

Title:

From Cheap Hotels to Backpackers Hostels

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Summary:

Traveling on a budget - From hostels to service catering apartments

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Article Body:

Most industry insiders are predicting that this year more people will be jetting off on city breaks, inter-railing round Europe and generally heading off traveling in greater numbers than ever before. And they're spoilt for choice when it comes to the sheer range of excellent accommodation options out there.

Hostels

The number of backpackers hostels and independent youth hostels has surged in response to increased demand for cheap accommodation, as a result of a radical overhaul from the travel industry in the last five years, or so.

The package holiday for so long a staple of summer holidays has become chronically unfashionable, as people increasingly looked to move away from the uniformity that they promoted. And the conventional high street travel agent is feeling the pinch, as people increasingly found they could cut out the middle man and make their own arrangements online.

In light of this, people had to find some form of affordable accommodation on their holidays. And the answer came increasingly from the ranks of the independent youth hostels and backpackers hostels.

Hardly a new concept - youth hostels have been around for years now - the necessary tweaks really started to be made back in the late 90s. In retrospect, it's hard to see which came first, the great accommodation or the booking sites that drive them. It goes without saying that there couldn't be one without the other.

But with the internet, and a series of sites who allowed their customers to

'rate' hostels came a greater awareness of what travelers actually wanted and needed. Now well-stocked kitchens or cool communal areas boasting libraries filled with travel guides and DVDs, prove the rule rather than the exception.

And just as the hostels have gained in popularity (and quality), so too has the rest of the budget accommodation sector begun to take notice of the numbers of people, and offering an ever-improving service for less than you'd think.

Cheap hotels

The cheap hotel market, so long, seemingly, a slightly complacent force reluctant to really compete on price and relying on their hotel status, has started to really square up to its competitors. Increasingly, owners of small hotels are setting aside a quota of rooms online for the budget traveler, safe in the knowledge that they will be snapped up.

What's more many small hotels have realized that they can turn their size into a significant advantage. Global travelers are increasingly looking for a sense of uniqueness, of individuality. It's this desire that has inspired the rise of the boutique hotel, a concept which the cheaper end of the hotel market has embraced.

And there are times when even the most ardent backpacker or roving student traveler wants freshly pressed sheets, a hot shower to themselves and a good night's sleep. Oh, and perhaps a mini bar...

Bed & Breakfasts

Bed & breakfasts and guesthouses have also experienced a real resurgence in popularity in recent years. Both generally define themselves as 'homey' and comfortable with an emphasis on personal service rather than luxury. And their renewed popularity has come as a result of these values being increasingly in demand by footsore travelers.

Like the cheap hotel market they have responded well to a shift in the market, and the recent rise of boutique hotels by radically improving their service.

Apartments

Hovering somewhere between the service provided by a backpackers hostel (with a kitchen and lounge area as a general rule) and a hotel (you don't have to share your accommodation with anyone else) renting an apartment has become a viable alternative to the usual cheap hotel/B&B/hostel options. The hotels sector has

even responded to the demand for apartment-style accommodation with the growth of aparthotels.

The apartment concept can be a winning one, particularly for those traveling in groups or those looking to stay in a town or city for more than a few days. Groups can really fill out an apartment and make it somewhere that they'll genuinely look forward to coming back to at the end of a long day's sightseeing, whilst long-stayers can settle in and spread out more than they could in a cheap hotel or hostel.

All in all, things have rarely looked as rosy for travelers with a budget.