

BUDGET TRAVELLER
PRESENTS

Luxury Hostels of Europe

IN ASSOCIATION WITH HOSTELWORLD

BUDGET TRAVELLER MUST-HAVES!



#MEETTHEWORLD

ATLANTIC OCEAN

MEDITERRANEAN SEA

BY KASH BHATTACHARYA
WWW.BUDGETTRAVELLER.ORG



LUXURY HOSTELS OF EUROPE

by **Kash Bhattacharya**
www.budgettraveller.org



IN PARTNERSHIP WITH



INDEX

FOREWORD

INTRO

GREAT BRITAIN

| | |
|---------------------------------|----|
| CODE HOSTEL EDINBURGH | 5 |
| THE FORT YORK BOUTIQUE HOSTEL | 6 |
| YHA CAMBRIDGE | 8 |
| YHA BRIGHTON | 10 |
| YHA SOUTH DOWNS | 13 |
| YHA AMBLESIDE | 16 |
| YHA STRATFORD-UPON-AVON | 19 |
| YHA EDEN PROJECT | 22 |
| YHA SNOWDON PEN-Y-PASS | 25 |
| YHA LONDON CENTRAL | 28 |
| YHA BERWICK | 31 |
| YHA CARDIFF CENTRAL | 34 |
| SAFESTAY YORK | 37 |
| SAFESTAY AT ELEPHANT AND CASTLE | 40 |
| WOMBATS LONDON | 43 |
| GENERATOR LONDON | 46 |
| PALMERS LODGE BOUTIQUE HOSTELS | 49 |
| CLINK78 LONDON | 52 |

FRANCE

| | |
|---------------------------|----|
| LES PIAULES | 64 |
| GASTAMA | 66 |
| SLO LIVING HOSTEL | 69 |
| AWAY HOSTEL & COFFEE SHOP | 72 |

BELGIUM

| | |
|---------------------------|----|
| CUBE HOSTEL | 79 |
| BACKSTAY HOSTEL | 80 |
| MEININGER HOSTEL BRUSSELS | 83 |

ITALY

| | |
|------------------------------|----|
| OSTELLO BELLO | 86 |
| OSTELLO BELLO GRANDE | 89 |
| PLUS HOSTELS FLORENCE | 90 |
| GENERATOR VENICE | 93 |
| THE BEEHIVE HOTEL AND HOSTEL | 96 |
| THE YELLOW | 99 |

NETHERLANDS

| | |
|----------------------|-----|
| COCOMAMA | 102 |
| ECOMAMA | 105 |
| CLINK NOORD | 108 |
| HELLO I'M LOCAL | 110 |
| KINGCOOL HOSTEL | 113 |
| HOSTEL ANI & HAAKIEN | 116 |
| KINGKONG HOSTEL | 119 |

GERMANY

| | |
|---------------------------------|-----|
| THE CIRCUS HOSTEL | 122 |
| PLUS HOSTEL BERLIN | 125 |
| GRAND HOSTEL | 128 |
| DIE WOHNGEMEINSCHAFT | 131 |
| HOTEL AND GARTEN EDEN | 132 |
| GSPUSI HOSTEL | 135 |
| WOMBATS MUNICH | 138 |
| SUPERBUDE HOTEL HOSTEL ST PAULI | 141 |

AUSTRIA

| | |
|----------------|-----|
| WOMBATS VIENNA | 143 |
|----------------|-----|

CROATIA

| | |
|------------------------------|-----|
| DESIGN HOSTEL 101 DALMATINAC | 154 |
| BOUTIQUE HOSTEL FORUM | 156 |
| SWANKY MINT HOSTEL | 159 |
| MAIN SQUARE HOSTEL | 160 |
| HOTEL IW RIJEKA | 163 |

SERBIA

| | |
|-------------|-----|
| HOTEL BONGO | 166 |
|-------------|-----|

BOSNIA

| | |
|------------------------|-----|
| FRANZ FERDINAND HOSTEL | 175 |
|------------------------|-----|

BULGARIA

| | |
|-------------------|-----|
| HOTEL OLD PLOVDIV | 176 |
|-------------------|-----|

RUSSIA

| | |
|---------------------|-----|
| SOUL KITCHEN JUNIOR | 179 |
|---------------------|-----|

LATVIA

| | |
|-------------------|-----|
| TWO WHEELS HOSTEL | 181 |
|-------------------|-----|

LITHUANIA

| | |
|------------------------------|-----|
| DOWNTOWN FOREST H. & CAMPING | 183 |
|------------------------------|-----|

GREECE

| | |
|--------------------|-----|
| CITY CIRCUS HOSTEL | 184 |
|--------------------|-----|

SPAIN

| | |
|------------------------|-----|
| U HOSTELS MADRID | 187 |
| ROOM 007 CHUECA | 188 |
| TOC MADRID | 191 |
| CASA GRACIA | 192 |
| TOC BARCELONA | 195 |
| SANT JORDI ROCK PALACE | 196 |
| TOC SEVILLA | 199 |
| LA BANDA ROOFTOP | 200 |

| | |
|-------------------------|-----|
| GRANADA INN BACKPACKERS | 203 |
| CORDOBA BED AND BE | 204 |
| OPTION BE | 207 |
| LIGHTS OUT HOSTEL | 210 |

PORTUGAL

| | |
|----------------------------------|-----|
| LISBON CENTRAL HOSTEL | 213 |
| GOOD MORNING HOSTEL | 216 |
| THE INDEPENDENTE HOSTEL & SUITES | 219 |
| HOME HOSTEL LISBON | 222 |
| LISBON POETS | 225 |
| LOST INN LISBON | 228 |
| LISBON CALLING | 231 |
| HUB NEW LISBON | 234 |
| GALLERY HOSTEL | 237 |
| TATTVA DESIGN HOSTEL | 240 |

SWITZERLAND

| | |
|--------------------------|-----|
| BACKPACKERS VILLA HOSTEL | 243 |
|--------------------------|-----|

FINLAND

| | |
|----------------------|-----|
| DREAM HOSTEL & HOTEL | 249 |
| 7 FELS | 252 |

DENMARK

| | |
|----------------------|-----|
| GENERATOR COPENHAGEN | 255 |
| URBAN HOUSE | 258 |

ICELAND

| | |
|-----------------------|-----|
| KEX HOSTEL | 262 |
| HÉRAÐSSKÓLINN' HOSTEL | 264 |

HUNGARY

| | |
|------------------|-----|
| WOMBATS BUDAPEST | 267 |
|------------------|-----|

CZECH REPUBLIC

| | |
|-----------------|-----|
| MOSAIC HOUSE | 275 |
| CZECH INN | 276 |
| SOPHIE'S HOSTEL | 279 |
| SIR TOBY'S | 282 |

SLOVENIA

| | |
|--------------|-----|
| HOTEL CELICA | 284 |
|--------------|-----|

IRELAND

| | |
|------------------|-----|
| GENERATOR DUBLIN | 287 |
|------------------|-----|

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

| | |
|--|-----|
| | 290 |
|--|-----|

FOREWORD

To the lucky traveller,

'A journey is best measured in friends rather than miles'
(Tim Cahill – travel writer)

So true! Haven't we all made friends on our travels, sometimes friends for life, and what better place for meeting the world, than staying in some of the most high end hostels across Europe.

I am pleased to introduce you to Kash Bhattacharya's second edition of the Luxury Hostel Guide. It lifts the lid on what you can expect from today's hostel and what travellers from all corners of the world can hope to find when they walk through the doors. From swimming pools to privates with ensuites to bouncing bars, even tattoo parlours, the luxury hostels of the world are here to surprise and delight you at every corner, in the heart of the action.

I am thrilled that Hostelworld has had the opportunity to partner with Kash on this project; he is a travel blogger truly dedicated to the hostel cause and someone who truly understands the hostel philosophy – that the social heart of hostels make for a truly unique traveller experience.

Kash is also the 2015 winner of Travel Media Award's highly esteemed accolade of Travel Blogger and Vlogger of the Year, so he knows a thing or two about hostels, and in this guide he imparts his wisdom and knowledge of the best hostels have to offer.

In hostels you will find the beating heart of social travel which means you are highly likely to meet new and open-minded people; have great adventures with people from all walks of life and make some lifelong friends with travellers from all around the world. Your journey is also a journey of self-discovery and sharing experiences, as many of our Hostelworld customers told me over the years. By staying in a hostel, they are open to learning about themselves and other people, languages and cultures.

The communal and open minded atmosphere in a hostel means that you will find people whose sole ambition is to experience new cultures and witness all that the

world has to offer. This type of travel is great at giving you confidence, and makes you very social at the same time.

The heart of hostels has always been the same, but over the past few years the bricks and mortar have undergone a revolution. In fact, nine out of ten offer private rooms, many with ensuite bathrooms, and you can find no end of amenities on offer – free bike rentals, discounted activities, drinks offers, free meals and amazing staff, all of which are listed in this guide. Hostels also dramatically improved their style, often designed by renowned style gurus (like Anwar Mekhayech of The Design Agency, who designed the Generator Venice hostel).

So, whether you're right now adventuring around the world, have an upcoming trip planned or are just thinking about venturing to far and distant lands, this guide is for you! May you be a traveller whose journey, measured in friends, is endless.

Enjoy!

Ottokar Rosenberger, Chief Marketing Officer at Hostelworld



Introduction

Why a Guide to Luxury Hostels?

'I'm a hotel kind of girl. I backpacked Europe and stayed in hostels in my 20s. Now that I have a job, I can afford my own room. I can't bear the idea of slumming it now in a 10-bed dorm with a bunch of smelly backpackers.'

My date had been going really well until then. I had gone through a tough breakup and on the advice of a friend, had signed up for the dating site Match.com. I found my love for travel to be a great icebreaker on dates. Until they discovered that I wrote about budget travel, that is.

'Budget travel? Isn't that about staying in hostels? Does that mean you sleep in dorms?' they asked me quizzically, their foreheads creased with discontent at the prospect of travelling the world with me in seedy establishments.

Hostels not only had a negative perception amongst my Match.com dates, but also amongst people within the travel industry. I attended numerous travel conferences to develop working relationships with various destination marketing organisations, but found there to

be a huge lack of awareness about hostels and budget travel. The slick brochures were awash with decadent images of spas, Michelin gourmet dining experiences and the finest hotels that money could buy. Hostels? No sign of them at all. The general opinion was that hostelling and budget travel were not seen as a revenue generator for the tourism destination providers. I realised then that there was a need for the rebrand of the image of hostelling both within and outside the travel industry.

There is also a personal reason I undertook this project. I realised that as I was getting older, I was finding it more difficult to sleep in dorms. The more I travelled, the more intolerant I had become of other people's travelling habits. I craved the luxury of having my own space, but I wasn't ready to graduate into the mundane, characterless, and insipid world of chain hotels.

Growing older had some benefits – increased wisdom taught me that I want a special experience when I travel. At 37, travel is no longer about spartan rooms and sleeping in the

cheapest bed available. I want more than just a cheap bed. I want an experience.

Hence, I began my mission to find if there was a more grown-up and alternative way to backpack around Europe that wouldn't involve sacrificing comfort.

I started researching on the web, reading travel blogs, and speaking to the travel community via Facebook and Twitter to ask about their experiences of hostelling. I found, especially in my own age segment of travellers aged 30-39, that there was a trend of people 'travelling younger'. They were choosing hostels, previously thought to be mainstays of 20-somethings.

I then discovered the new breed of design hostels that had emerged in the last few years. These hostels were a step up from the usual hostel. They had dorms but also offered private ensuite rooms. The design of these hostels was on par with what you find in a boutique 4- or 5-star hotel.

The facilities are outstanding in these properties. From outdoor swimming pools to rooftop dinners, from petanque bars to in-house cinemas, from tattoo parlours and tango lessons to Spanish cooking lessons and sushi dinners – there is a wealth of amazing experiences to savour and enjoy in each of the 96 luxury hostels within this book. I like to think of each of them as your home away from home. Once you stay there, you'll find it hard to leave. I promise.

What started as a project to discover a new way of travelling and rediscover my passion for backpacking also



Kash Bhattacharya
Founder and editor
BudgetTraveller.org

became a great way for me to meet some amazing people.

I've had the pleasure of meeting some very creative, courageous and inspiring people through this project. For that reason, I hope that when you do decide to visit these hostels, you will have the same experience and be inspired by meeting these same people. In my opinion, they are redefining the way we travel and also the way we see hostels.

On BudgetTraveller.org, my aim has always been to find new ways to inspire people to travel, challenge the conventional ways we travel, and discover something new. It's my hope that this ebook will help inspire a new generation of travellers old and young to visit these amazing hostels and embrace this exciting new revolution in hostelling.

Welcome to the future of budget travel. Welcome to the Luxury Hostels of Europe.

How to Use This Guide?

Okay, a concise explanation.

The format of each review is easy to follow and self-explanatory:

Location

Where the hostel is located.

Rooms and Bathrooms

What can you expect in terms of rooms and bathrooms.

Facilities

I've tried to outline the various range of facilities you can expect in each hostel ranging from whether you have a locker facility, free wifi, self-catering facilities, cultural activities (free walking tours, activities within the hostel like dance or cooking classes) , whether there is a bar on-site, and what are the staff like.

Verdict

I sum up my opinion of the hostel.

Factbox and Costs

This includes the address and rates. The rates are the cost per person to stay at the hostel and again, just an indication. Rates may vary according to season and type of room, so always check and book in advance to get the best rates possible.

Please be aware that some hostels featured may charge you an extra fee for supplying sheets and towels. In addition, some cities may also be liable for a tourist tax, so do keep that in mind.

**GREAT
BRITAIN**

CODE HOSTEL EDINBURGH

A design hostel with Japanese style pod beds, fab central location in the heart of Edinburgh's New Town, helpful friendly staff plus they serve Marmite for breakfast. Whether you hate or love Marmite, this hostel will not leave you indifferent and for me is the perfect launchpad for discovering the joys of magical Edinburgh.



THE LOCATION

Location, location, location. CODE hostel is located on Rose Street North Lane, slap bang in the heart of the Georgian New Town. You have some of Edinburgh's finest bars lining Rose Street and running parallel to George Street. Plus it is only a 10-minute walk to many great sights like the Edinburgh Castle, the Scott Monument, Calton Hill, Dean Village and many art galleries and museums.

ROOMS AND BATHROOMS

I've long advocated the idea of pods replacing bunk beds, having seen them first at the Fort York Boutique Hostel in York, recently at the Main Square Hostel in Zagreb and at the fab 9 Hours Hotel at Narita Airport, Japan.

The pod style of beds means you have complete privacy when you are sleeping in the dorm. Each pod as you can see in the picture is equipped with a privacy curtain, which means even if someone ambles in at a late hour and switches the light on you won't be disturbed. If you are a light sleeper, the hostel offers all guests a free set of earplugs, which can be found in each pod when you arrive. More can be requested at the reception. Each 'pod' is also equipped with two power sockets and 2 USB chargers for charging all your gadgets. Pod bed in a 6-bed dorm currently starts at around the £18 mark.

The hostel has a rooftop luxury penthouse suite with a private garden. I had the luxury of staying in this for one night and I loved it. With prices currently starting from around £65, (Prices will vary according to season. Always book in advance to get the best possible rates) this has to be one of the best bargains in Edinburgh.

The front door, the door of the dorms and your locker inside the dorms are all accessible with their secure code system. No need for keys or padlocks. Once you have booked, the hostel staff sends you a welcome email explaining how to check yourself in.



FACILITIES

The communal showers are clean and showers are excellent. The hostel has a small communal area with a fully equipped kitchen. Free tea and coffee is available all day. The hostel offers a laundry service for only £5- this includes soap, washing and drying.

They also offer a fab free breakfast. Free breakfast consists of 4 types of cereal: All Bran, Coco Pops, muesli and cornflakes. If you have gluten or lactose intolerance they serve gluten free cereals and rice milk for vegans and people who have lactose intolerance. They have 3 types of bread and 3 types of jam, Nutella, peanut butter, Vegemite and Marmite. They also offer 3 types of fruits, which is a rarity in hostel breakfasts plus eggs, unlimited coffee, tea and fruit juices.

The staff – Ben and Rafy are wonderful

hosts and really take wonderful care of their guests. They organise whisky tasting, pub-crawls and Ceilidh dancing (Ceilidh: is a popular form of Scottish traditional dancing- fun and not too difficult to learn) nights, plus they plan to organise a variety of social events in the summer.

WHAT MAKES THIS A LUXURY HOSTEL

I love the pod style beds - comfortable, stylish and gives you complete privacy. Location in the heart of Edinburgh's New Town is a huge plus. Staff are friendly and free breakfast is fantastic. Altogether a great place to stay in when visiting Edinburgh.

FACTBOX

The price per night ranges from £20 in low season to £35 in high season and August going up to £50 for a dorm bed. The price for the penthouse ranges between £65 in low season to £120 in high season and up to £150 in August.

**50 Rose St N Ln, Edinburgh EH2,
United Kingdom**



THE FORT YORK BOUTIQUE HOSTEL YORK

If you haven't visited the beautiful historic Roman town of York yet, I strongly urge you to make a point of soon visiting this dreamy city that looks like something straight out of a Harry Potter novel. If you do visit, I definitely recommend staying at the stunning Fort Boutique Hostel. Here is my review.



THE LOCATION

The Fort York Hostel has a dreamy location, right in the heart of the historic city centre, off Stonegate. It's a 10-minute scenic walk from the railway station that takes you past the city's ancient Roman walls and the beautiful York Minster.

ROOMS AND BATHROOMS

The Fort York has twelve rooms in total- ranging from 8 bed and 6 bed deluxe dorms to private ensuite rooms. They were individually designed by young local artists who were winners of a competition launched by the hostel's owner, Karen Waugh in collaboration with the Creative Protégé design agency.

I stayed in their stylish private twin ensuite room, walls graffitied with deep-sea creatures, which give the room a cool, calming effect and then you have a great view. I witnessed a spectacular winter sunset over the rooftops of York and dreamy spires of the Minster from my room on my first evening there. The bedding was very comfortable. Ensuite shower-powerful and excellent.

If you are on a budget, I recommend booking a bed in the 8 bed dorms at the Fort York with their stylish pod beds. They come equipped with a reading light and power socket. At just £22 a night (linen, towels included) this is true luxury on a budget.

FACILITIES

Guests can help themselves to free tea, coffee, chocolate drink, and juice in the communal kitchen/common room.

Kitchen has lots of food storage space, fridge and freezer, microwave, toaster plus plenty of pots and pans to cook with. There is excellent Wi-Fi available throughout the building. Next to the kitchen there is a laundry room that is free for guests to use. The shared bath-rooms are clean, plentiful and separate from one another.

A huge asset of the hostel is its warm and welcoming staff. Upon check-in at the excellent Kennedy's Restaurant downstairs, guests are shown around and given a thorough induction of the facilities.

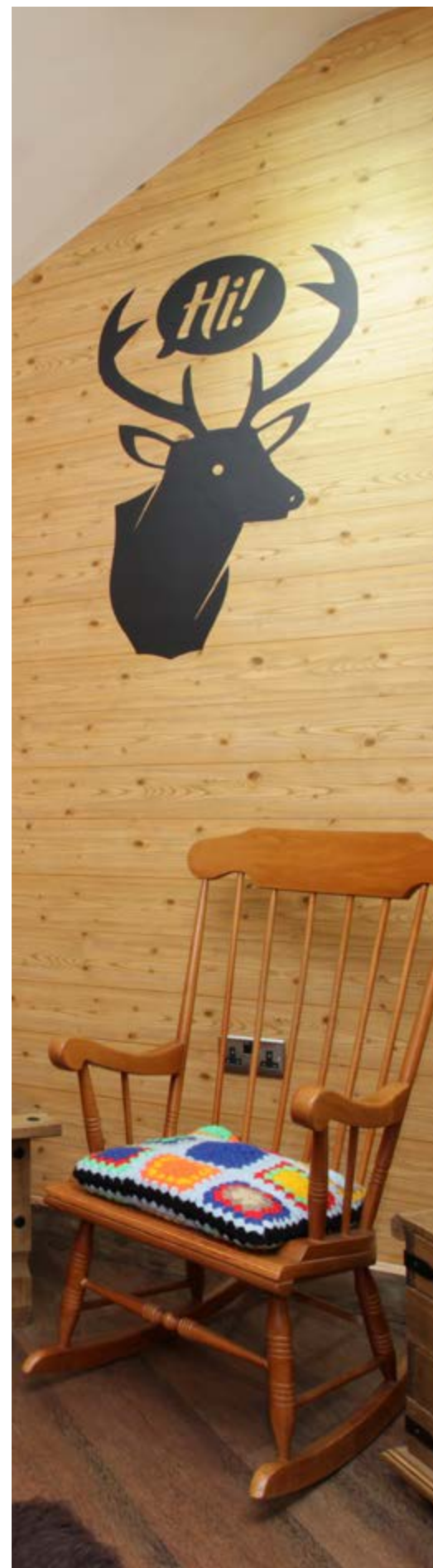
The Kennedy's Restaurant and Bar, is in itself, a great place to come and have a bite or just to relax with a book during the day, with a coffee or a glass of wine.

I had dinner there on the first night and enjoyed a delicious homemade burger served with hand cut chips. Kennedy's is also where they serve breakfast -I enjoyed their fabulous Eggs Benedict. Note that all guests get 20% discount on all food and selected drinks at Kennedy's.

Another great feature of the hostel is their basement Sotano Charcuterie & Bar which serves wonderful cocktails, craft beers, great wines and delicious tapas. It's a very cosy, stylish affair in a candlelit atmospheric cellar. You can choose from an inventive selection of tapas dishes like their pan fried chorizo served with piquillo pepper or choose to have a plate of their finest charcuterie that includes some of the best serrano ham I have ever tasted. On weekends they have guest DJ's spinning everything from hip-hop to funky tech and Latin beats. Cocktails- I recommend the Operatic Violet, a cocktail using the fruity essence of Sikkim Bilberry Gin and Litchi Liquor, topped with Cava and Violet Liquor.

Any drawbacks?

