

# Contents

- A** - Accommodation
  - Air travel
  - Airfares
  - Airports
- B** - Backpacker hostels
  - Bed and breakfast
  - Budgeting
- C** - Cameras
  - Camping
  - Car travel
  - Climate
  - Clothing
  - Concession cards
  - Cost of living
  - Courier travel
  - Cultural awareness and sensitivity
  - Currencies
  - Customs
- D** - Disabilities and travel
  - Documents
  - Duty free shopping
- E** - Essential travel equipment
- F** - Fear of flying
  - Finding a doctor
  - Fitness
  - Frequent flyer points
- G** - Guidebooks
- H** - Health
- I** - Internet cafes
- J** - Jetlag
- K** - Keeping in touch
- L** - Language

- Luggage
- M** - Medical kit
  - Mobile phones
  - Money access
  - Money security
- N** - Navigation
- O** - Overnight travel
- P** - Packing
  - Passports
  - Photography
  - Power of attorney
  - Preparations for leaving
  - Private health insurance for Australians
  - Pubbing and clubbing
- Q** - Quality not quantity
- R** - Research
- S** - Safety and risks
  - Sleeping bags
- T** - Travel insurance
  - Travel passes
- U** - University campuses
- V** - Visas
  - Volunteer work overseas
- W** - Women travellers
  - Working overseas
- X** - Xenophobia
- Y** - Yachts and ships
  - YHA/HI hostels
- Z** - Zanzibar

Bibliography, further reading and useful websites



# Backpacker hostels

Some of the best value accommodation options are to be found among the many backpacker hostels. These generally provide dormitory or room share accommodation with a shared common room, kitchen and bathrooms. The standard can vary greatly, ranging from absolute gems located in pristine natural environments to inner city dives that are busy and impersonal.

An advantage is the camaraderie generated as you share travel stories and team up with new travel companions for the next leg of your travels or just for the next day. You may even find your future flatmates around the kitchen table. However, some people find the atmosphere a bit stifling in that a certain sameness in the way you interact with the world during your travels is generated. It's up to you how much or how little you differ from the expected norm of the independent backpacker. But there will no doubt be times when seeking out sameness can have its place in providing comfort after a few torrid days or weeks in an unfamiliar culture with much of your experience limited by your foreign language skills.

Hostelling International, known in Australia and New Zealand as YHA, runs the largest network of backpacker style accommodation. Youth hostels usually cost slightly more than other hostels but have the advantage of a predictably good standard of accommodation and can be booked up to six months ahead via the YHA International Booking Network. A hotel network aimed at the budget end is YMCA and YWCA in Europe, North and South America, India, the Middle East and parts of Asia. Details of international YMCA/YWCA accommodation options are available at [www.travel-ys.com](http://www.travel-ys.com). Guides listing other independent hostels are also available for some countries or regions. One such guide is *Independent Hostel Guide: Britain & Europe* published by the Backpackers Press in the UK (ISBN 095233819x).

It is distributed in Australia by Peribo and in New Zealand by Penguin. Listen well to word-of-mouth advice about individual hostels from fellow travellers. This will help steer you away from poorly run hostels—bad news travels faster than you! Also check out the suggestions in a reputable guidebook for the region you're travelling in. If you're looking for a hostel in a particular location check out [www.hostels.com](http://www.hostels.com) which has a worldwide database of hostel accommodation.

Avoid staying in places that don't have smoke alarms or where the fire exits are not clearly marked or are blocked. Look before you book in, and if you come across such a place tell others about it. Don't feel intimidated about asking to have a look at the rooms and facilities before you book in, although sometimes you may not have much choice in terms of alternative accommodation or you may be just too tired to care.

See also: [Accommodation](#), [Camping](#), [University campuses](#), [Bed & breakfast](#), [Youth Hostels Association \(YHA\)](#) and [Budgeting](#).

## Bed and breakfast

Traditionally bed and breakfast (B&B) accommodation is provided in private homes. For a tariff the owner offers one or more separate bedrooms, with either en-suites or a shared bathroom, as well as breakfast, which is usually cooked and served by your host in their own dining room. This style of accommodation is usually modest and comfortable, although there are many establishments that literally cushion you with life's little extras: fresh flowers, bath salts, bulging pillows, thick layers of bedding and clean thick towels. B&Bs dominate the tourist accommodation available in the UK, but are increasingly an option in most Western countries.

