Is the accommodation safe?
- What alternative accommodation options are there if I am unhappy with where I am staying?