On weekends, thanks to the popularity of Sotano and Kennedy's with guests and locals alike, it can get a bit noisy. So if you are a light sleeper, please keep this in mind. I managed to sleep through it thanks to a good nightcap at the bar on both nights. The hostel offers free earplugs also. Just ask.





WHAT MAKES THIS A LUXURY HOSTEL

Love the location in the heart of the historic core of York with a bunch of cool shops, bars and cafeterias on your doorstep. Staff are welcoming and make you feel at home.

I loved add-ons like the excellent Kennedy's restaurant and the super cool Sotano. Rooms are comfortable and excellent value. It's a tad noisy at weekends but otherwise there is little to fault with this hostel.

FACTBOX

Dorm rooms are from £22pp, doubles start at the £87 mark. A two-night minimum stay at weekends.

• 1 Stonegate, York YO1 8AX
United Kingdom

YHA CAMBRIDGE

Having recently undergone a £1.4 million refurbishment the YHA Cambridge stands out as a modern, clean and comfortable hostel. Friendly, welcoming staff, a great location plus other fab features like a big guest kitchen and the amazing YHA breakfast makes this the perfect place to base yourself for exploring Cambridge.



THE LOCATION

The location of the hostel is fantastic, just a stone's throw away from the railway station. The historical centre and Cambridge University Colleges are a 15 minute walk away.

ROOMS AND BATHROOMS

YHA Cambridge has 122 beds in 32 rooms, 10 of which are ensuite. The latter get snapped up quickly so book early. There are a number of communal toilets and bathrooms on each floor. They are clean and well maintained. Showers are powerful and excellent. Rooms are clean and each bed comes with its own reading light and power point. All beds have their own individual lockers for storing valuables. Because of unusually warm weather the twin dorm room I stayed in was quite stuffy. However, the management team does offer fans on request (subject to demand) so if it gets warm in your room, ask at reception.

FACILITIES

This a cosy, homely kind of hostel. I spent some time relaxing in their plush armchairs in their resident's lounge reading on my Kindle while sipping their excellent coffee. If it is a rainy day, hire a board game from reception to pass the time. The self-catering kitchen here is one of the nicest I've seen in a hostel. With 3 ovens, 3 sinks, 2 fridges and a couple of microwaves- there is plenty of space for all the guests. There is an open lounge area with a huge plasma screen TV. The dining room leads on to a secure pleasant courtyard area to the rear of the hostel. There are 4 bike lockers in the courtyard area with ample seating.

Free Wi-Fi is available to the guests in the common areas but not in the rooms. The onsite Scholars restaurant offers great value meals and a hot breakfast. Plus the staff here makes the best coffee from all the YHA hostels we visited so definitely have your caffeine fix here. The staff were super friendly and helpful offering us lots of useful recommendations. They can also organise discounted tickets for local attractions and activities like going punting.





WHAT MAKES THIS A LUXURY HOSTEL

The staff and their passion for the city, great location, great facilities and modern design make this a very nice hostel. Given the lack of budget accommodation in Cambridge, I think this hostel is an excellent choice.

FACTBOX

Privates run from £48, dorms rooms from £20.

97 Tenison Rd, Cambridge CB1 2DN, United Kingdom

YHA BRIGHTON

Close to the historic Brighton Pier and beach, with its glorious wrought iron portico entrance and Regency era bay windows, YHA Brighton is like stepping into a portal to the city's Victorian past. Recently refurbished with tastefully decorated en-suite rooms and dormitories this is one of the most historic luxury hostels you will visit anywhere in the world.



LOCATION

YHA Brighton, boasts a fantastic location, just a stone's throw from the attractions of Brighton Pier and the famously cool shopping district, The Lanes.

ROOMS AND BATHROOMS

Ideal for solo travellers and backpackers, all 51 of YHA Brighton's bedrooms are en-suite, ideal for convenience, and the Youth Hostel has 18 double bedrooms for those looking for more privacy. Major departure from most hostels, YHA Brighton is also offering premium rooms where you can expect king-sized bedrooms with a beautiful sea view and a roll top bath.

Premium rooms include beds instead of bunks, TV, hair dryer, room safe, soap, towels, two pillows per person, storage space, dressing table and chair.

FACILITIES

The hostel has a chilled out bar, an ideal place to relax with a cold beer and choose from the YHA's food menu of pizza , burgers, salads and the classic fish and chips. The bar has a number of local ales and ciders on draft, alongside wine by the glass or bottle. Their full English breakfast (£5.25) is tasty and very filling. As well as a restaurant, the hostel also offers self-catering facilities with a dedicated dining area.





WHAT MAKES THIS A LUXURY HOSTEL

Youth hostelling has changed in a big way and this hostel is living proof of those major changes. As well as being an historic property crammed with original period features, the fabulous location on Brighton's seafront and close proximity to all the city's attractions makes this a fantastic base for enjoying all the joys of 'London by the Sea'.

FACTBOX

At YHA Brighton two-bed rooms start from as little as £45, four-bed family rooms are from as little as £65 per night and beds in shared rooms are from £14.50 per night.

Breakfast is excluded. Free Wi-Fi. Check in begins at 15:00. Check out before 10:00 am

Old Steine, Brighton BN1 1NH, United Kingdom.

YHA SOUTH DOWNS

This beautifully converted Sussex farmhouse has stood on its gentle slope facing the River Ouse since the Middle Ages. Amongst its many beautiful features is the font in the kitchen, which dates back to the 13th century. In a dreamy location by the South Downs walk way, this hostel offers guests a wide choice of rooms including the exciting option of camping in one of their luxury pods.





THE LOCATION

The location of the hostel is perfect for exploring the South Downs area. The hostel is right on the doorstep of the South Downs Way, making it ideal for either long distance walkers wishing to tackle the whole thing or for those wishing just to cherry pick the sections with the stunning views, many of which are within easy reach of the hostel.

The beautiful town of Lewes is just a few miles away plus the hostel has its own dedicated train station- just a few hundred metres down a country lane brings you to Southease Railway Station. The station has direct trains to Brighton (25 minutes) and London Victoria every hour (Journey time: 1 hour 20 minutes).

ROOMS AND BATHROOMS

The hostel offers a choice of ensuite dorms, private rooms, family rooms plus a self-contained, 3-bedroom family unit with its own kitchen area available for exclusive use.

There is also the option of luxury camping pods. Luxury camping pods? Yes you heard me right. These wooden log pods offer all the magic of a camping experience but with creature comforts like lighting, heating and electrical plug points. Guests have to bring their own bedding. There is a dedicated shower cum toilet bathroom for guests staying in the pods. Pods are perfect for a family of 4.

FACILITIES

Guests can relax in the common lounge with its unpainted plaster walls and exposed brickwork, which give the whole place a very rustic yet boutique feel. The hostel's onsite 'Courtyard Cafe' offers a relaxed atmosphere for guests to unwind after a long day. You can enjoy a full English breakfast for as little as £5 in the morning. From homemade cakes to coffees to three course meals, the Courtyard Cafe has it all.



WHAT MAKES THIS A LUXURY HOSTEL

In terms of character, heritage and location this is one of Britain's finest hostels. Plus the perfect place to explore the South Downs National Park. It feels like a world away from London and yet just 80 minutes on the train from Victoria. Visit soon.



FACTBOX

Privates run from £39, dorms from £20.

Top tip: Hike upto Firle Beacon which is just a wee jaunt from the hostel door and take in the stunning panoramic views across the hills and out to sea.

Itford Farm, Beddingham, Lewes BN8 6JS, United Kingdom

YHA AMBLESIDE

Welcome to one of the most scenic hostels in the world. I've been visiting here for years and I love the staff, the location on the hem of Lake Windermere always takes my breath away





THE LOCATION

For me, this hostel is the perfect base to explore Lake District. This is probably one of the most scenic hostels in England perched on the edge of Lake Windermere. The nearest bus stop is in front of the Waterhead Hotel and the closest train station is Windermere, from where the 555 Bus will bring you to the Waterhead Hotel, a stone's throw away from the hostel.

ROOMS AND BATHROOMS

There are a variety of available rooms. These include: 11 rooms with en-suite which are perfect for couples, beds in shared single sex rooms, private or family rooms with or without en-suite. The bunk style rooms are comfortable and perfect for a group of friends or families. Many of the rooms here have lovely Lakeside views or views of Langdale Pikes.

YHA hostels are family friendly (cots, high chairs available) with a number of their hostels having undergone an impressive renovation. This particular one has undergone a 1.4 million pound renovation.

FACILITIES

The facilities here are excellent- from kayak hire to large self-catering kitchen. The hostel has been refurbished in the recent past so you can expect clean, modern rooms and a bunch of excellent amenities that including a café serving local food, restaurant and self-catering facilities. It has its own jetty waterside picnic benches too. There is a comfortable TV lounge and some of the dorms and bedrooms have views across both the lake and the Langdale Pikes. There is a games room, which is perfect for the kids and a selection of books for guests to borrow. The hostel is perfectly located with a number of walking and cycling routes in close proximity and the option of bike hire.

A variety of watersports can be enjoyed on the lake and guests can buy tickets for lake cruises and mountain goat tours at reception.

Free Wi-Fi is available for all guests in communal areas.

Towels are not provided as a rule but bedding comes with the cost of a night's stay in a dorm.



WHAT MAKES THIS A LUXURY HOSTEL

What makes this a luxury hostel is the spectacular location. Situated on the hem of Lake Windermere, in the lap of nature, to stay here is like a dream. After a long day of exploring and hiking the countryside and lakeside relax at the hostel. If you are not too tired at the end of the day, take your pick of any one of the three local cinemas or have a tipple at the local pub.

FACTBOX

Beds start from £10.00, Private rooms from £25.00 per person, Family rooms from £25.00 per person.

The maximum number of children's cots/cribs in a room is 1. Any type of extra bed or child's cot/crib is upon request and needs to be confirmed by management.

**YHA Ambleside, Waterhead,
Ambleside LA22 0EU, United Kingdom**





YHA STRATFORD-UPON-AVON

This is a beautiful hostel in a Grade II listed Georgian building built in 1874. The hostel has undergone a fairly recent £1.2 million refurbishment. It is set in grounds spread over three acres of land.

THE LOCATION

The hostel is a few miles outside of Stratford-Upon-Avon in the pretty village of Alveston so if you don't have a car, your movements are restricted. However, there is a regular bus service from the door of the hostel to the town, which runs late into the evening in case you are without car and catching an evening performance at the theatre.

The hostel is only two miles from Shakespeare's birthplace. Historic Stratford-upon-Avon is nearby as is Warwick Castle- a medieval castle. A show by the world-renowned Royal Shakespeare Company is certainly on the cards if you visit.

ROOMS AND BATHROOMS

There are a wide variety of rooms to choose from. They range from shared single sex rooms for adults or under 18's, private rooms with and without ensuite sleeping 2-6 people, private family rooms with and without ensuite sleeping 2-6 people and large pod deluxe rooms. Cots are available upon request and bedding and housekeeping are provided.

The insulated Camping Pod Deluxe Rooms have all the comforts of the indoors paired with the excitement of camping in the outdoors. Avail of amenities like a kitchenette area with fridge, sink, kettle, crockery and microwave and a wet room with toilet and shower. The sleeping arrangements include a double bed and a double sofa bed with bedding. Enjoy a glass of wine at the end of a long day on your very own private deck.

FACILITIES

There is a large dining room/restaurant, games room and lounge and good cycle shed. The staff is friendly and extremely helpful. No trip to England is complete without a Sunday roast and the hostel's excellent onsite restaurant, Hemmingford's made my wish come true serving an excellent Sunday roast – roast beef and all the trimmings included. For an extra £5, you can enjoy the hostel's all you can eat breakfast buffet which is very filling and includes a mix of hot and cold items. The other nice feature about this hostel is the beautiful stretch of lawn and outdoor

seating areas. Just grab a book and maybe a coffee or jug of Pimms from the hostel bar and you are sorted.

Free Wi-Fi is available for all guests in communal areas.

Towels are not provided as a rule but bedding comes with the cost of a night's stay in a dorm.





WHAT MAKES THIS A LUXURY HOSTEL

This Grade II-listed Georgian hostel is only two miles from Shakespeare’s birthplace. It is very close to Warwick Castle and historic Stratford-upon-Avon. All these factors make this historic hostel deserving of the status of a luxury hostel.

FACTBOX

Beds in a dorm run from £17, private rooms from £35, family rooms from £29 and camp-ing pods from £69.

Address: Hemmingford House, Alveston, Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwickshire, CV37 7RG.

YHA EDEN PROJECT

Stay super close to one of Cornwall's best attractions at YHA Eden Project. The unique Snoozebox bedrooms are made from recycled shopping containers and sit just a scenic walk away from the iconic biomes. You could even hire a beautiful bell tent in the campsite if you want to be even closer to nature.



LOCATION

YHA Eden Project is only about a 20-minute walk from the Eden Project site itself, so you can stay all day. You could even take a walk to the coast – you can see it from the campsite.

ROOMS AND BATHROOMS

Inside the Snoozeboxes you'll find full air conditioning, comfy beds and an en-suite bathroom with soap. There's even a TV in each Snoozebox, so you can curl up and watch telly together in the evenings! There are 60 bedrooms on site and the hostel feels like a village of recycled (but very luxurious) shipping containers. If you're camping in the nearby field, you'll find a separate block of heated showers and toilets – perfect for chilly mornings. The festival inspired bell tents make a great choice if you're going to the Eden Sessions.

FACILITIES

YHA Eden Project's social space is a huge heated marquee, and it's got plenty inside for families to do when they're not at the main attraction. You can chill out with some giant Jenga, read information about the Eden Project itself, or socialise with a St Austell beer from the bar. If you're feeling peckish, there's a small kitchen with a few appliances for cooking, or you could buy a microwavable meal from the hostel shop. There's even free Wi-Fi in the marquee if you want to upload some photos of your amazing day out.





WHAT MAKES THIS A LUXURY HOSTEL

Sleeping in a Snoozebox is an experience you'll never forget, and you'll feel so in tune with the Eden Project's eco-friendly values.

The little extras like air conditioning and having a TV in your room make all the difference and the ensuite bathrooms feel really high spec. Not to mention being in easy walking distance of one of the UK's most iconic sights.

FACTBOX

At YHA Eden Project private rooms start from as little as £29, family rooms are from as little as £34 per night and camping is from £12 per night. Breakfast excluded. Free Wi-Fi. Check in begins at 16:00. Check out before 10:00 am.

Bodelva, Cornwall, PL24 2SG



YHA SNOWDON PEN-Y-PASS

With a stylish multi-million pound investment and a café named after mountaineer George Mallory, conquering Mount Snowdon has never felt so satisfying. YHA Snowdon Pen-y-Pass has a legendary history and great modern facilities too – it's ideal for families, groups and climbers who have caught the mountaineering bug.



LOCATION

1,000 ft above sea level, this mountain retreat will give you a head start on your adventure up Snowdon. There are some exceptional views of the surrounding scenery too.

ROOMS AND BATHROOMS

This hostel's refurbishment means you can look forward to individual plug sockets and handy reading lights. Expect shiny bathrooms, lit mirrors and sturdy metal bunk beds to leave you feeling refreshed before and after your climb. YHA Snowdon Pen-y-Pass has 16 en-suite rooms and a mixture of dorms, private rooms and family rooms to choose from. You'll find plenty of storage lockers for your gear and plenty of room to socialise with your new roommates – why not ask them about their adventures on the mountain?

FACILITIES

YHA Snowdon Pen-y-Pass has everything you need for a comfortable stay – unless you can't live without your mobile signal and Wi-Fi! The hostel has lots of space to relax, play board games or curl up with a book.

You can even read the wall murals to find out more about the area's history and the famous mountaineers who have taken on Snowdon. Look out for bottled ales at the bar and delicious Welsh dishes from the kitchen. There's a good self-catering kitchen too if you fancy preparing something to scoff on top of the mountain.



WHAT MAKES THIS A LUXURY HOSTEL

With a £1.3 million investment under its belt, YHA Snowdon Pen-y-Pass is fully equipped to make mountaineers feel at home. The hostel is especially good for groups and business conferences, as there’s a modern classroom with state-of-the-art facilities on site. And of course, having Snowdon right on your front door makes it pretty great too.

FACTBOX

At YHA Snowdon Pen-y-Pass private rooms start from as little as £35, family rooms are from as little as £29 per night and beds are from £15 per night. Breakfast excluded. Check in begins at 17:00. Check out before 10:00 am.

Caernarfon, Gwynedd, LL55 4NY



YHA LONDON CENTRAL

With everything from a 'diva room' to a buzzing bar of backpackers, YHA London Central is the ideal way to experience the capital. This modern yet affordable four-star hostel offers great food, friendly staff and a great central location in London.



LOCATION

Central by name and central by nature, this hostel sits just five minutes from the Oxford Street shops and in easy walking distance of attractions like Madam Tussauds.

ROOMS AND BATHROOMS

YHA London Central offers a variety of rooms based on your budget. All rooms under eight beds can be booked as private, and family rooms and en-suites are available too. All dorm beds have a secure large locker to store your luggage—just don't forget to bring your own padlock.

There are plenty of communal bathrooms dotted around on multiple floors. Shared bathrooms are clean and spotless. Hair dryer or straighteners can be hired free of charge. There's soap next to all sinks and you can rent or buy a towel from reception if you're not bringing your own.

FACILITIES

YHA London Central has all key essentials. You'll find plenty of space to plug in your laptop, board games to play, and a well-stocked bookshelf of paperbacks and travel guides. Guests can log in on the in-hostel computers or connect to the free Wi-Fi in social areas. The hostel bar is the perfect place to have a beer or glass of wine after a long day of sightseeing in London. They also serve coffee and hot/cold snacks. If you are on a tight budget, the basement contains a well-equipped kitchen. The hostel hosts free music events on a regular basis. There's even a handy postbox to tell everyone back at home what you're up to. If you need to wash your clothes there is a self-service laundromat. The only thing that is missing in this hostel is the lack of social interaction amongst guests.



WHAT MAKES THIS A LUXURY HOSTEL

YHA has a bunch of good quality hostels in London but this one is my favourite. I love the amazing location.

The hostel has a very relaxed easygoing ambience.

The rooms are clean and comfortable. You have a good filling breakfast to start your day in London.

I travelled with my family last summer and they loved it. You

know what you get with the YHA. They are not party hostels and it is not easy to meet fellow guests here unless you are staying in one of the dorms.

Overall though, for the price you pay, facilities and rooms, YHA London Central is a great hostel for exploring London. Not to mention the nightlife, shops and famous sights of London are right at your doorstep.

FACTBOX

At YHA London Central private rooms start from as little as £69, four-bed family rooms are from as little as £65 per night and beds in shared rooms are from £17 per night.

Breakfast is excluded. Free Wi-Fi. Check in begins at 14:00. Check out before 10:00 am.

104 Bolsover Street, London, W1W 5NU

YHA BERWICK

YHA Berwick is home to a hostel, a bistro café and an art gallery. Explore the town that Lowry loved to paint with a stay in this historic (and leaning) building. You'll find modern facilities mixed with over 240 years of history, tasty food in the Granary Bistro, and a scenic quayside location that's ideal for walkers and cyclists.





LOCATION

This hostel lies very close to the town centre of Berwick-upon-Tweed – home of the Lowry trail. Or you could even take a day trip further north over the Scottish border.

ROOMS AND BATHROOMS

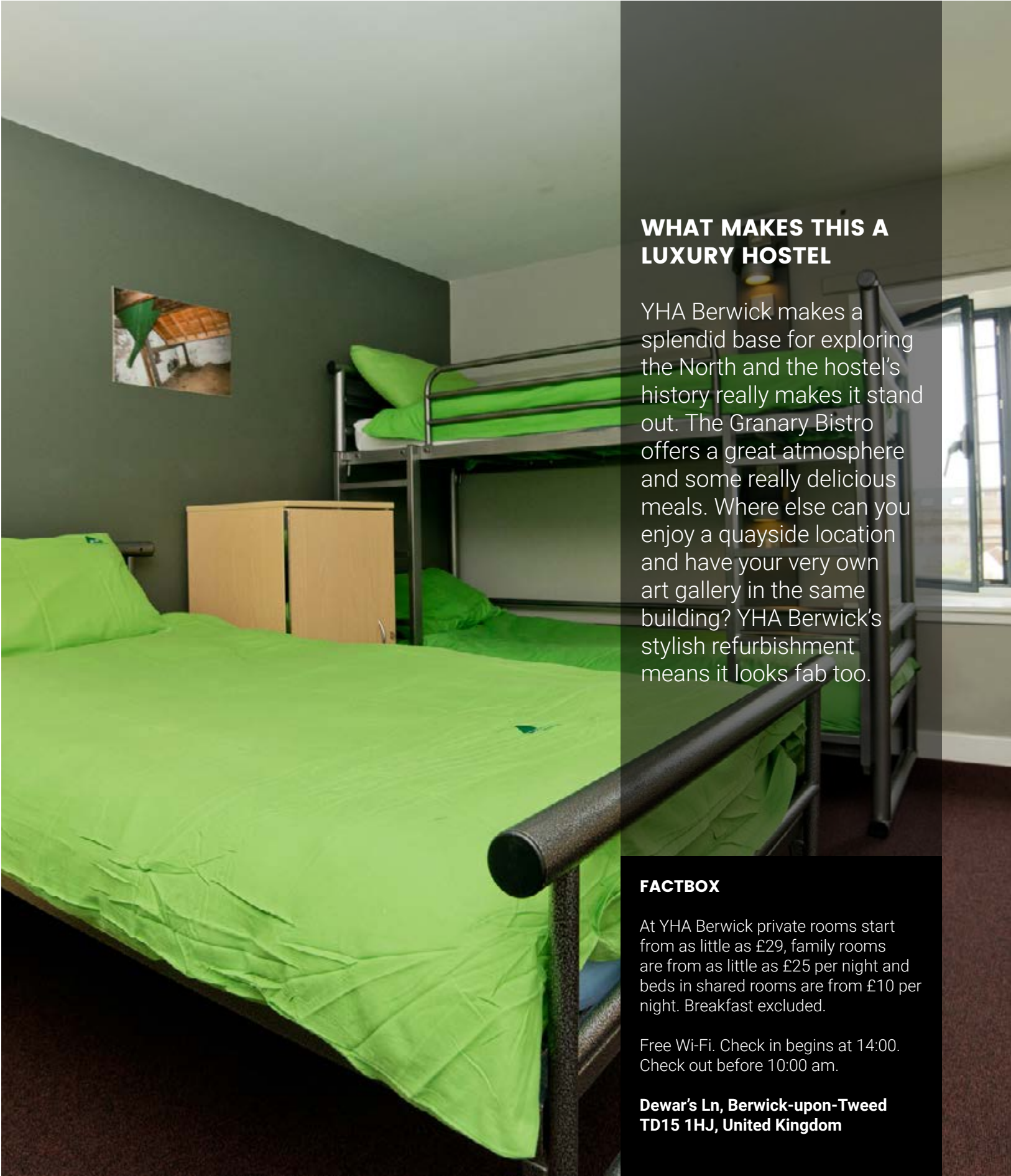
All rooms at YHA Berwick are en-suite, which is really handy if you're staying as a family. There are 55 beds in total at the hostel and 13 bedrooms, with a choice of dorm rooms or private rooms. The modern metal bunk beds have their own plug socket and reading light – you'll also find plenty of storage for your things. Some of the rooms have great views over the town and sloping roofs, there's soap next to every sink too.