B&Bs cost more than most hostel accommodation but generally less than a hotel room. (Although it is worth noting that several hotels and motels now offer B&B style accommodation, and sometimes price, within a non-traditional B&B setting.) In terms of your budget,

staying only in B&Bs will not stretch your money as far as hostel hopping. However, they are definitely worth considering for a change of scene, and for a bit of indulgence during your travels. Besides, if you've been travelling for a while and starting each day with do-it-yourself bread and cheese, the prospect of a home-cooked breakfast can be hard to pass up. A full tummy will last you well into the day, as will the good nights rest in a comfy bed.

## Advantages

- A chance to meet some locals.
- A good feed and a good nights sleep (generally quieter than hostels and other budget options).
- Good value for money when breakfast and comfort are considered.

## Disadvantages

- Lack of privacy compared to a hotel (although more privacy than a hostel dormitory!).
- Strain on the budget if staying exclusively in B&Bs rather than hostels during a long trip.

## Booking

*As you go:* look out for the B&B signs attached to private homes offering accommodation; go for those with some sort of accreditation indicated on the sign; not a good idea to rely on finding a vacancy by this method in peak tourist season.

*Through the local tourist information centre:* here you will often find a list of local B&Bs; for a small fee the office may be able to book a bed for you by phone and some will even book your accommodation in the next town.

*Through your travel agent at home:* often as part of an airfare deal.

*Through your guidebook:* either a guidebook for the country you're travelling in or a book specifically listing B&Bs, e.g. *The Good British Bed and Breakfast Guide* by Elsie Dillard and Susan Causin which

is published by the Consumers' Association (UK) and contains full details of over 1100 of the best affordable B&Bs in Britain as well as referenced colour maps.

*Through a B&B network:* check these out in the travel media or through your travel agent before you leave home and select one that has a comprehensive directory for use while you travel.

See also: [Accommodation](#), [Budgeting](#), [Camping](#), [Backpacker Hostels](#), [Youth Hostels Association \(YHA\)](#) and [University campuses](#).

# Budgeting

The earliest planning stage of your trip will involve money considerations. How long you intend to stay away and the style of travel you choose will largely determine how much the whole thing will cost. In nearly all situations living more like a local and less like a tourist will stretch your dollar further. However, the trick is to achieve a balance, and not be so frugal as to create constant travel misery. Instead, be aware of cost options as you go and temper budgetary constraints with the need for comfort and enjoyment of your time on the road. Don't sacrifice the depth of your experience for blind frugality.

Depending on where you're headed your daily costs will vary not only with your approach to selecting good value options but also with the country's cost of living. Become familiar with the exchange rates between the Australian and New Zealand dollars and the currencies of countries in which you'll be spending time. In Western Europe the good old Aussie and Kiwi dollars have poor stretching power but in many developing countries they will stretch out before you like a golden highway. Also remember that there will be cost variations in all countries between city and rural areas, and between tourist havens and less visited areas; in each case the latter is generally more affordable.

If you intend to be away for several months, it is well worth exploring the various work visas available. If you fall into the eligible categories, a working holiday allows you to mix temporary work with

stints of travel, which has advantages for both your bank balance and the extent of your travel experiences.

Saving before you go is essential to pay for the unavoidable up-front cost of an airfare and to provide the proof of available funds required by many working holiday visas, often a minimum of \$4000 (see [Working overseas](#)). Travel insurance is an essential and unavoidable up-front cost and is likely to cost several hundred dollars. The money you save before leaving will also provide funds for day-to-day expenses during your trip or, if you intend to work, for the initial stage of your trip prior to you finding a job. At a bare minimum, daily expenses will include the cost of food, accommodation, transport, and possibly phonecalls. The best guide for estimating the day-to-day costs in your destination is to use a reputable and recent edition of a guidebook to that country. Select a guidebook that has advice appropriate for your travel budget. See also the *Time Out* website at [www.timeout.com](http://www.timeout.com), which provides a guide to accommodation costs in several major international cities. The Travel section of Saturday's *Sydney Morning Herald* provides a useful table called 'What's it cost?' which lists the cost of everyday items, e.g. a cup of coffee, a Big Mac or daily car hire, for a different international city each week. These tables are accessed from the website of Thomas Cook Travel at [www.thomascook.co.uk](http://www.thomascook.co.uk) so you may like to have a browse here yourself. The travel tips left on website noticeboards aimed at budget travellers will also give you access to on the ground advice. Try [www.yha.com.au/backpackeressentials](http://www.yha.com.au/backpackeressentials), [www.yha.org.nz](http://www.yha.org.nz), [www.lonelyplanet.com/thorn](http://www.lonelyplanet.com/thorn) or [www.statravel.com.au/traveltips](http://www.statravel.com.au/traveltips). It is also worth perusing the travel sections of local newspapers before you leave for tips aimed at those making their way to overseas destinations. Although some of the advice is for travellers with a fatter budget than yours, you'll soon learn to sift out the advice relevant to your own budget.

