

10 TIPS (+1) FOR A CAREFREE HOLIDAY

from experienced professionals
in the hospitality sector



Certain websites allow you to rent a room for short periods of time.

*This method has recently seen a surge in the tourism sector
and is one that often skirts around laws protecting tourists.*

*You should therefore know how to protect yourself from the dangers – however small or
large – hidden within this new formula.*

***Here are 10 tips (+1) on what to look for
when booking accommodation for your next trip.***



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1) WHERE WILL I BE SLEEPING TONIGHT?



This is a given if your chosen accommodation is run by a professional business: on the online booking portal or the accommodation's own website you can see their licence, which includes their trading name. The VAT number is almost always there, too, leaving no doubts as to the company's identity.

If, however, you have chosen another type of set up, you should not settle for the nicknames that appear on the listing.

These aliases do not allow you to find out the name under which the place operates.

Practical advice

Ask for a written notice that contains the name and surname (or trading name) of the person (or company) and that meets contractual requirements.

If you do not get a response to this request, ask yourself why and consider finding alternative and more reliable arrangements.

2) WHO IS MY HOST? A PROFESSIONAL BUSINESS OR A PRIVATE INDIVIDUAL?



Knowing this is important, as you are better protected if your host is a professional business.

For example, the Italian civil code stipulates that a hotel owner is liable for the theft of anything its guests bring into the hotel. The same protection is not offered to those renting an apartment.

Paradoxically, certain portals only take care of the opposite problem, offering hosts a policy that insures them against damage caused by their clients, without any concern for the guests.

Practical advice

If your host is not a professional business, make sure they have an insurance policy in place covering guests of the apartment against various types of risk (theft, fire, accidents, etc.).

3) IT IS A GOOD IDEA TO BOOK DIRECTLY



As with everything else in life, a direct relationship leads to a stronger and more personal link between provider and guest.

Further, direct contact allows you, first-hand, to receive information regarding availability, to settle specific requests and to benefit from any special offers, services or conditions that might be available.

For example, you could get a better price or other types of benefit, such as a better room, parking included in the price, free entry to the spa or a discount at the bar or restaurant.

Practical advice

After having identified the best accommodation for your holiday, contact the establishment directly (via their website or by email or telephone). Check whether they can offer benefits that will beat those published on the big booking portals.

4) WHAT'S THE ADDRESS?



Certain portals do not give you the address of the accommodation, providing only a general indication of its location.

The fact that this information is missing should not be underestimated, as there can be significant consequences.

In the most serious instances, you could fall victim to serious fraud.

Every year, there are reports in the papers about people who arrived at their dream villa – having already paid a deposit – only to discover the property’s actual owners living there, completely unaware of the booking. Or, the place had already been rented to others. Or, it does not exist at all.

A much more common trick is one where houses are used to lure in guests. You book because the photos and reviews for the accommodation look fantastic but, upon arrival, you are taken to another entirely different apartment.

Practical advice

Request a written notice that clearly indicates the address of the accommodation for which you have paid.

If it is an apartment, ask for the building, floor and flat numbers, too.

5) WHO WILL LOOK AFTER MY LOVED ONES AND ME?



You need to know whether there will be someone at the accommodation to whom you can turn in times of need, especially during the night.

What if a lightbulb blows or something gets damaged?
What if you need urgent medical attention or the guests in the room next door are making a racket?

Practical advice

Ask if there is a night doorman or someone else to whom you can go if needed.

If the host tells you can call them, make sure they tell you how far their office is from your room (it is one thing if it is on the floor above, but another if they are coming from the other side of the city).

To be certain, carry out a late-night test: call with an excuse, to ensure you get a proper response.

6) WHAT'S ON YOUR PLATE?



“Breakfast included” is often stated in the listings. Serving food and beverages requires specific authorisation and compliance with strict standards, to ensure food hygiene and safety is upheld every step of the way (not just when preparing food but also when storing, transporting, preserving it, and so on). Promises of cakes handcrafted by the owner’s grandmother often turn out to be fibs (the goods actually bought in hard discount stores) and you could be in for some bitter surprises. It could ruin your holiday eating food that is past its expiry date, stored with little regard for hygiene and carelessly cooked.

Practical advice

If your accommodation does not have an official permit, ask for the first day’s breakfast to be taken off the price. You can grab a coffee and a bite to eat from the nearest café or bar.

7) WHERE CAN I LEAVE MY BAGGAGE?



Being able to leave baggage at your accommodation before gaining access to your room or after having checked out is a really important service. The first and last days of your holiday can become very difficult if you have to drag your suitcase along with you as you tour the city, not to mention that certain museums or large stores will not let you enter with baggage.

Practical advice

This is simple: find out before you leave and choose accommodation that provides this service.

8) CAN I PAY BY CREDIT CARD?



Tourists in Italy have the right to pay in cash when they buy goods and services (up to a limit of 3,000 euro for Italians and 15,000 euro for foreign nationals).

But that does not mean they can force you to pay in cash.

Being able to pay by credit or debit card is highly convenient and allows you to travel safer and lighter, without having to worry about withdrawing large sums of cash and carrying them around with you.

Practical advice

Here, too, it is important to know whether you can pay by credit or debit card in advance.

And do not forget to ask for a receipt upon departure.

9) FIRE IS NO LAUGHING MATTER!



Waking up in the middle of the night to find yourself in the middle of a fire is not a pleasant experience, but that becomes far more dangerous when in an unfamiliar environment where it is difficult to orient yourself.

Additional risk factors – which can result in serious or even fatal accidents – include boilers, gas tanks, fireplaces, etc.

That is why the law imposes strict fire safety measures on accommodation providers.

Practical advice

Avoiding the issue is useless: fire is no laughing matter. Do not make your holiday unforgettable for all the wrong reasons: ask for express confirmation that the accommodation is fitted with fire safety equipment before booking.

If, upon your arrival, you cannot see any extinguishers, the escape routes are not marked out or you are

expected to sleep in a room with boilers or gas tanks, carefully consider whether it is wise to stay there.

10) WHO IS SLEEPING IN THE ROOM NEXT TO YOURS?



Every night, all accommodation providers – including apartments for rent – are required under Italian law to provide law enforcement with general information about their guests, to help the latter protect the community against any form of criminal activity.

With terror alerts currently at their highest levels, the importance of this is clear and you will sleep better knowing the person sleeping in the room next door is not a wanted criminal.

Practical advice

Alarm bells should ring if, upon arrival, no one asks to see any form of ID.

But at that point, it is difficult to find alternative arrangements.

It is therefore best to find out when making your booking.

LAST BUT NOT LEAST



In the instance that the accommodation is sold to you as a “locazione breve”, or short-term lease, the Italian law requires a written contract.

Practical advice

Ask for a copy of the contract before your travels begin and insist that you sign it upon arrival, in order to limit the risk of nasty surprises and to protect yourself should any arise.