Check out the décor in bedrooms to find out more about YHA Berwick's amazing history as a granary.

FACILITIES

From its very own art gallery (sometimes exhibiting Lowry himself!) to a bustling café, YHA Berwick is more than just a place to sleep. The Granary Bistro Café serves tasty sandwiches, snacks and meals – the bar is well-stocked too if you want to relax before hitting Berwick-upon-Tweed's famous pubs.

If you're visiting for business, the leaning hostel offers two meeting rooms on the first floor, along with projector screens and flip charts for your team. You can also stay connected using the hostel's free Wi-Fi and handy computers.



WHAT MAKES THIS A LUXURY HOSTEL

YHA Berwick makes a splendid base for exploring the North and the hostel's history really makes it stand out. The Granary Bistro offers a great atmosphere and some really delicious meals. Where else can you enjoy a quayside location and have your very own art gallery in the same building? YHA Berwick's stylish refurbishment means it looks fab too.

FACTBOX

At YHA Berwick private rooms start from as little as £29, family rooms are from as little as £25 per night and beds in shared rooms are from £10 per night. Breakfast excluded.

Free Wi-Fi. Check in begins at 14:00. Check out before 10:00 am.

**Dewar's Ln, Berwick-upon-Tweed
TD15 1HJ, United Kingdom**

YHA CARDIFF CENTRAL

It's not every day you stay in a five-star rated hostel – in fact YHA Cardiff Central is the only hostel in the UK that's bagged the title. With quirky décor, premium rooms and great facilities, this luxury hostel has everything you need for a city break. It's the perfect base to explore Cardiff's castle, culture and thriving sports scene.





LOCATION

YHA Cardiff Central is in the heart of the city centre and within walking distance of attractions like Cardiff Castle and the Principality Stadium. There is on-site parking too.

ROOMS AND BATHROOMS

With 320 beds, YHA Cardiff Central is perfect for groups of friends travelling together. All bedrooms are en-suite, to make it extra convenient in the mornings, and there is free Wi-Fi in your room, which is quite rare for YHA. There are private rooms available if you love your quiet time, or more luxurious doubles for couple's getaways. The premium rooms boast soap, towels, two pillows per person, TV, dressing table and chair too.

FACILITIES

The hostel has a trendy lobby to relax in, complete with painted translations of Welsh phrases on the walls and plush velvet furniture. There are meeting rooms and conference rooms available for business travellers with state-of-the-art facilities. The well-stocked bar offers tasty local ales and stays open until 2am – great for if you fancy a big night out in the city. There's also an all-day menu of snacks and main meals like pizza, burgers and sharing platters.

WHAT MAKES THIS A LUXURY HOSTEL

YHA Cardiff Central's five-star rating makes it stand out from the crowd. With its previous use as a hotel, there are all the modern essentials you need and more. This brand new hostel is great for exploring the regenerated Cardiff Bay or touring the city museums.

FACTBOX

At YHA Cardiff Central private rooms start from £39, family rooms are from £45 per night and beds in shared rooms are from £15.00 per night. Breakfast excluded. Free Wi-Fi. Check in begins at 14:00. Check out before 10:00 am.

East Tyndall Street, Cardiff, CF10 4BB



SAFESTAY YORK

In a city well known for its beautiful architecture it's good to discover Safestay York- an 18th century townhouse but with all the modern facilities you'll need for a good night's sleep.

Safestay have other branches, including London, Elephant & Castle so the brand colours (deep purple and hot pink) and funky interiors can be found here too.



THE LOCATION

Safestay York is within the medieval city walls and a short walk from the city centre. It's under 10 minutes walk from York railway station. York is a good-size city for walking around.

There's a decent chippy almost opposite and a Sainsbury's Local on the same street.

ROOMS AND BATHROOMS

Full occupancy is 147. There are private twin and double rooms, plus dorms with 4 to 12 bunk beds. Most have ensuite bathrooms and there are extra bathrooms on each floor.

Families are welcome (if there's an under 16 in the group you need to book the whole room). The hostel is pet friendly too.

On all beds the mattresses are firm foam and pretty darn comfy so you'll sleep well. There's Safestay branded purple bed linen and the duvets are warm. Beds are made for you so there's no collecting bed linen and trying to make the bed yourself.

There's a free luggage room next to Reception and there are small lockers to rent for £1 for valuables (larger valuables – laptops, etc... – can be also be stored with Reception in a locked room).

It could do with more plug points in the private room we stayed in but there were double sockets next to each bed, just not by the luxurious sofa.

The bathrooms in the private rooms are small and functional but the extra bathrooms on each floor have lots of space – even a sofa for your friends to wait for you. There's no bathroom shelf though so you'll be keeping your toothbrush in your bag.

In this Georgian building the rooms still have some original features such as fireplaces, exposed beams and ornate ceilings.

Private rooms include a TV, towels and toiletries, tea and coffee making facilities, hair dryer, plus iron and ironing board. There's a clothes rail instead of a wardrobe and no table and chair but the room we tried did have a large Chesterfield sofa (purple, of course).

There was also lots of extra space in the room so you can spread out.

FACILITIES

In the dorms the bunk beds have a personal reading light and power socket. Private rooms have bedside reading lights and sockets by the beds too. Bunk beds also have a privacy curtain.

There's a small additional fee for breakfast (£3.50-4), which is cheaper if booked in advance.

Free Wi-Fi is available throughout the building and the signal strength is fine for basic messaging.

On the ground floor there's a dining room with long benches and tables for breakfast and for guest use throughout the day. But the real gem is the lounge, which wouldn't look out of place in a 4 or 5 star hotel. It's got a bar too and is simply a great place to meet friends.

The bedroom doors are all fire safety doors, which does mean they slam shut quite loudly (no soft close) so bring your earplugs if you're a light sleeper. Otherwise, this is a quiet lo-cation and you won't be woken by anything from outside. (We did stay on a Sunday and Monday night so Fridays and Saturdays may well be more lively.)

You'll find really nice staff on the 24 hour Reception. We even got hair dye tips.

- TOP TIP -

York is great for walking to all of the sights so you won't spend anything more on transport once you're here.

Stop by the Evil Eye Lounge where there's a good bar on the ground floor (with a small garden at the back). Stay longer and order Thai food then head upstairs to dine on the first floor in one of the booths overlooking Stonegate for great food and people watching.





WHAT MAKES THIS A LUXURY HOSTEL

Staying in a historic building is a treat. There’s a sweeping staircase, panelled rooms, exposed beams and a grand Rococo ceiling. And then there’s the quirky decor (striped stair carpet, bright pink and green high-back chairs, etc...).

The heritage is embraced with a sign outside each room letting you know what its use would have been when it was the Bouchier family home in the 1700s.

The private rooms are gorgeous and that lounge is a proper gem.

FACTBOX

Cost of rooms:
Twin/double room: £75.00 to £170.00 per room
Bed in a dorm: £15.00 to £65.00 per bed

Micklegate House, 88-90 Micklegate, York YO1 6JX

SAFESTAY AT ELEPHANT AND CASTLE

Situated in one of London's less fashionable but up-and-coming neighbourhoods, Safestay is a beautifully designed hostel with top-notch facilities, offering a comfortable base for exploring London's sights and delights.



LOCATION

While the location isn't in the most desirable part of London, Safestay at Elephant and Castle has the advantage of having the 148 bus stop right at their doorstep, which takes you straight to Victoria Station in around 25 minutes. It is also just five minutes from Elephant and Castle tube station, putting it just a few stops from London Bridge, Leicester Square and Piccadilly Circus.

The Electric Elephant Cafe, just around the corner from the hostel, is one of the many interesting finds in this relatively undiscovered neighbourhood of London. Adjacent to the artists' quarter, you can expect home-baked goodness, great crispy bacon rolls, 'Damn fine coffee', and happy, smiling people.

This great neighbourhood has tons of character with cafes, takeaways, and little pots of history that give the location a great deal of character.

ROOMS AND BATHROOMS

The rooms at Safestay are comfortable and convenient.

The beds have a reading light, nice thick duvets and a privacy curtain – a simple but genius idea that more hostels should implement. It's nice not just for privacy but for the joy of not being woken up when fellow guests come in later at night and switch on the main light.

FACILITIES

I loved the bright colours, quirky design and décor – Safestay definitely has the look of a five-star boutique hotel written all over it.

The common room downstairs is a very chilled out and relaxing space. Whether you are there for a drink at the bar or just to catch up with friends or work on your laptop, it's a great shared space.

In the spirit of the great British tradition, there are tea-making facilities. The rooms have lots of natural light, which is great on cold winter days. And of course, an awesome plasma screen TV. Attached ensuite bathrooms are stunning and would not look out of a place in a four-star hotel.

The staff were very polite, friendly, and professional whenever I required their help.

While the hostel has all the hallmarks and touch of a luxury hostel, the one thing it lacked for me was a real soul. As many nice conversations as I had with the staff, it seems that they are still finding their feet in terms of creating the experience.

The other key thing that could be improved is the Wi-Fi, which during the time of my re-view was strong in the common room but weak in the rooms.



WHAT MAKES THIS A LUXURY HOSTEL

Overall, I really enjoyed my stay at Safestay – it was a comfortable and very pleasant experience. The great location and high quality rooms, as well as its nice layout and decor, make Safestay a very welcome addition to the London hostelling scene.

I will definitely be revisiting on my future visits to London.

FACTBOX

Dorms start at £18 per person while the private rooms begin from around £75 per night.

Walworth Rd London, Elephant & Castle London, Greater London SE17 1JL, United Kingdom



WOMBATS CITY HOSTEL LONDON

Once upon a time home to the author Joseph Conrad, this seaman's hostel turned travellers palace is a stylish bolthole for travellers looking to experience a different side of London.



THE LOCATION

Wombat's City Hostel London opened in December 2014 and set a new standard for hostels in the UK's capital. Minutes walk away from sights such as Tower Bridge, the Tower of London and City Hall and you are an easy walk from the buzzing nightlife of Shoreditch and Wilton's Music Hall.

ROOMS AND BATHROOMS

The hostel has a chequered history. In the Victorian age it used to be a hostel for sailors, who dropped into London from the nearby docks. The house served as an accommodation for sailors and seamen throughout a century and was known as the Red Ensign Club. Some of the Sailors often referred to it as 'Alcatraz', because of its small cabin like, spartan rooms. It was also once upon a time home to the author Joseph Conrad. It has a great history.

The current day rooms are lot less spartan and quite spacious. They come with comfy wooden beds, a private shower, toilet facilities and lockers for belongings. Private ensuite rooms are comfortable and perfect for couples.

There are more than 20 fully equipped Double rooms. Doubles and Dorms come with en-suite bathrooms and separate ensuite toilets, plus an extra washbasin, so people can brush their teeth, even though the toilet and bathroom are occupied. The biggest dorm is a 10 bed, although most dorms are 6 bed dorms. Every bed has its own reading light, a UK power outlet and a USB port.

Standout feature of this hostel: The 7th and 8th floor consists of two superior 6 bed dorms that will share an exclusive living room on the 9th floor with a balcony looking onto Tower Bridge, The Shard, Canary Wharf and the City of London.

FACILITIES

The hostel has a terrace in the yard, a big guest kitchen, a huge hangout area in the basement and lobby, a laundry and a bar with an outdoor area.

The hostel building itself is fab. Formerly a seaman's hostel, the building was converted to a traveller's palace. It features a huge

basement bar, courtyard, cosy hangout area in the lobby and all the amenities a backpacker could ever wish for.

They have a fabulous well-equipped guest kitchen where guests can cook their own meals. There is a Sainsbury supermarket down the road where you can grab all the basics plus they do a fab range of microwaveable curries. (Butter Chicken Masala is a winner). If you are feeling hungry, the bar serves small pizzas (£5) and snacks.

As with standard for all Wombats Hostels, they run an excellent breakfast buffet where for the princely sum of £3.50 you can help yourself to orange juice, tea and coffee, bread, spreads, cereal, fruit, cheese and meats. Perfect breakfast to kickstart your day in London.

When you arrive at the hostel you will be greeted with a small welcome drink and

their very own city map with essential information with all the going-ons in town. As with every Wombat's there will be free Wi-Fi all across the hostel, free linen provided, towels and hair dryers to borrow at reception.



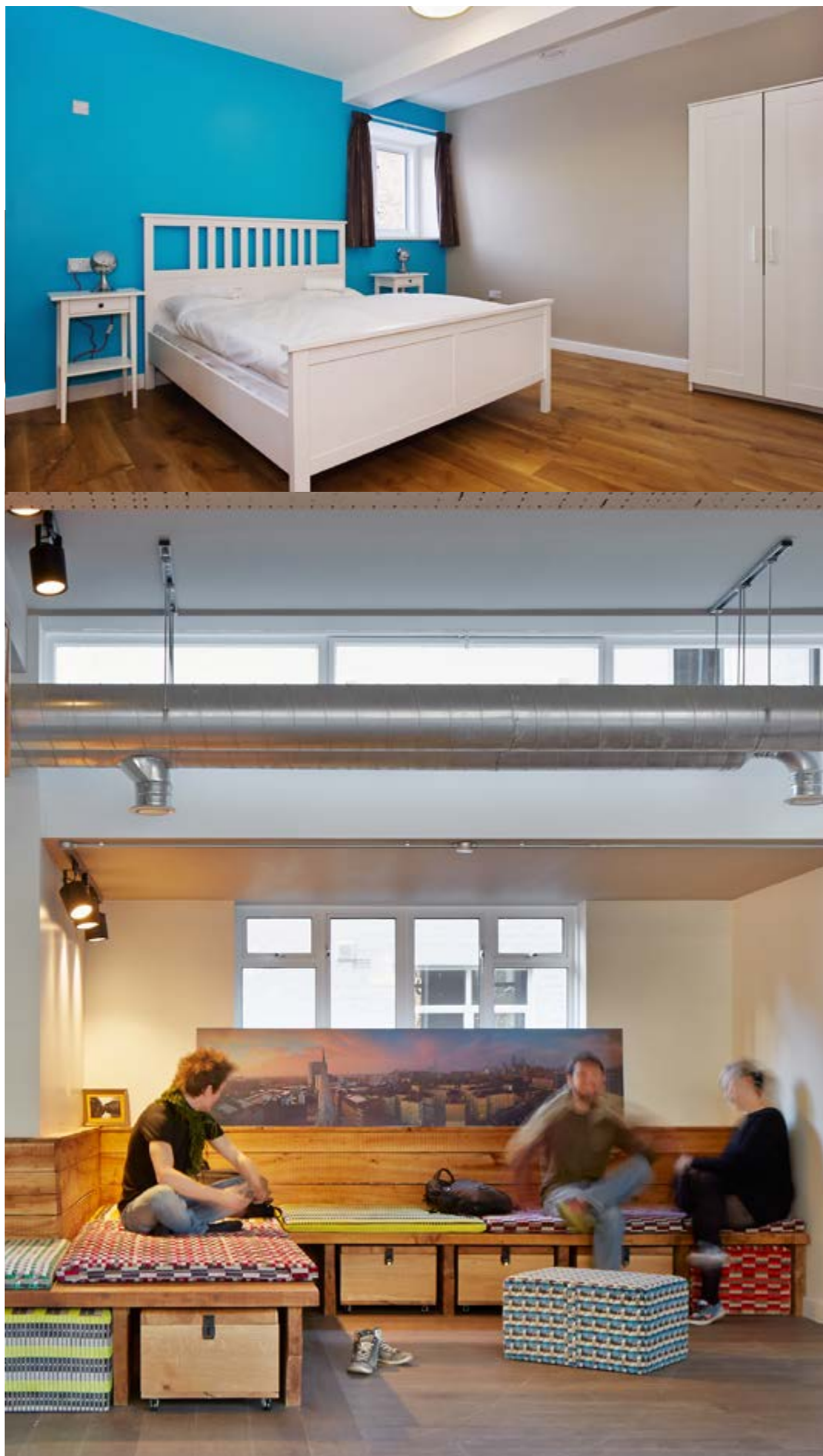
WHAT MAKES THIS A LUXURY HOSTEL

Voted by Hostelworld users as the best hostel in England, this hostel is probably my favourite in the Wombats chain of hostels. (Wombats Munich, a close second). Even though it is a large hostel, the friendliness of the staff here make this feel more like a small hostel and less like a corporate chain hostel/hotel. I love the history and story of this building. The location in East London is fantastic and allows guests to explore a different side of London. Plus features like their fab basement bar and also the common room on the 9th with excellent views of Canary Wharf to the Shard is a huge plus for me.

FACTBOX

Cost of rooms: A bed in a 6-bed dorm starts from £26, a bed in a 8-bed dorm starts from £23, a bed in a 5-bed dorm from £27 and bed in a 4-bed dorm from £29 per night. A double room starts from £88 per night for two people.

**7 Dock St, London E1 8LL,
United Kingdom**





GENERATOR LONDON

Originally built in the early 20th century as accommodation for the London Metropolitan Police Force, Generator London has been welcoming travellers from all over the world for over 20 years. Fully refurbished in 2013, the property takes inspiration from the diversities of London, the design, art, food and drink.

THE LOCATION

Love the location, just a few blocks from Russell Square underground station and walking distance to the British Museum and Leicester Square. Bunch of cool cafes, bars and budget friendly restaurants in the neighbourhood.

ROOMS AND BATHROOMS

I arrived quite late on a Wednesday night, close to midnight and the place was still buzzing. Reception staff were friendly and checked me in super quick time. There was a problem with lights in my triple bed dorm room so I got quickly checked into one of their very slick twin private ensembles.

The room was compact, cosy and very comfortable. There was a clothes hanging rail, full-length mirror, comfy beds, linen and towels were supplied plus Wi-Fi signal in the room (4th floor) was excellent. It would have been nice to have plug point by the bed instead of in the opposite corner of the room. The ensuite bathroom was very stylish with a powerful Grohe Shower

and came with complimentary Waitrose toiletries. It definitely feels more like a budget boutique hotel room. The dorms also do not disappoint. The bunk beds are a nice length and come with a privacy board. Nice mattress. They have secure storage spaces beneath. Plenty of plug points dotted around the room. There is a mix of 4, 6 and 8 bed dorms. Some ensuite and some have shared bathroom facilities. The communal showers are clean and showers are excellent. There is a washing basin inside each room.

FACILITIES

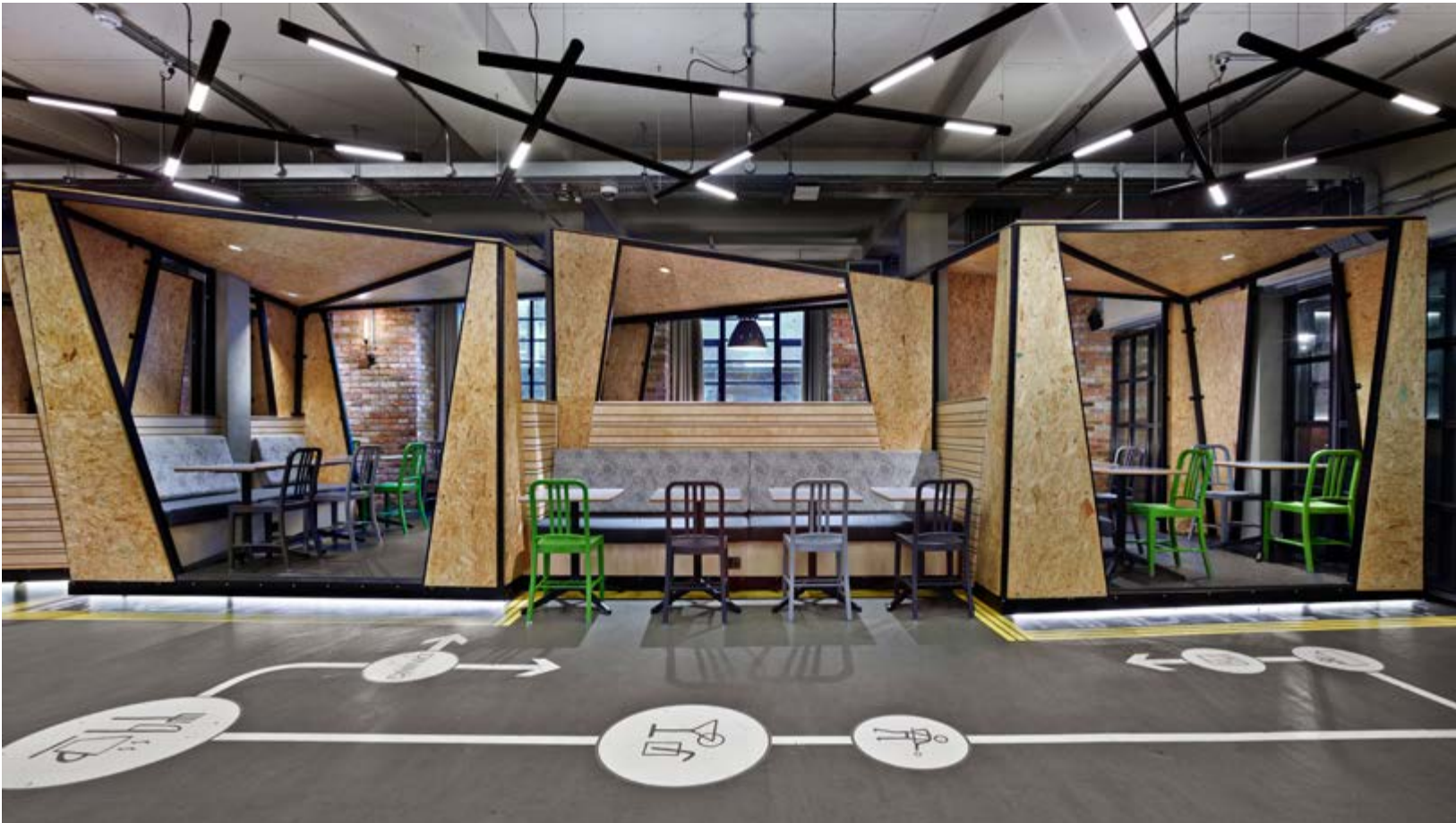
Downstairs they have a bunch of cool social spaces where guests can relax. If you want to party, they have a cool Generator Bar that organises a number of events for guests. On Wednesday night the Karaoke night was in full swing. Away from the bar they have a nice chillout lounge complete with flatscreen TV and nice low lighting where guests were surfing the net on their laptops or tablets. During the day, within this lounge, they have a nice in-house cafe where you can order coffee and their excellent brownies.