Unless you are taking a Spartan holiday from the outset, you'll also need to budget for entry costs to special events and tourist sites, souvenir purchases, socialising with fellow travellers and new friends, and keeping in touch with home. It's also a good idea to have ready access to enough money to cover an unforeseen emergency that at

its most expensive could require you to quickly purchase a return flight home. The savings enforced by the 'proof of adequate funds' requirement of many working holiday visas also make sense for those preparing an extended holiday that does not include work. Aiming to save additional funds, apart from those budgeted to cover your essential upfront costs and your daily travel expenses, is a good starting point for any travel savings plan.

Before leaving home you'll find there's quite a bit to be spent on simply getting ready to go. These costs will include a backpack or other type of luggage, a daypack or other hand luggage, money belt, appropriate clothes (some of which you may already have), comfortable footwear (you'll be walking a lot!), possibly a sleeping bag, guidebook(s), visa and passport application fees, camera and films, travel insurance, vaccinations, and some of the various travel paraphernalia that are widely recommended by those who have journeyed this path before you. One advantage of joining the Youth Hostels Association (YHA) early is to make use of the discounts available to YHA members which allow you to save heaps on buying gear for your travels.

Before leaving home also consider purchasing membership of organisations that may save you money on day-to-day costs as you travel. For example, membership of the National Trust or New Zealand Historic Places Trust will allow you free entry to many historic sites overseas (see [Concession cards](#) for details). Contact the tourist authorities of the countries you will be visiting to see what they are able to offer. Also investigate the various travel passes available that can save you money on transport costs during your trip. Many of these can only be purchased before you leave home, others are available at your destination (see [Travel passes](#) for details).

For those intending to work overseas, other initial costs may include the purchase of work clothes or uniforms, work tools (unless you can forward your own set by post or carry them easily in your luggage; see [Working overseas](#)), and the membership or registration fee for the relevant professional or trade organisation which you may need to pay before being able to work locally. Finding work overseas often involves finding semi-permanent accommodation for which you may need to pay rent in advance and, if not in share accommodation,

a bond and the connection fees for gas, electricity and phone. Share accommodation, especially with fellow travellers who are taking a fairly frugal approach to life in the city, is generally the cheaper option, provided that everyone in the house actually pays their way! Share accommodation outside your travelling circle can really add to your experience of an overseas country and is well worth considering. University noticeboards may be a good option here. If you intend to look for semi-permanent accommodation soon after arrival, some insight into the general rental market can be gained by accessing via the internet an on-line version of a local newspaper before you leave home. For example LOOT is a daily free ads newspaper in London with extensive rental accommodation listings for London at [www.loot.com](http://www.loot.com) and for New York at [www.lootusa.com](http://www.lootusa.com).

The tables on the following pages may be useful in estimating the amount you'll need to save for your travel and how long this will take. The first table is for those travelling for a holiday only, and the second table is for those taking a working holiday.

In working through the relevant table you may, for example, calculate that your savings goal for your trip is \$7400; you have already saved \$2200 and you estimate that you can realistically save \$110/week from your current income. Therefore,  $\$7400 - \$2200 = \$5200$ . Then,  $\$5200 / \$110 = 47$  weeks, which is the minimum number of weeks you have until take-off!

Don't be disheartened by the outcome here, as the aim of the exercise is to calculate a savings plan and time frame that is realistic for your initial travel plan. If you calculated your costs based on staying in B&Bs in the UK and Europe for two months, then a re-think of cheaper options, say, one month travelling in the UK staying at youth hostels, and an even less costly month travelling in India, might have you leaving well ahead of the time you calculated in the first attempt at this exercise. Keep juggling all the variables until you come up with a savings plan and a time frame that feels right, as well as a style of travel that is close to the one you have long dreamed about.

See also: [Preparations for leaving](#), [Travel insurance](#), [Essential travel equipment](#), [Concession cards](#), [Quality versus quantity](#) and [Working overseas](#)