Alternatively they do a very moderately priced (Around £6 mark) range of hot food and snacks. I ordered a BLT toasted sandwich with fries, which I washed down with a bottle of Luscombe Ginger Beer. Nice.

I personally would not go for their £4.50 continental breakfast. Your usual selection of breads, ham, cheese and cereal.

Coffee tasted pretty awful. I've had better breakfasts in hostels plus the people serving were a bit cold.

The other cool feature in this Generator Hostel is the movie room where guests can relax and watch a movie. During the day, it acts as a very cool chillout space where guests geek out on their laptops or sleep off their hangover. Other top facilities include their travel shop where you can buy your underground tickets, book a walking tour and just get good general travel advice. They also have storage room facilities for storing your lug-gage. Plus don't forget to bring your towel here. They do not have fluffy towels for hire but do sell them for £5 a pop.





WHAT MAKES THIS A LUXURY HOSTEL

The reclaimed furniture to the exposed brick and pipework give the hostel a very cool industrial chic vibe. It's definitely one of the best hostels I've stayed when in London and a cut above many similarly priced budget hotels in the city. Breakfast could be better plus better placed plug points in the rooms. Big pluses include their cool bar, movie room, common lounge chillout area and fab location in Bloomsbury make this a good choice for travellers when coming to London.

FACTBOX

Dorm beds start from £10.50 while and private twins start from £25 per person but can be much more in high season.

Breakfast is £4.50 extra.

37 Tavistock Place, Russell Square, Bloomsbury, London, England United Kingdom, WC1H 9SE



PALMERS LODGE BOUTIQUE HOSTELS

HILLSPRING LODGE AND SWISS COTTAGE LONDON

It's a strange sensation when you say goodbye to a place where you've only stayed for a few days, yet it feels as if you're leaving home. That kind of place where everyone seems to be dead friendly and you just slip into the swing of things like a duck to water.

Staying at two members of the Palmers Lodge Boutique Hostels family is exactly like that - a home away from home.

LOCATION

Palmers Lodge Swiss Cottage is in a superb location, just a few minutes' walking distance from Swiss Cottage tube station in zone 2. The Hillspring Lodge is also located in zone 2 of London in a quieter residential location, about a 10-minute walk to 24-hour bus stops, the Underground and Overground.

ROOMS AND BATHROOMS

The 20-bed dorms feature bunks built on solid oak, with proper thick mattresses and nice fluffy pillows. Beds are pre-made and linen is free, so if arriving late, you can jump straight into bed. Each bunk has a curtain, which offers a great level of privacy, and comes with a handy reading light and power points for charging up your gadgets.

Moving up the scale, both hostels offer private ensuite rooms. If you're travelling as a couple or just want your own space, these rooms are great.

Both hostels offer free linen and all rooms have free safes and luggage lockers to store valuables.

Starting at £70 (€82) per night for Hillspring Lodge and £100 (€117) mark for Swiss Cottage, these prices are on par for a budget hotel in London but still represent a great deal and are far better than many four-star hotels in the city.

FACILITIES

The staff look after their guests well. They are people who are just travellers like you and me and always armed with great tips.

Besides being very accommodating, both the hostels offer a great level of comfort.

Recently renovated, Palmers Lodge, Swiss Cottage is an 18th century lodge featuring a stunning entrance with a chandelier and many original features like the oak doors and staircase.

Palmer's Lodge, Hillspring Lodge is filled with quirky items of furnishing like a deer rug hanging from the ceiling and a garden full of the owner's collection of 100-odd motorcycles.

The facilities are great here - huge laundry plus an on-site restaurant that does decent pub-style grub.

Both hostels have a really nice lounge area. There are tons of comfy sofas where guests vegetate, smartphone in hand, surfing the web, thanks to the excellent free Wi-Fi in both hostels.

The lounge area at Swiss Cottage and the reception area in Hillspring Lodge also have a few desktop PCs to use for free.

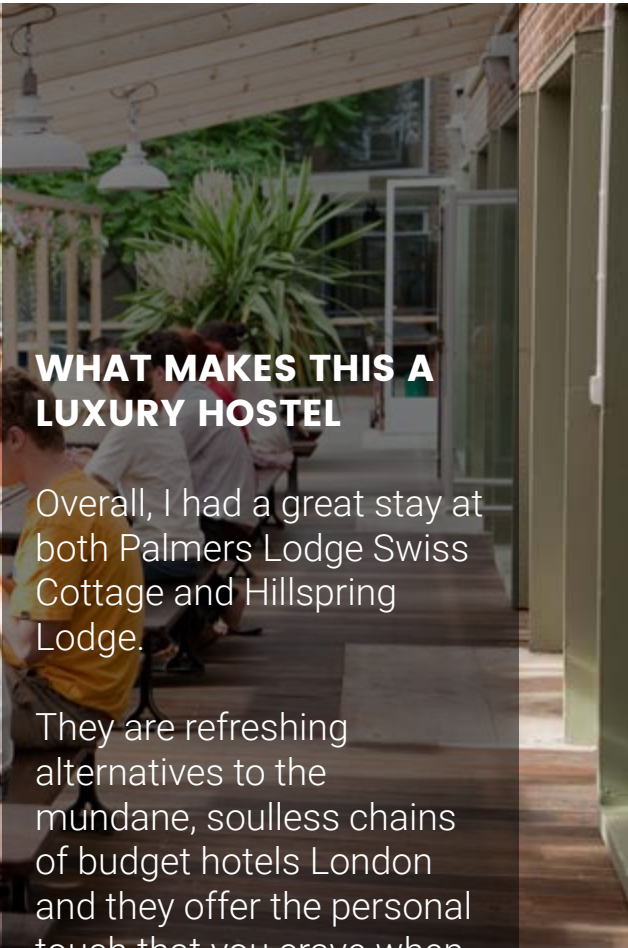
Each hostel has a huge plasma screen TV with a large library of DVDs that you can watch and even borrow for free.

Each hostel has a great funky bar, where you can socialise and meet other hostel guests.

If you are staying at Palmers, they offer an excellent full continental breakfast for only £4.50 which is pretty good value for London. At Hillspring you can enjoy a simple breakfast of toast, cereals and coffee for free.

Both hostels offer free Wi-Fi in all common areas and rooms. Plus a 24-hour reception means someone is always on hand to answer questions about your trip or stay at any time.

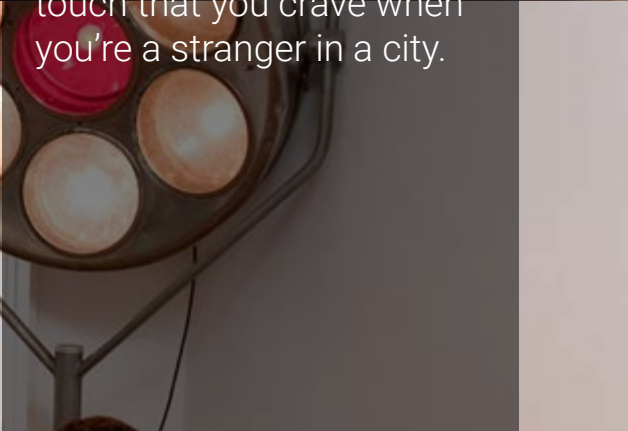




WHAT MAKES THIS A LUXURY HOSTEL

Overall, I had a great stay at both Palmers Lodge Swiss Cottage and Hillspring Lodge.

They are refreshing alternatives to the mundane, soulless chains of budget hotels London and they offer the personal touch that you crave when you're a stranger in a city.



FACTBOX

Dorms from £20 (€23); doubles from £70 (€82) per room per night at Palmers and £100 (€117) per room per night at Swiss Cottage.

Swiss Cottage:
40 College Crescent, London, NW3 5LB.

Hillspring:
233 Willesden Lane, London, NW2 5RP



CLINK78 LONDON

From Charles Dickens to The Clash, there are few hostels in the world that can lay claim to an illustrious history like Clink78. Today it's a unique and lively backpackers' hostel in central London, accommodating up to 500 guests from as little as £13 (€15) per night.



LOCATION

Clink78 is set in a majestic 200-year-old courthouse in an excellent location, just a few minutes' walk from King's Cross Station.

ROOMS AND BATHROOMS:

The rooms at Clink78 offer free bed linen, reading lights, and small personal lockers for valuables - plus, there is secure key card entry to every room. The hostel has girls-only, boys-only and unisex toilets and showers on every floor.

For those who wish to delve into the building's history, you can stay in your own private prison cell. The rooms sleep 1 or 2 in a bunk bed and come complete with original police custody features (including bars on the windows!) Don't worry though, you're free to come and go as you please ...

Note that the cells are not ensuite – but for the experience, this room is nevertheless well worth the investment.

Alternatively, you can check into the dorms, which house up to twelve people.

FACILITIES

This converted courthouse has been brought to life with cool and colourful interior decoration.

Charles Dickens worked as a court scribe and the court cases he saw here served as inspiration for his classic novel Oliver Twist.

Punk rockers The Clash stood trial in the building too, famously accused of shooting expensive racing pigeons in 1978. The two original wood-panelled courtrooms now serve as a TV / film lounge and a computer room where guests can relax and browse the internet in style.

Facilities on-site include a fun and sociable bar and a TravelSHOP where guests can book discounted tickets for top London attractions and get help with airport transfers and on-ward travel arrangements.

The free, all-you-can-eat-breakfast from 7:00-10:00 AM is basic but filling. There is a modern, fully equipped kitchen for those looking to cook their own budget-friendly meal (available for guest use from

12.30pm).

Free Wi-Fi is available throughout the building.

The multilingual staff are friendly and always ready to help – a real asset of this hostel. Chat to them to discover some real local gems!

- TOP TIP -

This is a lively hostel and a very sociable one. If you're looking for a quieter stay, check out their nearby sister hostel Clink261, further down Gray's Inn Road.



WHAT MAKES THIS A LUXURY HOSTEL

A clean and convenient hostel with a great location and friendly staff, top-notch facilities, nice rooms, and quirky history make Clink78 one of the best value hostels in London.

FACTBOX

Dorms from £13 (€15), doubles from £65 (€75) per room, prison cells from £65 (€75) per room.

78 King's Cross Road, London WC1X 9QG, United Kingdom



FRANCE



LES PIAULES PARIS

Situated in a 1930's renovated 'Art Deco' building in the upcoming district of Belleville, Les Piaules is a fab new design hostel with a very cool bar, custom made bunk beds and a rooftop terrace that offers you great views of the Paris skyline.

LOCATION

The hostel is located on the boulevard of Belleville, which is packed with great bars, coffee shops and some great eateries. The hostel reflects the vibe of Belleville: fun, bubbly and arty. The hostel is located near most of the must-see attractions in Paris.

You are within a 10-minute walking radius of the historical centre of Paris: Le Marais, Châtelet, République, Notre-Dame and Saint Germain des Prés plus you have access to all the historical places such as Champs Elysées, Moulin Rouge, Père Lachaise and more. The hostel is just 50 metres walking distance from Belleville Metro hub.

ROOMS AND BATHROOMS

The owners travelled for more than a year across the best and worst hostels and used that experience to design some really cool rooms. Their bunk beds offer comfort, convenience and privacy. The experience shows: they have privacy curtains, a reading light, power plugs, private lockers and a comfy mattress. Called the 'Le Plumard' it is definitely one of the nicest bunk beds I've seen in a hostel.

On the rooftop they have 4 rooms overlooking the Sacré Coeur and the Eiffel Tower.

One of these is called the Rockbound Dorm with the Le Plumard bunk beds. The privates are luxurious with their wooden parquet floors, espresso coffee machine and cosy linen white sheets. If you like your rooms modern and minimalist you will love these rooms.

FACILITIES

The hostel has the coolest bar in town with a carefully curated selection of local beer, coffee and French specialty drinks. The bar is packed with locals in the evenings enjoying aperitif and nibbling on their salty tarts, croque monsieur or cold meat and cheese platters. While enjoying one of their beers on tap, take a selfie in their photo booth, work off your steam with the punching bag or challenge a local on their foosball table.

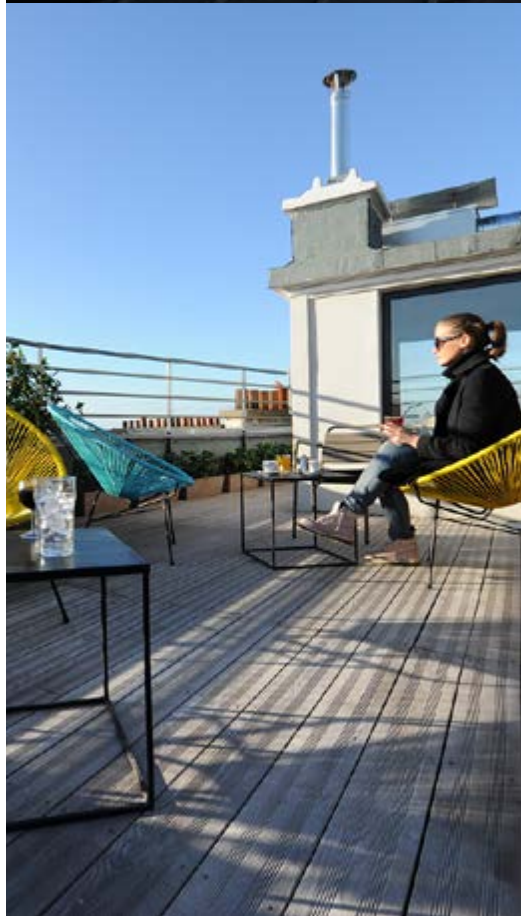
Guests can choose from a range of breakfasts (£2.50 to £8) to kickstart your

day – hand roasted coffee sourced from the Belleville Brûlerie (500m down the road), croissants, eggs and bacon, creamy 24 month-aged Comté, French cheeses from local producers, or muesli and organic yoghurt.

Other key features: You can check-in 24/7, party animals can check-out as late as 12pm, you have free and good working Wi-Fi and helpful multilingual staff who will also give you guidance of chat lines in French if required. Plus they have a very cool customised map of Paris, which has some great tips of things to do and places to eat in the area.

If I was to be picky about the negatives in the hostel: there is no kitchen for guests. The Rockbound dorm on the top floor means that it can get a bit noisy at night on the terrace for those staying in privates- a polite word to your fellow guests and hostel staff should hopefully solve any issues.





WHAT MAKES THIS A LUXURY HOSTEL

Hostels in Paris are pretty average so Les Piaules is a welcome addition to the hostelling scene in Europe. I love the design and hip style of the hostel especially the custom made bunk beds, trendy and cosy bar plus Belleville is a fun vibrant district to base your trip to Paris.

FACTBOX

Doubles start at €90 room, Dorm beds from €25 per person. Note that breakfast is ex-cluded.

**59 Boulevard de Belleville,
75011 Paris, France**

GASTAMA LILLE

I like to think that a great hostel makes a city great. In this case, a memorable few days at the Gastama Hostel gave me a rich perspective of Lille. Lovely staff. The hostel enjoys a fab location in the heart of Vieux Lille. The French-Flemish heritage of the area is reflected in the design of the hostel: exposed brickwork and dark wood beams give a cool industrial chic vibe. Plus you have possibly the coolest bar in town inside the hostel. What more could you want?





LOCATION

The hostel is located in the historic part of the city near all the key cultural sights, about 10 minutes walk from the main square of Lille and 20 minutes from the train stations.

ROOMS AND BATHROOMS

Rooms in Gastama are comfortable and clean. From dormitories to private rooms, this hostel offers the opportunity to meet new people from around the world.

Gastama offer a choice of 4, 6 and 8 beds. Some of the dorms are ensuite and some are with shared communal facilities. There are communal bathrooms on all the floors. Secure individual storage space is available under each bed and padlocks are available at reception. Female only dorms are also available for those who wish not to stay in a mixed room.

FACILITIES

One of the key assets of the hostel is their staff. The word Gastama means 'welcoming' in Esperanto and this is a philosophy that all the staff strongly follow. We got some great tips of places to eat (with 800 restaurants to choose from in Lille, this is handy) and even got discount tickets for an intimate live gig at Le Peniche, a local concert venue on a canal boat.

The star feature of this hostel is their bar, which is a meeting point for locals in Lille. They have a great lineup of events-from live music, live sports and even language exchange events. As a result the bar is packed with locals pretty much everyday. They have a large selection of beers from across the world on tap to sample including their very own 'Gastama' beer. They also serve delicious food from all 4 corners of the world. Dishes you can enjoy here include Moqueca de Rio (a Brazilian stew made with fish, onions, garlic, tomatoes and coriander) homemade burgers, vegan curry, Welsh Rarebit and delicious chicken tagine.

For €4, they also serve a filling breakfast in the morning that consists of 3-4 different cereals, baguettes, jam, nutella, coffee machine (coffee, cappuccino, hot chocolate, hot milk), juice (orange, multi-vitamin).

Plus there is a large kitchen cum common area on the 1st floor for guests.

The hostel also prides itself on being sustainable - bread is sourced from a local French bakery while their tea, coffee and juices are organic.

Plus all the cleaning products used in the hostel carry the green EU Ecolabel.

Earliest check-in time is 15:00 but if you arrive earlier, you can use their luggage room.



WHAT MAKES THIS A LUXURY HOSTEL

Luxury for me is an experience and that's what this hostel offers: a great experience. Staff are the best, nicest people you will meet. Rooms are comfortable and clean. The bar is the place to meet locals and with an excellent range of beers and fabulous food on offer, there is no danger of you going hungry or thirsty in Lille.

Definitely the place to be in Lille.



FACTBOX

Dorm bed range from €21–30, single rooms from €40–54 and doubles from €71–86.

109, rue de Saint André, 59000 Lille

SLO LIVING HOSTEL LYON

Awarded the best hostel in France in 2016, this hostel is a great combination of a lively convivial atmosphere and a relaxing setting. Located only 10 min away from the heart of downtown Lyon, you will enjoy its outside patio full of hammocks and plants, its comfortable mattresses and very clean spaces. Their friendly and helpful staff members are always glad to share tips and great addresses in town. Try their Slo Living Hostel App for walking and cycling itineraries in Lyon, it's free and usable in airplane mode.





THE LOCATION

Slo Living Hostel is located in the Guillotière neighbourhood, a multicultural animated part of town. Some of the streets close by can be noisy at night but the hostel is in the middle of a very quiet street, which is a real advantage when you need to rest! It will take you less than 20 minutes on foot to get to great sights like the Vieux Lyon (old town from the Renaissance period), beautiful historical squares and the most famous museums. Lyon's main train station is located only a 15 min walk away! During your stay, you won't even need to get a metro/bus pass because every point of interest in town is walkable from Slo Living Hostel.

ROOMS AND BATHROOMS

I particularly enjoyed the spacious and well-organised dorms. Even if their 2-bed dorm is a little bit too small it is convenient. You can borrow a padlock at the reception for free and store your luggage in lockers close to your bed. Each bunk bed has its own nightstand and plug so no need to worry about charging your phone or computer

at night. Getting my towel dried up after a shower can be tricky in some hostels I've stayed in but each room has their own wall coat racks there.

If you worry about noise in the dorms, the hostel offers a free set of earplugs at the reception but apart from potential snoring from other guests or people laughing in the patio, the dorms are very quiet.

In the summer you can borrow your own personal mini fan to plug in by your bed, which is a real treat during heat waves.

FACILITIES

The hostel's outside patio is definitely one of its main qualities. In summer you can relax in the long chairs or hammocks in the summer, eat convivial homemade dinners with other guests around the big table, enjoy their smooth playlists... feels like a real break from the city life while being downtown. I really enjoyed the coloured Street Art painting.

Communal showers are clean and convenient. Each one of them has a towel

hanger and a chair for your clothes or toiletry bag.

The common areas are spacious and beautifully decorated, however, the kitchen is a bit too small for more than 2 guests at a time and their fridge has limited space.

Breakfast may be 5 euros but their 'All you can eat' French buffet is wonderful and definitely worth the price! It includes crêpes, pastries, baguettes, jams, cereals, fruits, tea, coffee and fruit juices.

All year long, the staff organizes different walking tours, Apéro-pétanque (which is a perfect mix of drinking wine, savouring cheeses and deli meats and playing a ball game called pétanque), winecrawls, local beer and BBQ nights, homemade dinners, crêpe parties and a Yoga Brunch on Sundays. I would absolutely recommend their activities: great way to meet other travellers and learn more about the city for very low prices!



WHAT MAKES THIS A LUXURY HOSTEL

I particularly enjoyed the amount of services that this hostel offers. You can rent bikes and pocket Wi-Fi (which allows you to have internet on your tablet or smartphone all day everywhere you go for only 4 euros), borrow personal fans, adaptors, chargers, hair dryers, iron boards, download their free App for itineraries and addresses... Everything is very well thought of to make any traveller's stay in Lyon as pleasant as possible. With only about 40 beds, you will enjoy its intimate atmosphere while having fun in every activity they organize for locals and guests.

FACTBOX

The price per night ranges from €20 in low season to €34 in high season and December going up to €43 for a dorm bed during the festival of Lights in Lyon.

The price for the private room ranges between €65 in low season to €85 in high season and up to €120 in December.

5 rue Bonnefoi, 69003 Lyon
(Metro B/D Saxe Gambetta)



AWAY HOSTEL & COFFEE SHOP LYON

After inaugurating their first hostel in June 2014, the Slo Living Hostel team has just opened this new establishment in downtown Lyon. Bigger than the first one, it's just as modern, clean and stylish. Away Hostel & Coffee Shop offers the perfect balance of great value, clean spacious dorms, friendly staff, delicious coffee and events that will make you remember your stay in Lyon. The success of this new hostel is also due to the variety of activities organized such as guided walking tours of the city, wine tastings, concerts and Sunday brunch!

LOCATION

Right across the street from the Croix-Paquet metro station, Away hostel & Coffee shop is a 5 min walk away from downtown Lyon. Known to be a hipster and artsy neighbourhood, the bottom of the Croix-Rousse hill has tonnes of great boutiques, newly opened world-food restaurants and stylish bars. Nights can be a little bit noisy if windows are left opened in the dorms but free earplugs are given to all travellers so it was not much of a problem to me. The main train station is not far but connection can be touchy. Once arrived, I was able to explore most sights by walking without using public transportation, which was quite pleasant when visiting a major city.

ROOMS AND BATHROOMS

These clean and well-equipped dorms are smartly thought of as the beds are an in between pods and bunk beds designed with great taste. Each pod contains a reading lamp, a plug and a nightstand. They've kept the ancient 19th-century decor of the building with beautiful typical French parquet floors and added their Scandinavian style touch to it.

FACILITIES

I loved the relaxing living room with huge beanbags and comfy couches. There is also a well-equipped self-service kitchen with a fridge to store your food. I also enjoyed the free hi speed Wi-Fi everywhere in the building. This is really convenient if you have to work on the road (many locals are also coming to enjoy the coffee shop and internet connection). The bathrooms are just as clean and spacious as the dorms. Every shower has free soap and shampoo! An automatic luggage storage is located downstairs.





WHAT MAKES THIS A LUXURY HOSTEL

The design of the common areas and the dorms is awesome. I really enjoyed the mix between traditional 18th Century building and modern architecture. Dorms are very big and designed to respect intimacy and comfort for each traveller. Away hostel is also a paradise for foodies. It has a coffee shop/restaurant with breakfast, lunch and dinner options, 100% home made by a chef. Their 10 € dinner menu offers a three-course meal and glass of wine, which is great

value for your money. Breakfast starts at 3 € which is a great deal considering you'll have some delicious baguette, butter, jam, hot drink + fruit juice, you can add extras like cappuccino, pastries, crepes. I really enjoyed trying some French specialities while exchanging conversation with others guests! This hostel can be a little bit more expensive than others, but the value for money is very good. So treat yourself! And you now what? A cocktail bar will be opened in the hostel in 2017!

FACTBOX

The price per night ranges from €22 in low season to €36 in high season and December going up to €45 for a dorm bed during the festival of Lights in Lyon.

The price for the private room ranges between €65 in low season to €105 in high season and up to €180 in December.

21 Rue Alsace Lorraine 69001 Lyon
(Metro A - Hôtel de Ville Louis Pradel
/ Metro C - Croix Paquet)

BELGIUM

CUBE HOSTEL LEUVEN

Great free pancake breakfast, fab games and cinema room, a nice location in the heart of the city, wonderful team of staff, clean rooms and a stylish bar cum lounge make this hands down the best place to stay in Leuven.



LOCATION

Cube Hostel is centrally located in historical Leuven, just a 5-minute walk from Big Market Square, Old Market Square and the shopping district. Given the central location (plus as the city's only proper hostel) and the newly opened bar, the hostel is a magnet for young people in the city. So you can meet people from all corners of the world here.

ROOMS AND BATHROOMS

Cube has a variety of rooms to suit every traveller's budget. You have the option of staying in their spacious 12 bed dorm for as little as €23 per night. There is also the choice of 8, 6 and 4 bed dorms. All dorm rooms are ensuite. There is also a host of private ensuite rooms if you are looking for more privacy. Linen is included in the price but don't forget to bring your own towel. Guests can rent towels at reception for €2 per towel.

FACILITIES

Come as a guest and leave as a friend. This is the motto of the Cube Hostel. They have a young and friendly bunch of staff here- all backpackers like you so they perfectly understand your needs. Plus they are willing to have a drink with you at the bar in the evening.

The large lounge has a very vintage, homely vibe. It is the perfect home away from home for a traveller. You have a selection of globes and travel quotes scattered across the room, a large library plus a desk created from retro suitcases- a great place to relax after a day of exploring Leuven. Plus the hostel has just opened a small onsite bar. Owner Elizabeth makes a delicious pink lemonade so that's my tip if you are looking for something refreshing and non alcoholic.

The hostel also has a games room (table football & pool table) plus a nice sized cinema room where guests can chill, watch movies on those rainy/hangover days.

Another star feature of the hostel is their large fully equipped shared kitchen with fridge, oven, microwave and toaster. They serve a filling, kickass free pancake breakfast (8am till 11am). You have a choice of nutella, fruit jams and peanut butter to enjoy your pancakes. Plus coffee and tea.



The hostel also organises a range of tours around the city to view the historic landmarks, a museum tour, tasting Belgium's finest beers at the Old Market and tours of the famous Stella Artois factory.

Note that you can check-in here from 9 am to 12 pm and 3 pm to 7 pm. Beds are available from 3pm. If you arrive early they have a secure luggage store to store your stuff. They have laundry facilities (€5 euro for washing, €3.50 for dryer) between reception hours.

WHAT MAKES THIS A LUXURY HOSTEL

Friendly staff, the cosy homely vibe, the free pancake breakfast, fab cinema and games room, clean and comfortable rooms and a nice onsite bar- you have all the ingredients of a great hostel and experience here. Leuven and the hostel is the perfect place to relax and enjoy true Flemish hospitality.

FACTBOX

Dorm bed range from €23–30, and doubles from €55

Brusselsestraat 110-112, Leuven, Belgium





BACKSTAY HOSTEL GHENT

As the sun goes down, the striking frontage of this 1930's Art Deco Building lights up with the name of the original owner: the socialist newspaper, Vooruit. Popularly referred to as the 'newspaper hostel', the Backstay Hostel is an authentic taste of Ghent. Great staff, cosy bar which hosts a regular programme of live music & events, (including board game evenings) basement cinema room to watch movies plus beautifully designed dorms and private rooms named after famous papers. Style, character and fun, this hostel has it all.

LOCATION

Backstay Hostel is conveniently located on Sint-Pietersnieuwstraat which is a key connecting lane between the art quarter and the inner city. So you're right in the middle of everything. The university is across from the hostel as well as the renowned art centre Vooruit which has a great outdoor bar and a lively music scene. You are also just a 3-minute walk away from the historic city centre.

ROOMS AND BATHROOMS

Continuing the newspaper theme guests can choose to stay in dorms and bedrooms named after famous newspapers: Le Monde, the New York Times, Die Zeit, El País, or the Guardian-take your pick.

The rooms here are a mix of dorms and privates, bathroom facilities are shared though. The bunk beds are some of the nicest ones I have slept in-custom made, equipped with a private light and plug points. Each room has its own lockers.

FACILITIES

'Every traveller is a friend' is the guiding philosophy of the hostel. Every guest gets a royal welcome here. Staff are young, friendly and passionate about the city and what it has to offer. The 'Travellers zone' is the place where guests can relax. There is also a podium built in with a piano and guitars on hand for an impromptu jam session.

The groundfloor bar is the meeting point for travellers and locals. They have a regular programme of cultural events and live music. When I visited, on a Sunday morning there was a debate amongst local politicians, Monday was quiz night and on the following Wednesday there was a popular local rock band playing. There is always something interesting and different going on.

The bar area is furnished with lots of interesting features. The bar itself has been decorated with hundreds of wooden typesetting letters from the collection of a local printing house. I love the globe lights above the bar. There is always a great selection of international newspapers, cool travel guides and fiction to choose from. The bar has a nice outdoor patio where you

can enjoy your drink.

I love the blogroom but guess I am biased. I wish more accommodation providers would have a quiet space for creative people to write their thoughts and tales. Situated in the lighthouse turret at the top of the building, the quarters were in the past rented to notable Flemish authors. Now it is an abode for guests and locals who can make use of this sanctuary to blog on their laptop or use the vintage typewriter. It is completely free of charge to hire.

Other fab features of the hostel are the free buffet breakfast served between 7.30 and 10.30am. Besides juices, coffee, tea and cereals you have the luxury of boiled eggs and making your own waffles. When in Belgium...

They have a very cool basement movie room where they regularly screen movies. They have in the basement a free do-it-yourself laundry machine and dryer. Just to make you feel more at home so that you never feel like leaving this hostel. The hostel has a fully equipped kitchen with refrigerator, oven, microwave, toaster, cups and plates.

Other key things to remember: they have a luggage room that is free to use if you arrive before your room is ready and after you checkout. Also be aware that the city of Ghent charges a tourist tax of €3 per person, per night, for everyone who is staying in a hostel or hotel. You can pay this amount at the reception desk. If you can, bring your own towels. However, they are also available to rent at the reception for 3€ (2 pieces) (+ 7€ deposit). Private rooms have towels included. When requested in advance and depending on availability, this hostel offers you the luxury of a late check out. The costs are €5 pp to keep your room until 1 pm or €10 pp to keep the room until 5 pm





WHAT MAKES THIS A LUXURY HOSTEL

Backstay Hostel is like the perfect home you dreamed of. It has everything you would want in your home. A piano. Some guitars for a late night impromptu jam session. A movie room. Your own private bar. Obviously. A podium of course and kickass sound system if you wanted to host private gigs and bring your mates over. An outdoor terrace for summer drinks. Cosy rooms. A large library of great travel guides and all the latest newspapers. Plus most importantly, a waffle maker to make waffles and a huge tub of Nutella. A cup of coffee. Free of course. Who pays for breakfast when at home?

Backstay Hostel comes pretty close to my idea of a perfect hostel. What I call a luxury hostel. The kind of place, once you visit, it is very hard to leave.

FACTBOX

Dormitory beds start from €20.50 a night while private doubles are from €64, B&B.

Sint-Pietersnieuwstraat 128, Ghent, Belgium (00 32 9 395 96 60)

MEININGER HOSTEL BRUSSELS

Situated in a former brewery overlooking the Canal Bruxelles-Charleroi, Meininger Hostel is perfect for those looking for a quiet and relaxed base to soak in the sights of Brussels. Like all other Meininger Hostels, I love the modern design, comfort and the cool onsite bar is a big plus.





LOCATION

Overlooking the Canal Bruxelles-Charleroi, this hostel lies just a 6-minute walk from Comte de Flandre metro station, 2 km from the Manneken Pis fountain, and 6 km from exhibitions and the observation deck at the Atomium.

ROOMS AND BATHROOMS

Like with all Meininger Hostels, both the private and dorm rooms have a very contemporary feel and design that is very pleasing on the eye. All rooms here come with free Wi-Fi, flat-screen TVs and private bathrooms.

Dorms are spacious. Bunk beds have their own spotlight and power point as well as lockers underneath the bunks. As always, remember to bring your own padlock.

FACILITIES

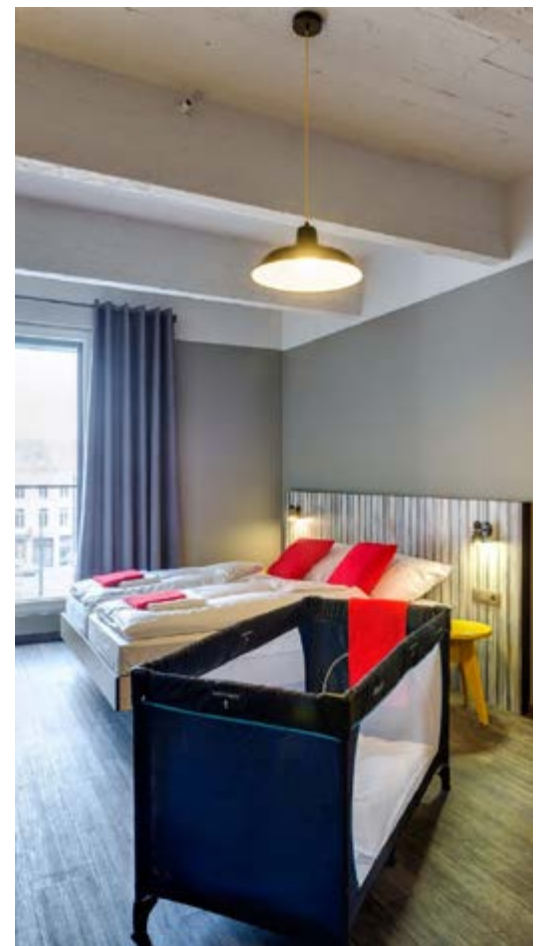
Until recently, this red-brick building, a former brewery in the city centre, was used as an exhibition space for art. The hostel pays respect to its artistic roots still with the

funky graffiti walls in the common areas.

Key feature of the hostel is the industrial-chic bar, complete with a pool table and bookshelves. It's a very cool space.

This hostel attracts a mix of guests from backpackers to families and business travellers so the atmosphere can be quite relaxed compared to your typical hostel.

Again, as is standard with all Meininger Hostels, they have a fantastic communal kitchen for guest use. At an additional cost of €6 they offer an excellent buffet breakfast. Other amenities at the hostel include a games room, a laundry plus desktop computers available for guest use in the lobby area.





WHAT MAKES THIS A LUXURY HOSTEL

I love the story and heritage of this building.

I love the design and features. The hostel is clean and comfortable.

Staff I met were friendly and helpful. My only quibble would be that it can be a little quiet at times.

It feels more like a hotel and less like a backpacker hostel. Other than that, there is little to fault about this hostel. If

you value a comfortable bed, helpful staff with plenty of good tips plus a good location then this hostel is ideal for you.

FACTBOX

Dorms start from €20, Double Rooms from the €60 mark.

Quai du Hainaut 33, 1080 Molenbeek-Saint-Jean, Belgium

ITALY



OSTELLO BELLO MILAN

A free Mediterranean breakfast whenever you wake up, *aperitivo* in the evening with locals in a traditional Italian-style bar, lazy afternoons on a bright terrace with hammocks and barbecues – Ostello Bello is a hostel with an amazing difference and a great reason to visit Milan.

LOCATION

Just a 10-minutes walk from the Duomo, Ostello Bello boasts a great location with easy access to Milan's nightlife and fashion hotspots, as well as sites like Galleria Vittorio Emanuele, La Scala, Santa Maria della Grazie and Castello Sforzesco.

ROOMS AND BATHROOMS

I stayed in an ensuite double room. It was bright and spacious with a huge bathroom. The dorm rooms have beds well spaced out with drawers beneath them to allow you to secure your valuables. All rooms are ensuite and there is air conditioning in the rooms and common areas.

FACILITIES

Ostello Bello boasts some top-notch facilities— some of the best I've seen in Europe so far.

From the moment I walk in, I'm offered a welcome drink by the cheerful receptionist. I ask for an Aperol spritz and after a few sips, the stresses and strain of my travels just melt away.

The common room is one of the coziest ones I've ever seen. There is free Wi-Fi in both the common areas and the rooms. My third floor room had a great signal.

Most impressively, the hostel offers an excellent Mediterranean breakfast that is included in the price of a night's stay. The best part of this deal is that the breakfast is available whenever you wake up, which means that even if you can get yourself out of bed by noon, you can still walk downstairs and have your...brunch.

I can't think of any hotel or hostel that offers complimentary breakfast on demand - I think it's the ultimate luxury you can offer mankind. I'd love to see more hostels offer this!

Ostello Bello also has ping-pong tables, a piano, multiple guitars, a huge library, and a book exchange facility.

There's also a traditional Italian-style bar and restaurant where guests and locals

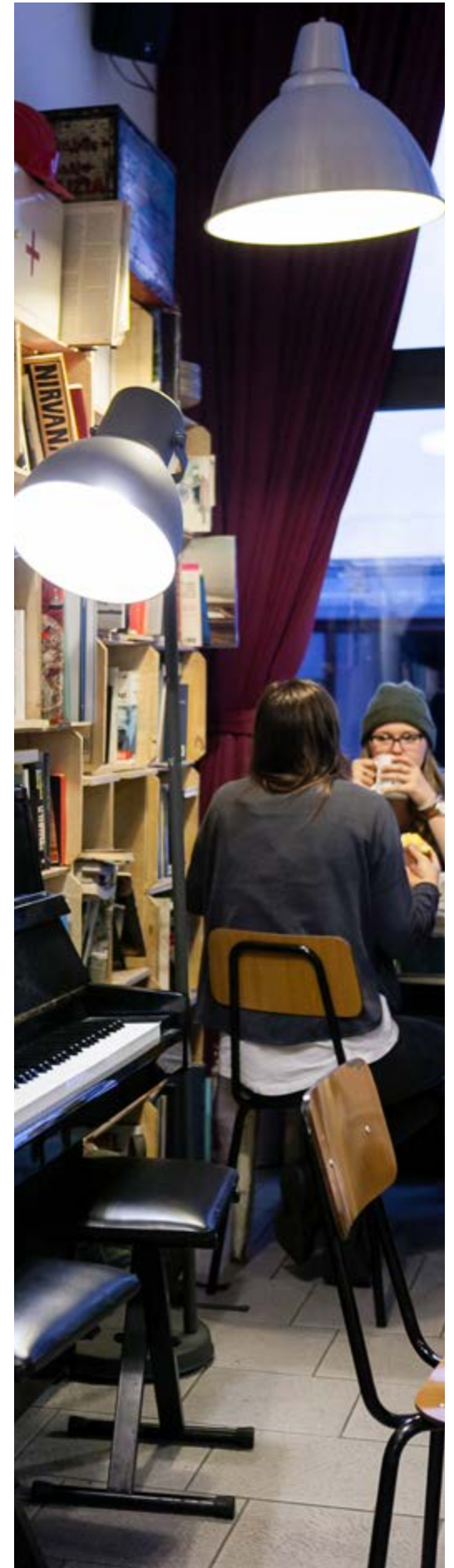
mingle during Aperitivo Hour. Hostel guests can help themselves to the food and grab a glass of wine or beer from the bar (Costs around €4-5). The bar is open pretty much 24/7, which is another cool feature.

What I loved about the bar was the number of locals pouring into the joint after work in the evening. They definitely add flavour to the atmosphere. Ostello Bello isn't just a hostel, but a meeting point where Milanese can mingle with travellers from all over the world.

Other things to love about Ostello Bello is the large and bright terrace, complete with hammocks and barbecue facilities. Guests can also access the guest kitchen on the 2nd floor where they can also help themselves to free pasta that is prepared by the chef earlier in the day. Other awesome free things include coffee and tea.

Last but not least, the staff here at Ostello Bello are all very friendly and a massive incentive for staying at this hostel. They make Ostello Bello feel like a sanctuary for travellers to relax in and enjoy Milan.

It's hard to find any faults with this hostel.





WHAT MAKES THIS A LUXURY HOSTEL

Despite the higher price point, Ostello Bello is worth every cent in my opinion. This is not just a place to sleep but a place to live. It is hands down one of the best hostels in this book. I've visited the hostel multiple times over the last few years and always left with good memories of the people and the place.



FACTBOX

Dorms from €30, doubles from €80 per room, triples from €110 per room, quads from €150 per room.

Via Medici, 4, 20123 Milan, Italy

OSTELLO BELLO GRANDE MILAN

‘We welcome guests to our hostel as if they visiting our home.’ This is the key philosophy that defines the experience of staying at Ostello Bello Grande and makes this one of my favourite luxury hostels in Europe.





THE LOCATION

Ostello Bello Grande, sister hostel to Ostello Bello is just a stone's throw away from Central Train Station where you are likely to arrive if taking the Airport shuttles from Linate, Malpensa and Bergamo airport or the train from all key Italian cities. Milan's Corso Buenos Aires shopping street is just a 2-minute walk from the property.

The Duomo square is easily reachable by 3 subway stops or by a nice 20 minute walk through the main city attractions.

ROOMS AND BATHROOMS

All the rooms at Ostello Bello Grande are en suite. There is a choice of rooms for every type of traveller—from 4 and 6 bed female dorms to doubles and single rooms. Rooms are clean and the bedding very comfortable.

Each dorm comes up with a private reading light and plug point. Another key feature is that both dorms and private rooms are separate to the common areas, so you are guaranteed a great night's sleep. Dorms also have sizeable lockers—just don't forget to bring your own lock.

FACILITIES

In terms of facilities, what they offer is astonishing.

The moment you arrive they offer a free

welcome drink, which includes a choice of prosecco, beer, wine or soft drinks. I wish all hostels would offer this.

Breakfast is served all morning and is very filling. You have your choice of cereals, muesli, fresh fruits, scrambled eggs, yoghurt, fruit jams, nutella, bread, juices and milk to kickstart your day. Filter coffee is ok but definitely worth paying the euro and ordering an espresso from the bar.

Just as in sister hostel on Via Medici, they offer a simple but very nice aperitivo in the evenings between 7 and 9pm. Oh, that's free too.

If you are peckish between breakfast and dinner, they have free pasta in tupperware boxes in their 24-hour guest kitchen. Just pop it into the microwave and you have a meal.

List of other free things they offer include free shampoos & soaps, free earplugs, free hair dryer, free ironing board, free safe deposit box at the reception, free luggage storage plus free linen and yes even free towels!

Wait. They also offer free mobile Wi-Fi devices with data so if you need to Instagram on the move or call your friends on Skype from the Duomo-Ostello Bello Grande make it possible. Plus also they offer free iPads and laptops for hire. Plus free maps.

What's the catch I asked the owner of Ostello Bello Grande.

'Our aim is to make our guests feel at home. It is very simple as that.'

Talking about feeling at home, you have a lot of rooms to relax in and escape. You have on the third floor two open-air terraces with hammocks to relax in, complete with a vegetable garden and an attached kitchen if you need some parsley for your pasta. The downstairs common room is the main hub of activity where you will find guests on their laptops or maybe strumming on the guitars hanging on the wall or playing the piano. Music lovers please note that the hostel often organises live music nights plus there is karaoke!

There is a pleasant courtyard where you can enjoy your aperitivo plus a ping-pong table. Wait. I am not finished yet. There is also an additional downstairs lounge with a foosball table and a big flatscreen TV to watch movies, football or play the Wii or PS3.



WHAT MAKES THIS A LUXURY HOSTEL

The central location, friendly multilingual staff, the list of endless free amazing stuff, clean and comfortable rooms plus the fabulous open air terrace with hammocks make this a dream abode for backpackers. It really does feel like home staying here.

Your only regret will be not having booked to stay a week here instead of 2 days. A wonderful experience and a great sequel to the original Ostello Bello on Via Medici.

FACTBOX

Bed in a 4 bed dorm starts at around €35 while a double room cost you around €100 a night.

Via Roberto Lepetit 33, Stazione Centrale, 20124 Milan, Italy



PLUS HOSTELS FLORENCE

It's not often that you visit a hostel boasting not one, but two swimming pools in addition to a Turkish bath, steam room, and sauna - but there's so much more to Plus Florence than these incredible amenities.

LOCATION

Plus Hostels Florence is in a nice, quiet neighbourhood about a 10-minute walk from Firenze Santa Maria Novella Station. A short walk from the hostel brings you past the markets to the Duomo and the historic core of the city.

ROOMS AND BATHROOMS

The rooms are akin to what you would find in a budget hotel: clean and spacious with en-suite bathrooms.

You have lockers within the room, as well as a dressing table, mirror and a small TV. Beds come with a reading light and a power socket to charge your gadgets.

There are also the 'Plus Girls' four, six, and eight-bed female-only dorms that include a large ensuite bathroom, towels, hair dryer and a complimentary cosmetic pack.

- TOP TIP -

If you're not in the party spirit, choose a room on the top floor where it is much quieter.

FACILITIES

The facilities are outstanding at Plus Florence. You have a huge outdoor pool to cool down in after a long day in the heat.

In the winter, guests can access an indoor pool, Turkish bath, sauna, and steam room – for a hostel, this is highly unusual and but very welcomed and appreciated.

The hostel's own Opera Restaurant offers excellent value meals. The pizzas are particularly delicious. There is also a bar by the pool.

My favourite place in the hostel is the excellent rooftop terrace, from which you can experience one of the best views of

the Duomo. When I was there in August, I grabbed a €3 bottle of Tuscan red from a shop down the street and spent a few hours in the evening chilling on the rooftop terrace. I read a book and watched the terracotta roofs of Florence turn a brilliant red during the sunset.

The free Wi-Fi access was mediocre in the past but has improved in recent years.

Linen is included in the price and free luggage storage is provided. Other facilities include an on-site launderette that can carry loads of up to 8 kgs!

Plus Florence also has a travel desk that will answer your travel questions, print your boarding pass, check onward train connections - plus organize local walking tours, cooking classes, visits to wineries in Chianti and trips further afield to places like Cinque Terre and Pisa.

The hostel offers an all-you-can-eat buffet breakfast from 7:00-11:00 AM for €7, which is a tad pricey but offers quite generous portions.





WHAT MAKES THIS A LUXURY HOSTEL

Thanks to a great location in Florence, top-notch facilities like the on-site restaurant, outdoor and indoor swimming pools, Turkish bath, steam room and sauna, plus a terrific rooftop terrace makes this is a great base for exploring Florence. If they can improve the Wi-Fi, perfect.

FACTBOX

Dorms from €16, triples from €63 per room.

**Via Santa Caterina D'Alessandria, 15,
50129 Florence, Italy**

(+39) 055 628 6347
www.plushostels.com/plusflorence



GENERATOR VENICE

Given the scarcity of hostel options in this floating city, Generator Venice have come up with a gem of a hostel with an unbeatable location. Beautifully designed with a cool bar, modern rooms and amazing views of Piazza San Marco in the distance this is a one of a kind hostel.



THE LOCATION

This is one of Generator’s best (and most expensive) hostels with an unbeatable location in the heart of Venice. The exact location is on the waterfront of the island of Giudecca. From the hostel, it is a short, single stop on the Vaporetto to the famous Piazza San Marco.

ROOMS AND BATHROOMS

The hostel building is a historic converted granary. The hostel retains all the Venetian charm but has a modern design twist to it. Highlights of the design include mosaic flooring, Rubelli textile curtains and glass chandeliers from Murano. In addition there is a huge fireplace reminiscent of Palladian craftsmanship. You can choose between private and shared rooms, some of which have views of the sea.

Visitors to the Generator Venice can expect a lot of choices when it comes to room options at this hostel. There are nine different accommodation options ranging from private rooms and suites to shared dormitory rooms and double or twin rooms.

Perks that come with the dorm rooms include bunks with privacy boards, power sockets (EU only), reading lights and a lock-up storage while the perks of a private suite extend to complimentary toiletries, plush towels and an en-suite bathroom to name a few.

FACILITIES

Some of the facilities that come with the hostel include free Wi-Fi, an on-site bar and restaurant, 24 hour reception, chill out areas, laundry and a café to enjoy that perfect cup of coffee.





WHAT MAKES THIS A LUXURY HOSTEL

What makes Generator Venice a luxury hostel is the location and the history associated with the building. Each of the rooms has a highly covetable view.

Look out upon the Lido, the gardens, the Grande Canal or San Marco. Book early due to high demand. It can get very crowded during the summer.

FACTBOX

The Sky Suite that sleeps 1-2 people starts from €40 Per Room, shared rooms start from €16 per bed. Prices hugely vary from low to high season so please take these numbers as a guideline. Book early to get the best prices here.

Fondamenta Zitelle 86, Venice, 30133



THE BEEHIVE HOTEL AND HOSTEL ROME

Right next to Termini station, this eco-conscious hostel-meets-hotel in Rome is an oasis of calm in this fast-paced city, complete with a garden and an organic vegetarian café that offers generous portions of locally sourced, home-cooked goodness.

LOCATION

Just two blocks from Rome's Termini Station in the historic area of Rome lies one of the friendliest places in the city - The Beehive. Situated on Via Marghera, the hostel is in close proximity to Piazza della Repubblica and sights like the Basilica di Santa Maria Maggiore.

ROOMS AND BATHROOMS

The hotel offers a choice of private rooms (some with ensuite bathrooms called the 'Sweets'), an eight-bed dormitory and guest rooms with self-catering facilities off-site. There's an option here to suit every type of traveller and budget.

The dorm rooms are clean, bright, and spacious with large, sturdy lockers. I stayed in the dorm room and the shared bathrooms are plentiful and clean, so I really didn't miss having my own bathroom.

Double rooms have bright colours, beaded lamps, huge windows that breathe in light, and lots of wardrobe space -plus your own private sink and locally sourced, handmade vegetable soaps.

The common shared bathrooms are plentiful, clean, and well maintained.

Self-catering apartments come with a kitchen and shared bathroom.

FACILITIES

This place is a hybrid of a hostel and a holistic retreat - perfect for unwinding after a day of exploring Rome.

The common lounge has an iPad for browsing the Internet, plus a nice selection of travel guides and books. The free Wi-Fi here is excellent. Steve, the owner, is a keen photographer and has a fantastic collection of framed photographs adorning the walls for guests to enjoy.

The garden area is a blissful oasis of calm - the kind of place where you can linger for hours while chatting with guests while drinking wine and losing track of time.

The staff are friendly and attentive. The owners are passionate locals and have some great tips to share to make your stay more enjoyable, like recommending the best Gelateria in town (a subject of fiery debate amongst the Romans).

They have also created their own free guide to Rome, which you can download from the Beehive website as well as an app that works without an Internet connection, so you can see what they recommend around you wherever you are.

The real added bonus of staying here is their excellent organic vegan café. Breakfast is not included in the room price, but if you do splash out, it is a real treat. You have some exciting options ranging from scrambled tofu with veggies or Juk: Korean Rice Porridge (has to be ordered a day in advance) or French toast with fruit and honey. They also have local craft beers and organic wine from Umbria (€8 a bottle, €2 a glass). They also host pop up dinners, lunches from local chefs, a yummy weekly vegan aperitivo buffet, cooking classes plus a fab monthly storytellers' event. Steve and Linda also have a huge wealth of knowledge about the food scene in Rome and a wealth of excellent suggestions so you are in good hands here.





WHAT MAKES THIS A LUXURY HOSTEL

I loved the contemporary design element of the place like the Phillippe Starck inspired chairs at the reception, warm coloured interiors, Steve's beautiful portraits and facilities like the basement organic café and their beautiful outdoor garden. Most of all, my enduring memory of this place is meeting awesome people here like Steve and Linda. If you like places with a personal touch and attention to detail, then the Beehive is the place to stay for you in Rome.

FACTBOX

In the low season dorms start from €25, singles from €40, doubles from €60 per room. These prices are subject to availability and should be used as guideline.

Via Marghera 8, 00185 Rome, Italy

A photograph of a room in The Yellow Rome hostel. On the left, there are black metal bunk beds with white linens. A small shelf is mounted on the wall, holding a few books, a small plant, and a framed poster. Below the shelf is a wooden desk with two drawers, each labeled 'PBMETER 6850457'. A desk lamp is on the desk. To the right, there is a window with dark green curtains. The floor is covered with a black and white checkered pattern.

THE YELLOW ROME

The Yellow is possibly the greatest party hostel on earth. This hostel has been designed with the idea of you having the wildest night of your life. There are a lot of cool spaces where you can easily meet your fellow guests: greatest of which is the Yellow Bar. However, it would be a huge mistake to label the Yellow as just a party hostel. The Yellow is a bold concept in hospitality where guests can eat, party, sleep and work in one space. A hostel is no longer just a place to rest

your head. You can catch a local band in action. Go on a food tour of Rome with a local or enjoy a cooking class preparing something typically Roman like a pasta guanciale. If you are travelling for work you can catch up with work in their brand new co-working space. Even get your hair cut in their soon to be launched hairdressing salon. There are plans for even an escape room. Yellow is a very exciting fun space. Prepare to be amazed.

ROOMS AND BATHROOMS

The Yellow caters to all types of travellers. If you are travelling solo and want to meet people and party in Rome then the ensuite dorms are perfect here. (There are non-ensuite dorms available too). Equipped with reading light, power outlet and lockers- they are comfortable and clean. Plus, most importantly in summer the ensuite dorms have air conditioning.

If you are looking for something more peaceful and relaxed, their private rooms in the newly launched Yellow Hotel across the road are great. They are equipped with a private en-suite bathroom, direct-dial phone, independent Air Con, heating, a safety deposit box, hair dryer, mini fridge and wired Internet access. If I was to nitpick, the private room I was in looked a little dated but there are in the process of upgrading all these rooms.

FACILITIES

Great features of this hostel: they have free and working Wi-Fi, free iPad hire (30 min/ day) plus a free drink when you follow the hostel on Google+.

The Yellow Bar across the road is where all the action happens. With some of the cheapest drinks in town, a regular programme of events that includes great local bands and DJ nights in their basement nightclub, Arcade. The cherry on the cake is the downright bizarre yet entertaining Tonika - a kind of x-rated fitness live video is one way of describing it. I shall say no more. You will have to see it for yourself. Bartenders at some point go around offering free shots of Jager, which leads to even wilder gyrating on stage from hostel guests. If that doesn't whet your appetite, you can sign up for a fee and grab a seat on the 'Rollin Bar': a magical mystery tour of Rome by night. Imagine a van with strobing lights, half crazed backpackers knocking down unlimited booze on offer accompanied by the surreal beautiful view of Rome at night. Plus there is a pole fitted somewhere if memory serves me correctly. Crazy eh.

Breakfast, which is served at the bar, is often a sobering affair where you start piecing the previous night together with the help of hostel guests.

The hostel serves a la carte breakfast available from €2.50 and up. Plus most importantly, they have a proper coffee machine here. There is an all day menu where you can help yourself from burgers to salads. Pretty decent fare for a hostel. My preference would be to dine at Mamma Angela's Trattoria across the road. Great selection of antipasti, fab bruschetta and amongst many other dishes they serve a fantastic Roman classic: cacio e pepe (cheese and pepper)

Hostel offers a variety of great walking tours and organises cooking classes in the new basement kitchen of the hotel area. Kitchen is available for use by all hostel guests.

In the new hotel building, there is also a 'movie garden' - a hidden inner courtyard where you can watch classic movies or just relax with a book during the day and chill.

In terms of other key facilities, the hostel has a laundry service. For a small fee they will take care of your dirty clothes.





WHAT MAKES THIS A LUXURY HOSTEL

Crazy, sexy and fun are the words I would use to describe the Yellow experience. If you feel young at heart and party like its still 1999, then you will love the Yellow forever. If you are not the partying, social type and looking for something placid then look elsewhere.

Yellow is so much more than just a party palace. They've got a ton of exciting plans for the place: barber shop, coworking space, escape room and a 2nd bar. By the way, the staff

are great too: very friendly & helpful. Staying at the Yellow was an experience that will stay with me for years to come.

FACTBOX

Doubles start around the €50 mark while a bed in a 10-bed mixed dorm costs €15 EUR. The hostel also offers 6-bed mixed dorms for just €21 en-suite as well as female only 6-beds dorms for €23 en-suite.

Via Palestro, 51, 00185 Roma, Italy

NETHERL

LANDS



COCOMAMA AMSTERDAM

A beautiful 130-year-old building with high ceilings and chandeliers, a garden complete with picnic tables and gnomes, a cuddly hostel cat called Joop, a kitchen stocked with beers for €1, a hostel run by a bunch of energetic ladies who know the city like the back of their hand, plus an authentic, not-too-touristy location - what more could you want from a hostel in Amsterdam?

LOCATION

A 20-minute walk from Amsterdam's tourist-filled red light district and much closer to Rembrandt Square and the Heineken Museum lies Cocomama.

It's definitely an interesting location: the premises of Cocomama were once the address of one of the city's most famous brothels, 'Yab Yum'.

Guests can still view pictures of the flamboyant former owner and his girls at the entrance. You'll also find a few pairs of racy, lacy underwear hanging beside the pictures of its former residents as a tongue-in-cheek reference to the history of the building.

ROOMS AND BATHROOMS

All their rooms are decorated with different Dutch themes, so that guests can enjoy a proper Dutch experience. You'll find comfortable beds, lockers, power outlets and a shower in your room, but what they really want is for you to come and hang out with them and all the other travellers in the common areas.

If you're on a budget but still looking for a unique experience, you can stay in the Wind-mill six-bed dorm. With triple-decked custom-made bunks, each bed in this room comes with its own privacy curtain, reading light, power outlet and secret compartment. Linen is included in the price and the beds are freshly made prior to arrival. (A rarity in most hostels). There is an en-suite bathroom and large luggage lockers too.

If you're looking for more privacy, you can choose one of their five private double rooms, which are all ensuite and come with a queen sized bed, linen, towels, bathroom amenities by Stop-The-Water-While-Using-Me, a hair dryer and coffee/tea set-up. Each room has a traditional Dutch theme like 'Tulips', 'Van Gogh', 'Royal', and 'Cow & Milk'.

Wi-Fi is free and works in all rooms.

FACILITIES

Being a boutique hostel, Cocomama never caters for groups. The maximum group size they accept is four. This means that the hostel audience is primarily comprised of solo travellers who are keen to mix and

socialise with other guests.

Expect the style of a high-end hotel without the stiff formality and high prices.

Hostel guests can get together dining in the cosy kitchen/living room that is the focal point of socialising in the hostel.

I've volunteered to cook a simple dish of pasta with peppers and smoked sausage, accompanied by a €3 bottle of Merlot that I picked up from the nearby Lidl, just a block away. The hostel provides basic cooking ingredients, pastas, and spices for the guests' use.

I had thought about venturing out for dinner but I enjoyed the buzz and banter so much in the hostel that on both the nights, I stayed in and ate dinner with the guests.

Cocomama staff organise a bunch of events to give you the best possible experience of Amsterdam. Ranging from tours of the red light district to a tour of their favourite nightlife hotspots on weekends-they keep you busy here.

The hostel has its own beer fridge, which operates on an honesty box policy.

Cocomama is also home to Joop, the hostel cat. He's the star of the show at Cocomama, scurrying around the garden, chasing his imaginary foes. Many an afternoon is spent on his back in his beanie bag, being showered with affection by the hostel guests.

Expect many acts of random kindness at Cocomama.

Right from the moment you walk in, guests are orientated with their surroundings with a detailed and handy explanation of their surroundings with a neat map. Soon, I'm given the lowdown on places where the hostel staff like to eat - I always enjoy these kind of recommendations.

When you're constantly travelling, it's great to be in a place where you can relax, talk to some nice people and just chill.

I've lived in hostels that make a great base to explore and discover a city. Cocomama, on the other hand, really felt like home. During the two days I spent in Amsterdam, I

actually ended up spending most of my time in Cocomama.

In the end, thanks to Cocomama, I saw a very different side of life that is known only to the people who have had the good fortune of staying there.





WHAT MAKES THIS A LUXURY HOSTEL

One guy I met who moved to Amsterdam six months ago stayed at Cocomama for the first few days. He summed up the Cocomama experience perfectly:

‘Even after leaving the place and getting my own apartment I come back here. I know all the staff well now; they are now some of my closest friends.

Cocomama felt like home from day one and wherever I go in the world, it will always be like a home to me where I know I will be welcomed with open arms.’

FACTBOX

Dorms: 21€ - 45€, Privates 76€ - 150€

Westeinde 18, 1017 ZP, Amsterdam, Netherlands

ECOMAMA AMSTERDAM

‘Green, Quirky, Cozy and conscious sleeping’ is the slogan of Ecomama, a green and luxurious update to its sister hostel in Amsterdam, the fabulous Cocomama. The emphasis here is on creating space that is friendly to the environment yet fun and also budget friendly. Three words that you never expect in one sentence. I love the large communal space here. Perfect to meet fellow travellers. There is also a lovely large kitchen and a real teepee tent where guests can meet and interact.





LOCATION

In terms of location, its perfect. You're right in the heart of Amsterdam only a few minutes walk from the Waterlooplein flea market and the Jewish Museum, 15 minutes from the Dam, and two metro stops from Central Station.

ROOMS AND BATHROOMS

Whether you are travelling with friends and need a few beds or you're on a romantic weekend or looking for some luxury while exploring the world – Ecomama has got you covered. There are 7 different types of rooms, catering to all types of travellers on all kinds of budgets.

The owners have a put a lot of thought into profiling their customers and creating the perfect room for them. For example if you are a solo female traveller in need of some girl time then the Ladies Only Dorm is perfect for you with the different shades of pink and free girly goodies like free nail polish, glossy magazines, hair dryer and straightener. If you're looking for something ideal for a romantic weekend then the Double Deluxe is perfect. For flashpackers on a budget who want their privacy, there is the option of their windowless double cabin rooms with shared bathroom. I slept in their 8 bed dorm aimed at 'experienced travellers' and this is probably the most luxurious dorm I have slept in. The bunk beds are huge, extremely comfortable beds and have their own power socket and reading light.

All dorms offer multiple power-outlets and large luggage lockers, which can be locked with a padlock to stow away your valuables. Padlocks can be purchased at reception.

Linen and soap are always included. Towels are included in their double rooms and available for rent or purchase in the cabins and dorms.

Ecomama donates €1 for every night that you sleep at the hotel to NGO's and good causes she supports, such as Niños de Guatemala which aims to improve society through education and entrepreneurship in Guatemala.

FACILITIES

Ecomama has set the bar high for hostels and hotels with their ecological philosophy. Apart from a water saving system, green roof and cradle to cradle building materials, they have used recycled materials wherever possible -from building materials to stuffed toys for furnishing the hostel. The reception desk is probably my favourite piece in the hostel, created using vintage books. Hostel cleaners use natural, eco-friendly products. The hostel has a green roof and natural stone heating. Everything is sourced locally as much as possible.

The communal area is an inspiring and creative space where you can find all the latest issues of Monocle and a great selection of coffee table books to leaf through while sipping on coffee from the hostel cafe, Filter. The cafe by the way, besides great coffee offers a great selection of baked treats and an awesome breakfast.

Another star feature of Ecomama is the Teepee tent where they show movies: a mix of old-time classics to sci-fi and rom-coms. Hostel staff are happy to offer you popcorn.

During the day the teepee is a place to relax and chill with a book. Maybe have a cheeky snooze.

If you are on a tight budget, then the beautiful open plan kitchen is fab. The kind of kitchen you would see in a cooking show.

Besides a stove, microwave and all other kitchen modcons there is a shelf with free leftovers plus an honesty bar in operation for using the mini fridge, which is packed with drinks, ice cream and other snacks. The hostel also hosts a family style dinner twice a week.

Staff here are friendly, all keen travellers and have great tips to share.

Most importantly, Ecomama staff are keen for you to experience Amsterdam as a local and have a great time. From trips to an organic beer brewery to personalized Red Light district tours, or hopping on their canal boat in the summer and enjoying Amsterdam from the best perspective.

Other key facilities: hostel has bikes for hire, board games and also a book exchange.

WHAT MAKES THIS A LUXURY HOSTEL

Ecomama is more than just a place to crash. It has impressive green credentials. Who says sustainable living is boring? It's also a hostel where you get to know people, relax and most importantly experience Amsterdam as a local. Providing the perfect combination between a cozy stay, value for money and offering a unique experience of Amsterdam Ecomama is one of the finest hostels in Europe. Visit soon.



FACTBOX

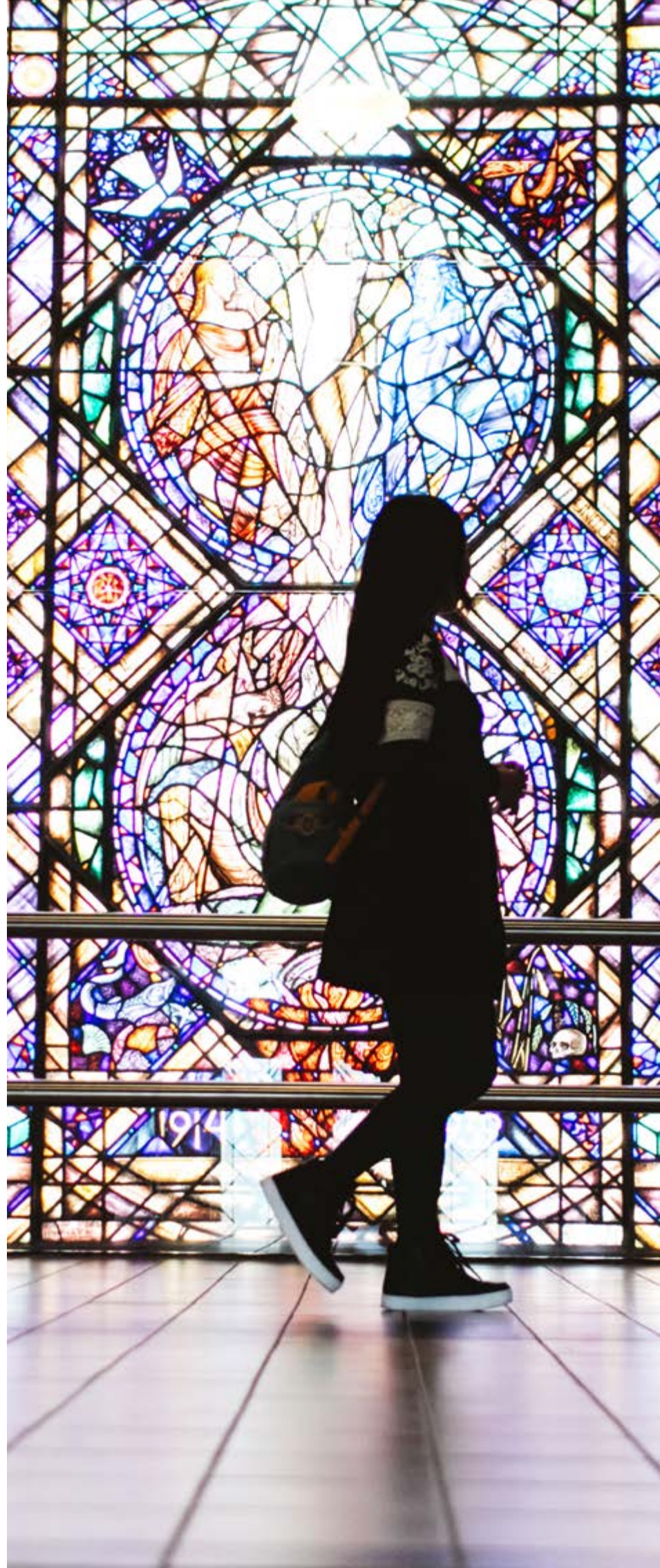
For both Dorms: 21€ - 45€, Privates 76€ - 150€

Dorm rooms range from €21 per person in low season going upto €45 in high season. Private rooms start from €76 in low season, €150 in high season. Breakfast is not included.

**Valkenburgerstraat 124, 1011 NA
Amsterdam, Netherlands**

ClinkNOORD AMSTERDAM

After the success of its two backpacker hostels in London, Clink Hostels have opened their first hostel outside the UK in Amsterdam, called ClinkNOORD. In a great location on the other side of the River IJ, Amsterdam Noord is spacious and green and situated where you can find picturesque country villages and stylish restaurants on the water. Mixing Dutch style with creativity and modern comforts, ClinkNOORD have created for travellers a unique and fun place to stay, as well as socialise.





LOCATION

ClinkNOORD Hostel is located in the upcoming neighbourhood of Overhoeks in the district of Amsterdam Noord. It is just a short journey from Amsterdam Central Station thanks to a 24 hour ferry service ('Buiksloterwegveer' to Noord). Being located in Amsterdam Noord it gives you a much more relaxed and authentic experience of local living in Amsterdam. The Overhoeks neighbourhood has a strong focus on culture and the arts, ClinkNOORD's neighbours include many respected arts venues; the EYE Film Museum, the A'DAM Tower, the Tolhuistuin multimedia centre and band venue, Paradiso.

The area is green, lots of cool bars and restaurants and feels a world away from the jam of tourists around Central Station and the Red Light district. A pretty ideal location for you to launch your Amsterdam adventure.

ROOMS AND BATHROOMS

With over 750 beds, this is a huge hostel. I managed to inspect one of their 6 bed dorms which was ensuite with separate toilet and shower. Some of the dorms have shared facilities. Room was clean. Each bed had a plug, USB port and light above it.

Plus everyone in the dorms have their own assigned locker. Just don't forget to bring your own padlock. The other cool thing to note is that in the reception area there are lockers available for storing valuables or luggage which is quite handy. I stayed in one of their private rooms. Compact but convenient. Nice ensuite bathrooms. My only quibble with the rooms was how grey and sterile they looked. I have been told there are plans to 'jazz' things up. They have a range of room types to suit every traveller's budget, from 16 bed dorms (female and mixed) to private doubles.

FACILITIES

Beautiful features from the original 1920s building have been restored (like the stained glass windows) while creating relaxing social areas: love the sunny and spacious atrium with picnic tables, café, library with a well styled bookcase filled with books, collectibles and trinkets and a bespoke self-catering kitchen for guests and flexible spaces for meetings and events.

The in-house ZincBAR puts on a regular programme of events from DJs, karaoke nights to talks and performances. They also host an eclectic mix of musicians thanks to their fantastic 'Stay & Play' programme, where emerging artists are granted accommodation in exchange for playing a

gig at the hostel. It is a great way of giving upcoming bands exposure and giving them access to new audiences. They have a fab range of cocktails that are delicious and strong- you have been warned.

They also serve up a casual, regularly updated menu that includes tasty bites like the Dutch classic Bitterballen (soft meat balls fried in breadcrumbs, served with sweet mustard), excellent Clink burger (chunky chips are excellent) and their stonebaked pizzas. Prices start from €7.50 mark for mains which is superb value for Amsterdam.

There is a pretty filling all you can eat buffet breakfast for €6.90. Price may seem a bit steep for a hostel but trust me, this is pretty good value for Amsterdam. Grab a coffee and pastry breakfast deal at CatalystCAFE for just €3.50.

Staff are friendly, multi-lingual and always in the know about things 'Dam' related. They'll be happy to help you get the most out of your stay here.

Also worth noting that the hostel is accessible to wheelchair users via an entrance at the rear of the building. Rooms 105, 205 and 305 are equipped for wheelchairs.

WHAT MAKES THIS A LUXURY HOSTEL

Various features make this a really cool hostel. Friendly staff.

Love the interior design and features like the stained glass windows, the library and the atrium. Their in-house ZincBAR with an affordable food menu

is a winner. Plus you have the really cool location in the hip and upcoming district of Amsterdam Noord.

Atmosphere can be lacking at times which is the one area they need to work on more. Otherwise this is a pretty cool hostel and great value for its location.

FACTBOX

4-6 person mixed-dorm prices at ClinkNOORD start at the €24 mark, whilst a bed in the 4 and 10 girls only dorm starts at €25 per night, while the private ensuite rooms I stayed in start at around €80 a night.

Badhuiskade 3, 1031 KV Amsterdam, Netherlands.





HELLO I'M LOCAL HAARLEM

Get back to basics and escape the everyday stress and strain at Hello I'm Local. Staying here reminded me of what holidays were like. Riding on bikes through the surrounding glorious open countryside. Maybe heading to the nearby beach. Quenching your thirst at some fine countryside pub. Playing board games in the common room. No Wi-Fi or TV in the rooms means a relaxed sleep. Beautiful beds as if you were back home. Wake up to the most gorgeous breakfast spread ever- all locally sourced. Then maybe grab a book and chill in their lovely outdoor patio. If you are thirsty, enjoy the delicious local Joven beer along with some of their homemade bitterballen. Take a walk to the station and hop over to Amsterdam, which is just a 15-minute ride away. Haarlem is ever so pretty though. Completely devoid of tourists. So peaceful.

LOCATION

Hello I'm Local is a boutique hostel centrally located in the city centre of Haarlem in the Netherlands. It is located in the Burgwal neighbourhood of Haarlem. It is in close proximity to the famous Grote Markt and the water so it is very well placed. It is also only a 15 minute train ride into Amsterdam from the city.



ROOMS AND BATHROOMS

There are a total of 12 rooms and a living room and patio for relaxation. The rooms are clean, airy and bright. Some have a private shower, some share a toilet. There are toilets in close proximity. The other nice touch is that beds are pre-made. No faffing around with pillow and duvet covers.

Each of the 12 rooms at Hello I'm Local draws on stories from the local area. My double room, covered with beautiful maps, was called the 'VOC' room and was named after a local map maker. Other rooms included the 'Holstein Friesian' named after the dairy cows that are popular to the area while others have been named after famous past residents of Haarlem such as Jan Davidszoon de Heem. 'Klederdracht room' is perfect if you are travelling with family and has its own swing!

There is no Wi-Fi or TV in the bedrooms, only in the living room area. Owner is old fashioned and wants guests to have a conversation, maybe play one of their board games. Friends and guests are welcome in the living room or courtyard but quiet time starts at 11 pm at night. This is the perfect hostel to enjoy that undisturbed night of rest.



FACILITIES

With increasing number of tourists seeing food as a main reason for travels, Hello I'm Local is part of a new breed of gastro-hostels that is keen to share the culinary heritage of their area. The hostel takes great pride in sourcing everything from local producers. They serve fabulous breakfasts where you can savour their hand kneaded traditional bread (option for picking gluten free, muesli and raisin flavoured bread), enjoy it with some organic cheese from the local Doruveal farm or homemade rhubarb strawberry jam from J'aime. Plus you have options of organic muesli with blueberries or scrambled eggs. During the day you can graze on their meat platter from Wild Van Wild or dig into their delicious bitterballens.

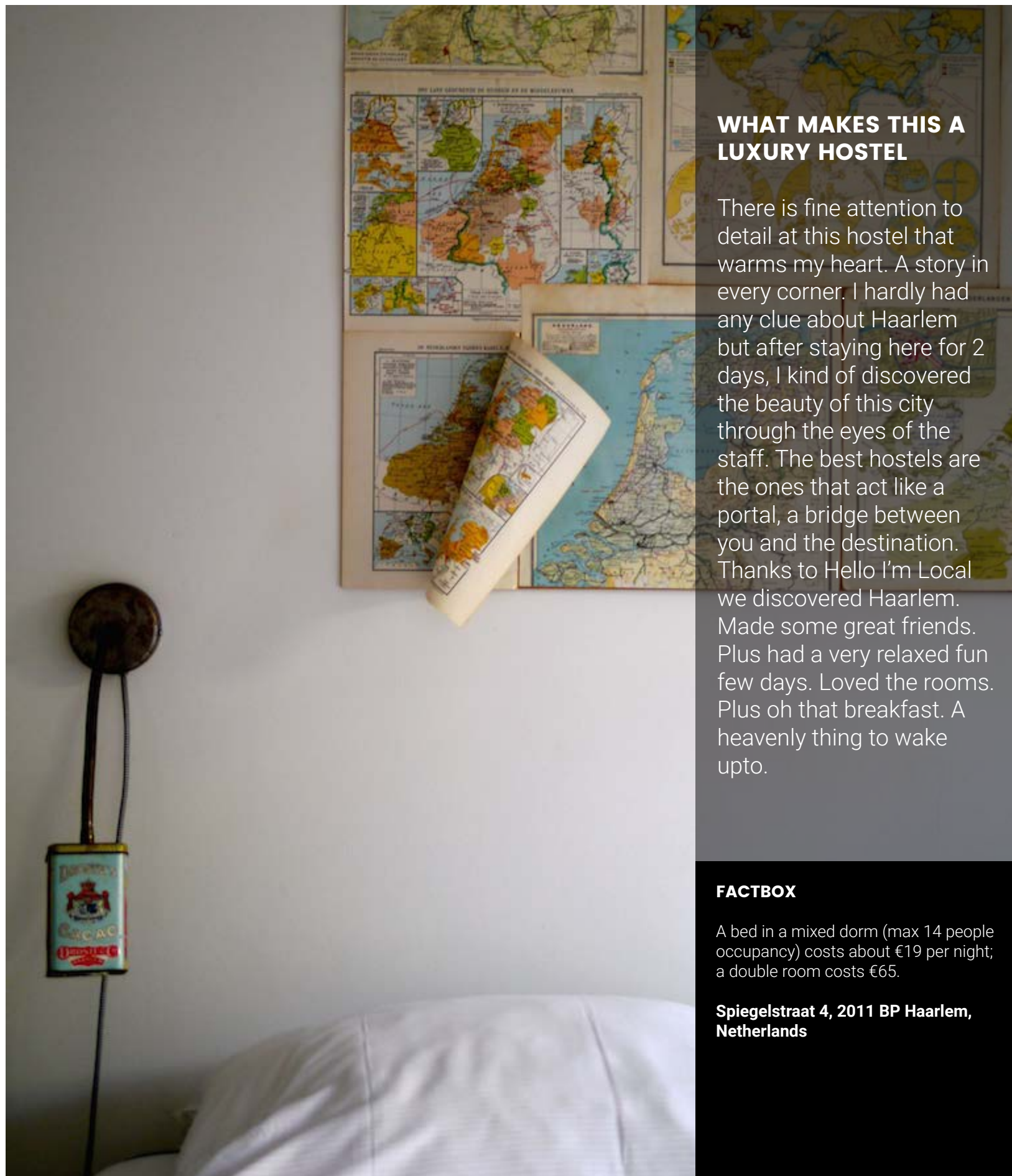
They also serve the heavenly local Jopen craft beer and have recently started a food and bike tour for foodies. A great mix of local culture, beautiful countryside and lots of good food and beer-this was my highlight of my trip to Haarlem. Tours runs every Wed, Fri, Sat and Sun. Prices for the tours start from €22.50 and last between 2 and 3.5 hours.

The hostel is well located: take a bike ride through town or to the beach, go shopping in the award winning centre of Haarlem, visit the museums of Amsterdam which are a short hop away by train (If you're looking for something less expensive and relaxed, not a bad idea to base yourself from Haarlem and explore Amsterdam) and then come back to the private patio with fireplace. The private patio is the perfect spot to soak in some sun during breakfast or while having an afternoon snack.

The hostel also has a guest pantry with all you might need like a microwave, fridge, hair dryer, iron and a water boiler to make your own coffee /tea.

Other key features: the hostel has a washing machine and a dryer. You can do your laundry for €7.50. Or you can also go to a local laundrette where they charge per kilo.

If you are driving there is a free parking space just a 5-minute walk from the hostel.



WHAT MAKES THIS A LUXURY HOSTEL

There is fine attention to detail at this hostel that warms my heart. A story in every corner. I hardly had any clue about Haarlem but after staying here for 2 days, I kind of discovered the beauty of this city through the eyes of the staff. The best hostels are the ones that act like a portal, a bridge between you and the destination. Thanks to Hello I'm Local we discovered Haarlem. Made some great friends. Plus had a very relaxed fun few days. Loved the rooms. Plus oh that breakfast. A heavenly thing to wake upto.

FACTBOX

A bed in a mixed dorm (max 14 people occupancy) costs about €19 per night; a double room costs €65.

Spiegelstraat 4, 2011 BP Haarlem, Netherlands



KINGCOOL HOSTEL HAGUE

Koning + cool = Kingkool. With the help of friends and family, Jan de Koning has created this hostel: from the playful lampshades to the unique theme rooms everything you see has been made by hand, mainly using recycled materials.

THE LOCATION

Kingkool Hostel has a superb central location in The Hague. The famous Grote Markt is two blocks down the road and public transport stops at the front door of the hostel. Both the train stations are a mere fifteen-minute walk away.

ROOMS AND BATHROOMS

The hostel is the dream and vision of one man- Jan de Koning who designed and built the hostel with his own hands recycling everything from old Bordeaux wine cases and creating tables out of them to creating a Japanese style capsule room using old shipping containers and piling them on top of each other to create triple bunk beds. Besides being extremely creative in designing the hostel he has a quirky sense of humour, which is evident when you walk into the 'Bunny-room', fully covered with posters of naked Playmates or the 'Paard

van Troje-room', a tribute to The Hague's iconic music venue. If you fancy sleeping in a camper van in the middle of the Hague then you can have the whole 'Urban camper-room' to yourself which houses a full size bright green camper van.

There are five different types of dorm rooms with varying facilities. The deluxe dorm room has more privacy and a curtain, a private power socket and reading light. Dorm rooms come with lockers but you must provide your own padlock. Dorms do not provide towels either but they can be rented from the hostel at an extra charge.

FACILITIES

This hostel comes equipped with a multitude of facilities. They include but are not limited to an on-site bar serving everything from strong coffee to alcoholic beverages, a guest kitchen, a cinema-room where you can watch movies on a big flat screen or play on the playstation, a lounge with comfy beanbags, a sundeck and terrace.

Breakfast is not included in the price and can be availed from nearby eateries. There is however, a fully equipped guest kitchen where you can whip up your own special breakfast fare.

Wi-Fi access is available throughout the hostel.



WHAT MAKES THIS A LUXURY HOSTEL

This is an unusual, quirky luxury hostel. If you are looking to experience a hostel visit with a twist I highly recommend a visit.

FACTBOX

The El Cheapo Dorm starts from €21, the 10 person Mixed Dorm from €24.

Prinsegracht 51, 2512 EX Den Haag, Netherlands



A photograph of a hostel interior. In the foreground, a white sofa is partially visible with a dark jacket and a colorful striped blanket draped over it. Behind the sofa, a wooden wall is densely covered with numerous small, colorful photographs of people. A warm-toned lamp with a pleated shade sits on a surface to the left. In the background, a red bicycle is parked against the wall. The overall atmosphere is warm and lived-in.

HOSTEL ANI & HAAKIEN ROTTERDAM

In 2005 owners of Ani & Haakien, Danielle and Joyce had the adventure of a lifetime. They went travelling around the world in 2005 staying at some great hostels. The key feature of all their favourite hostels was that they always made them feel at home. When they came back to Rotterdam a year later and finished their studies at the local art academy, they decided to start their own home away from home. One of the reasons for opening the hostel was to hold onto that eternal feeling of being on vacation and meeting interesting people from around the world. They also had a vision of creating a home that could showcase the work of local artists.

After working 14 hour days at restaurants and doing freelance interior design projects on the side they managed to raise the funds to open the hostel. So when you stay here, you are not just renting a bed for the night. You are buying into a vision and also supporting the dream of two girls.

LOCATION

Ani & Haakien is located just 600m from Rotterdam Central Station. You are a short walk from Rotterdam’s most popular attractions including the Markthal and the famous Cube Houses. There are no bars on the street of the hostel so you are guaranteed a good night’s sleep. However, within a short walking distance you can find good coffee places, design shops, rooftop bars, jazz clubs -great base for exploring Rotterdam.

ROOMS AND BATHROOMS

Dorms here are clean and comfortable. Each guest has their own individual locker. The walls in each room are decorated by local artists. The shared bathrooms are cleaned at regular intervals and are great. Doubles here are tiny: as the owners say on their website ‘you should really love your companion to book this room.’

FACILITIES

True to their word, Ani & Haakien does feel like you have been invited into a beautiful home. From their beautiful resident hostel cat Suzy La Cubanita to the large shared communal kitchen where guests gather every night for dinner, to their beautiful garden with hammocks: you feel at home instantly in this hostel. Filled with pieces from friends in the local art community, these touches reflect the hostel’s strong connection with the arts and their community focus. The artists collective Bier&Brood, for example, made a wall painting for the hostel. Els, a friend of the owners runs a vintage shop here. Plus yoga lessons and bands perform in the garden! Staff are fab here and filled with tips for the latest and best things to do in Rotterdam, that you won’t find in any travel guide. There is a packed schedule of tours and activities so there is no chance of feeling bored here.

Checkout their famous blackboard for what’s on.

From a tour of the brand new Markthal, windmill tours, their famous night walk, Graffiti and bar tours, tours to Delft and their one and only Rotterdam Architecture Tour - there is something for every type of traveller. In addition they organise daily dinners and also movie nights.

Another star feature of the hostel is their free, Dutch breakfast which runs from 8 am till 11 am. Slices of bread with a choice of peanut butter, chocolate spread, jam, appelstroop (sweet apple spread), coloured sprinkles, etc... Also an egg, beschuit (light cracker), cornflakes, coffee, tea, milk and juice. They also have Dutch style pancakes on select mornings too.

Other key features here: they have free lockers for storing valuables, which also have built in power outlets. If you arrive early or leave late, they have free luggage storage. There is the option of hiring bikes here for a fee (€8 for 4 hours, €10 all day) and also they offer free bike storage. A Tourist tax of €1 needs to be paid upon arrival.





WHAT MAKES THIS A LUXURY HOSTEL

By staying at Ani & Haakien you see a side of Rotterdam and a side of life that you can't find anywhere. Your sense of reality is challenged. You walk away from this hostel a richer person with all the friendships gained and hopefully a great experience of one of Europe's most underrated cities.

FACTBOX

A bed in a 8 bed dorm starts from €22 and €57 for a double.

**Coolsestraat 47-49, 3014 LC
Rotterdam, Netherlands**

KINGKONG HOSTEL ROTTERDAM

From a tattoo shop, illegal casino and a famous brothel to a very cool hostel that blends industrial design with 21st century contemporary art - say hello to the KingKong Hostel in Rotterdam.



LOCATION

It has a superb location in the beginning of Witte de Wittestraat, which is in the heart of Rotterdam's social scene and all of the city's best bars and restaurants are at your door-step.

ROOMS AND BATHROOMS

One of the key features of this hostel are their hip and trendy rooms. In all the rooms you notice the use of bright colours and use of wood and natural materials, which help create a cosy but cool ambience. There are 23 rooms in total all offering free Wi-Fi. There is a choice of 4, 6 and 8 bed dorms all with ensuite bathrooms (rain showers!), a luxury female dorm and 3 private hotel-style rooms.

One of the highlights of the hostel for me is their rooftop Loft Dorm. If I ever wanted to have a grand sleepover with all my closest friends in the world, this would be the room. With over 48 beds spread across, it sounds quite chaotic but the beds are spread out nicely. You feel like you have your own space. The triangular windows provide both pleasant light and views over the city centre. In between are unique and trendy spaces where you can play like the old school gym or relax in the smattering of brightly coloured hammocks or beanbags. Each bed has a nightlight, lockable storage trunks, and electrical outlets.

If you want to stay in a private room you can choose from several room options which include the Lovers Loft (a trendy room with loft, sleeps up to 2 people), the Full House (hip room suitable for up to 4 people/ friends) and the Kong Meis (hip style rooms named after local duo artists, you have access to a record player and Netflix here. Ideal for up to 2 people).

The best deal in this hostel is no doubt the Lovers Loft. Through a wooden ladder, you climb up to a higher level with a double bed. You have a curtain for privacy but from here you will have this amazing view of Rotterdam's skyline. Ideal for a couple on a budget romantic break to Rotterdam or if you are travelling solo and need some space.

Also worth noting that linen and towels are included in the price for all travellers.

FACILITIES

The lobby has an excellent barista station at the check-in desk. Coffee is good as well as their homemade lemonade. To your left is a comfortable seating area for relaxing with coffee or chatting with other guests... or simply enjoying the comings and goings of locals on Witte de Witt through the huge bay window. Downstairs is the stylish open plan kitchen cum dining area for guests- where you can find communal picnic tables with wide benches as well as more intimate tables for two. The kitchen is open for guest use except from 6.30 to 10.30am during breakfast hours.

Every morning you can enjoy a fresh breakfast buffet in the kitchen for € 7.50. At the breakfast buffet you will find fresh slices of bread, croissants, scrambled eggs, yoghurt, fresh juices such as orange juice, milk, cereal, fresh fruit, coffee and tea. It is more than adequate, quite filling and really fresh. If you are looking for a bit of variety I also highly recommend the breakfast at Bazaar down the road.

There is free tea and coffee available for guests from 8 till 11am. If you are feeling peckish during the day the hostel has a nice selection of sandwiches, wraps, salads, side dishes and drinks on offer.

Below the kitchen you have the hangover basement area with lots of pillows and a nice sofa. This is a great place to chill after a long day of sightseeing in Rotterdam. Plus you can watch your favourite TV shows or movies on Netflix here. Every evening at 8pm they also run a movie night where you can watch movies with free popcorn!

Staff here - Matthijs, Nuno and Isadora are super friendly and helpful. Besides giving you great tips of places to eat and drink in the area, they can help guests with other essentials like printing out your boarding passes and tickets, free of cost.

The hostel proudly claims that their Wi-Fi is faster than Usain Bolt and this is true to some extent. In the lobby you will also find a large reading table with computers and outlets for your own laptop and other electronic appliances.

Other key features to note here: you can wash and dry your clothes here for €8 or €4 if you just need to wash your clothes.





WHAT MAKES THIS A LUXURY HOSTEL

The location in the heart of Witte de Wiltstraat means you are in the heart of Rotterdam's nightlife and creative scene. The design of the hostel is fresh and innovative. Features like the movie room, open plan kitchen area and the rooftop loft dorm are fab. A really cool concept hostel in a very cool city.

FACTBOX

A single bed in a bunk/dorm starts at €17 and private double rooms around €44.

**Witte de Withstraat 74, 3012 BS
Rotterdam, Netherlands**

GERMANY

THE CIRCUS HOSTEL BERLIN

With a museum dedicated to the Hoff, their own microbrewery in the basement plus they serve breakfast till 1pm and also the most delicious currywurst pies, Circus Hostel is a hostel like no other in the world.



LOCATION

I love the location of the Circus Hostel. Guests are in the prime location of Rosenthaler Platz where you are within easy reach of everything in Berlin. A 15-minute walk away is Alexanderplatz. Prenzlauer Berg is up the hill. Right across you have the uber hip St Oberholtz cafe and also Main Haus Am See bar (open 24/7- need beer, want a coffee at 5am, or doze on their comfy leather sofas, listen to cool DJ's... anything goes).

ROOMS AND BATHROOMS

Like other luxury hostels I've reviewed so far in this project-this hostel offers the perfect balance of great value, funky vibe and really nice dorms plus private ensuite rooms.

Medium-sized dorm rooms are amazing value: no bunk beds here. You have four or five single beds, spaced out. Each of the beds has a reading light, fluffy pillow and duvet. Plus there is locker space for valuables.

Shared bathrooms are clean and well maintained.

If you are looking for something more luxurious and with great views, rent the penthouse apartment, which comes with a full kitchen and stunning panoramic views of Mitte and the TV Tower in the distance.

FACILITIES

Circus Hostel welcomes a nice mix of travellers- backpackers, students and also couples and mature travellers. It's not strictly what I would call a party hostel but has a nice communal vibe and social atmosphere.

Staff, like their international guests come from a wide variety of cool backgrounds and are really helpful and friendly.

The on-site bar and café area called Katz and Maus does a great selection of food including the excellent €5 all-you-can-eat buffet breakfast that is served till 1pm.

For lunch or dinner, try their twisted Katz & Maus burgers served with potato salad (€7.40) or their delicious currywurst pies (€6.90). Coffee here is excellent -beans

come from Costa Rica and 10% of revenue goes to charity.

One of the cool features of this hostel is the fact they brew their own beer and have a basement microbrewery. Really nice place to meet fellow guests and have a nice beer.

The hostel also has the unusual amazing feature of a dedicated museum to the 'Hoff', complete with chest hair and Hoff

memorabilia. Hoff is a bit of a cult hero in these parts thanks to hit single, 'Freedom' and also thanks to his apparent role in the fall of the wall.

Guests can also chill in the reception and dip into an abundance of tourist literature on the city. The hostel also organises their own free walking tours. Besides bikes, there is al-so the possibility of renting iPads, iPods or laptops from the reception.





WHAT MAKES THIS A LUXURY HOSTEL

This place is so much more than just a bed for the night.

It provides a real experience and feel of the city. Attention to detail like their awesome DIY walking tours (start and end at the hostel), option of offering bikes, segways and even rollerblades (€5) for hire, shows that they have thought of every possible need of their guests. I loved this hostel. The world definitely needs more hostels like Circus.

FACTBOX

Bed in a 4/5 bedroom starts from €23 (low season) to €27 (high season) while a double/twin starts from €75 (Low season) to €85 (High season).

Weinbergsweg 1a, 10119, Berlin, Germany.

PLUS HOSTEL BERLIN

An indoor swimming pool, sauna, jacuzzi, excellent Italian restaurant and iconic artists' commune all under one roof? Say hello to Plus Berlin, a hostel with a big difference.





LOCATION

Plus’s Berlin branch is in an excellent location just off Warschauer Strasse near the S-Bahn station, so you’re well connected to the Hauptbahnhof and the heart of Berlin.

The East Side Gallery - one of the remaining stretches of the Berlin Wall - is a few hundred yards away. There’s a clutch of cool bars in the area and across the bridge is the hip Watergate club. The River Spree, with its bizarre man-made sandy beaches (yes beaches!) and tiki bars, is less than a 5-minute walk away, as is the new spaceship-like Mercedes Benz concert arena. Berlin’s largest and most famous nightclubs are also either a short walk or a couple of subway stations away.

ROOMS AND BATHROOMS

The rooms themselves are very spacious, clean, and comfortable. I stayed in the double room within the ‘hotel’ wing of the hostel.

Private rooms come with ensuite bathrooms. They’re a decent size with a fantastic power shower and add-ons like hair dryers.

If you’re travelling in a group, I recommend checking out their six-bed dorm rooms, which have two ensuite bathrooms. Starting at just €11 per person per night, these rooms represent a great deal.

FACILITIES

One key signature of the Plus Hostels is that they have a swimming pool and sauna.

Hostels and swimming pools?! I know.

The moment I walked in and saw the pool, I suddenly had an image of crazy pool parties. The idea of a swimming pool in a hostel seems utterly fantastic yet a recipe for total anarchy.

The reception staff told me that they did have pool parties before, but it predictably descended into chaos and was stopped soon after.

TOP TIP

When I visited the pool in the afternoon, it was quiet with not a soul around. The school groups had left for the day so it was serene.

The perfect place to relax in Plus is the courtyard and garden. Guests here drink in the mellow sunshine, relaxing on the deck chairs or sleeping off the excesses of the night be-fore. The presence of a few pet rabbits scurrying around adds to the sense of tranquillity.

There is a series of wrought-iron sculptures exhibited in the garden. I was told they are part of a mobile exhibition known as the Tacheles. Since they were evicted from their

home, the Tacheles has become a mobile art exhibition presenting contemporary art-works around the city, and their temporary home is the garden of Plus Berlin.

Another defining space is the Opera Restaurant and Bar. It’s an impressive room with polished wooden floors and vaulted ceilings adorned by a series of kitsch circular lampshades. The centrepiece of the room is the impressively stocked long bar.

To the front they have a huge projector screen showing all the big games, as well as a well-stocked library of books that guests can use.

Adjoining the front is a room with a pool table. In the evenings, you can enjoy a choice of pizza or pasta dishes for a small price. At night, the bar is a great place to hang out and meet fellow guests. The staff were some of the friendliest I’ve come across so far - extremely helpful and cheerful with lots of great tips for places to eat and drink at nearby.

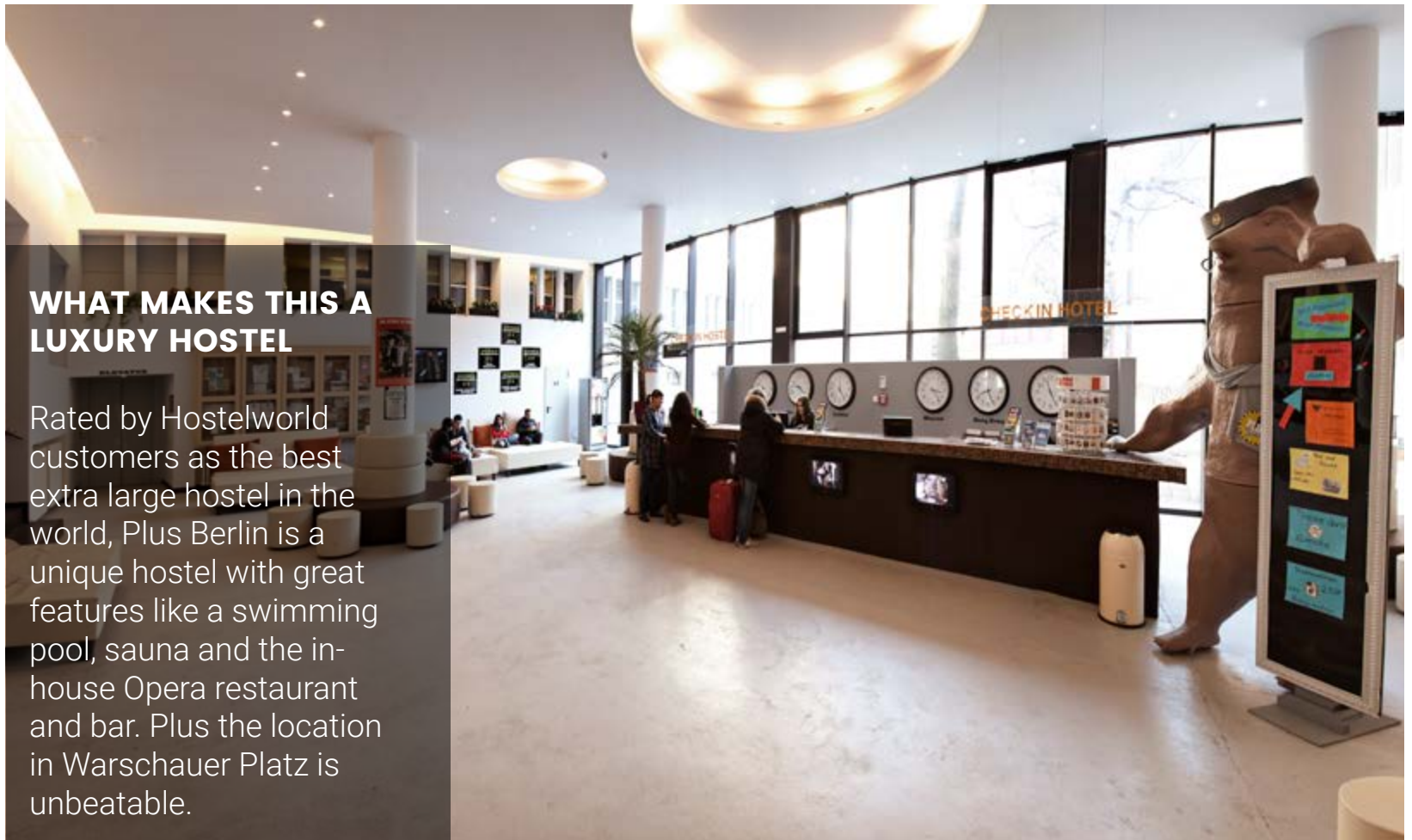
WHAT MAKES THIS A LUXURY HOSTEL

Rated by Hostelworld customers as the best extra large hostel in the world, Plus Berlin is a unique hostel with great features like a swimming pool, sauna and the in-house Opera restaurant and bar. Plus the location in Warschauer Platz is unbeatable.

FACTBOX

Dorms from €11, doubles from €20 per person, triples from €19 per person.

Warschauer Platz 6, D-10245 Berlin, Germany.



GRAND HOSTEL BERLIN

Situated in the trendy Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg district in a former Bishop's Palace dating back to 1874, The Grand Hostel Berlin is a hostel that combines a bit of old world Berlin charm with great modern hospitality – as well as a stunning library bar.



LOCATION

The location is excellent – just a three-minute walk to the Möckernbrücke station, from where you can access the U1 and U7 lines. It's in a quiet neighbourhood, so this hostel is as relaxing as it is conveniently located for exploring the city and its nightlife.

ROOMS AND BATHROOMS

Key card access keeps the rooms secure. The shared dorms in Grand Hostel are clean and well-maintained - they all have well-positioned single beds and no bunks. The rooms have high ceilings and come with beautiful bay windows.

The double rooms are beautifully furnished with a bit of old-fashioned charm with potted plants, a dressing table, and a walk-in wardrobe. My only minor gripe would be the extra €3.85 for linen and €2.20 for towels.

Common bathrooms are clean and plentiful on each floor. They come with hair dryers.

FACILITIES

At check-in, guests are offered a free cup of coffee, tea, an ice tea or a cold beer, which is a nice gesture after a long journey. The coffee machine is terrific.

The staff here are a real credit to the hostel and some of the best I've encountered on my luxury hostels tour. Professional, courteous, and always willing to help – this is five-star hotel-level service.

A standout feature of the hostel is the library bar. It's impossibly cool with volumes of old dusty books from floor to ceiling that you can leaf through while enjoying your coffee.

During the day, I spent a lot of time sitting on one of the leather armchairs reading a book or just catching up with friends on my laptop with the help of the free Wi-Fi.

In the evening, the bar opens and the library becomes the meeting point of the hostel.

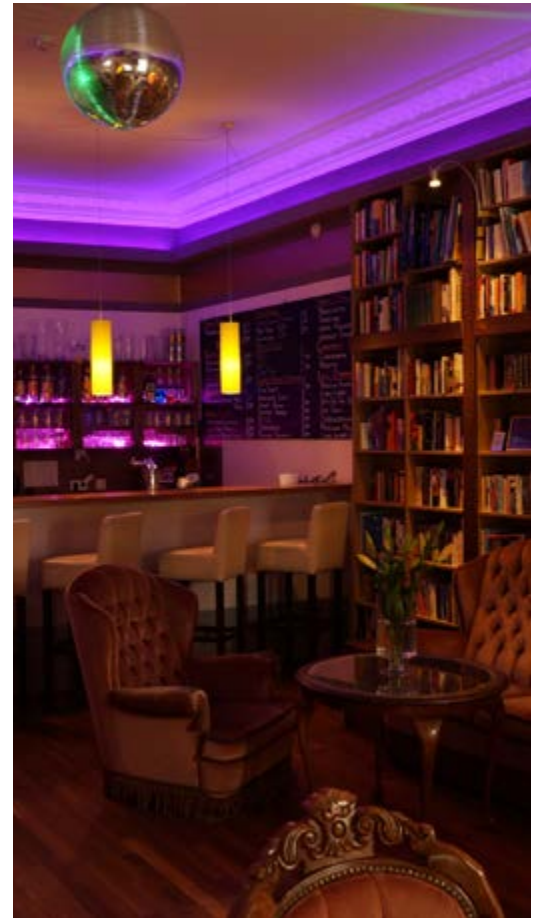
Martin and his team of bartenders are running the show, they know how to make a mean cocktail and keep guests entertained with their banter. I spent a large part of my evenings at the Grand Hostel chatting with

Martin and the guests.

Breakfast is not included. However, the hostel has recently opened a brand new breakfast restaurant called 'The Grand Bistro & Cafe' next to the hostel. Guests can order a full breakfast buffet including hot and cold items for just €6.50 and this includes hot drinks.

During the week the hostel offers evening beer tastings, free German lessons and Karaoke nights. The hostel staff also offers guests a city bike tour of Berlin and run a pub-crawl on Fridays. Bikes can be rented from the hostel for €12 per day (€50 deposit required).

TOP TIP: You're just a short walk away from kebab heaven: ask the staff for directions to Mustafa's on Mehringdamm 32. The kebabs here have the perfect balance of meat, sauce, vegetables, and bread. The meat is nice and juicy, the vegetables are fresh, and they include fried potatoes, which is ingenious. Warning: Queues are huge here so grab a bottle of beer to ease the pain of a long wait. It's worth it in the end.



WHAT MAKES THIS A LUXURY HOSTEL

Staying here is a great experience - the combination of Old Berlin charm, beautiful interior décor, and great service from staff makes you feel as if you are staying in a hotel more than a hostel. The cool library bar and spacious, bunkless dorms make this an ideal base for exploring Berlin.

FACTBOX

Dorms from € 9,90, doubles from € 38 per room.

Tempelhofer Ufer 14, 10963 Berlin, Germany.

DIE WOHNUNGEMEINSCHAFT COLOGNE

Ever known a bar where it felt so cozy, you end up spending so much time that it almost became an invisible extension of your living room? So cozy that you never wanted to leave. Maybe they had a few rooms, which you could share with the other like-minded patrons of the bar? That's how the Die Wohngemeinschaft bar became a hostel. 'Wohngemeinschaft' translates as 'flatshare'. The owners after a number of flatshare requests from customers felt the natural progression was to open a hostel.



THE LOCATION

Customers at first glance are often dismayed by how far the hostel is from the city centre. Then they arrive and realise (like I did) that they are slap bang in the heart of Cologne's hippest neighbourhood, the Belgian Quarter. You are on the doorstep of some of the city's most authentic and cheapest places to eat. There is great artisan coffee, amazing gelato, great burgers cool bars and a few impressive street art murals- it is a lovely place to call home for a few days. The Dom: Cologne's world-famous cathedral and the city's many impressive museums are a 10-15 minute walk away. Hostel die Wohngemeinschaft is a 2-minute walk from Moltkestraße Underground Station and a 4-minute walk from Rudolfplatz Underground Station.

Cologne Main Station can be reached in less than 10 minutes on foot.

ROOMS AND BATHROOMS

All of the 11 rooms at die Wohngemeinschaft Cologne are individually decorated on a unique theme.

I stayed in Tom's room. Every room in Die Wohngemeinschaft hostel, bar and theatre has a unique story. For example 'Tom' apparently used to be an art director but moved to Canada on the death of his great aunt. He lived in her log cabin in Lake Tagish and sailed across the Lake on her boat. On returning to Europe, he decided to make a bed from the boat. He comes and stays in the winter months apparently. Till then his boat bed is yours if you visit Cologne.

My other favourite amongst their themed rooms is the fabulous 'Compagnie de Résistance'. Sadly guys this is a female only dorm. Girls will love the ballroom inspired cozy interiors of this room. There are 6 beds in this dorm. At 1.40 meters wide, this is one of the biggest dorm beds I have seen on my travels. Each bunk is completely separated from the other so you have your own privacy plus a curtain. In addition, each bed has its own reading lamp, plug socket and a shelf to keep your loose change.

The rooms at Die Wohngemeinschaft are not en-suite. However, there are bathrooms and toilets on each floor. They are inspected and cleaned regularly.



FACILITIES

The Wohngemeinschaft isn't just a hostel.

They also have a very popular cafe-bar with outside terrace where locals congregate.

During the day you can enjoy delicious coffee and wonderful pastries and in the evening the bar becomes packed with locals and is a fantastic place to hang out and meet people.

The other cool feature of the hostel is their own theatre space, which seats upto 70 people. The theatre is a versatile space hosting everything from local to international bands, book readings, plays and films.

In the hostel itself, guests can relax in the nice common lounge which has a cool retro chic vibe. For a fee of €5.50 guests can enjoy an organic buffet breakfast in the lounge from 8-11am.

Most of the breakfast items like cheese, eggs, yoghurt, tea, and juices are organic. Bread is sourced from a local cologne bakery. All cold meats are sourced from a local organic farmer.

Free coffee and tea are provided, as well as DVDs and books. Bicycles and skateboards can also be rented at reception.

WHAT MAKES THIS A LUXURY HOSTEL

In terms of character, Die Wohngemeinschaft is one of the most exciting hostels in the world. If you are looking for an experience, stay here. I love the themed rooms, their amazing bar and also the fact they have their own cultural space. Staying here, I really felt like I connected with the people and spirit of Cologne.

FACTBOX

A bed in the 6 female only Compagnie de Résistance dorm starts from just €20 while a night in Tom's adventurous boat bed is around €45 a night.

Richard-Wagner-Straße 39, 50674 Köln, Germany.

HOSTEL AND GARTEN EDEN LEIPZIG

From pop-up art installations in abandoned buildings to discovering secret open air parties in the wood- sounds quite exciting no? Leipzig is a city undergoing a really exciting creative transformation. The 4 artists and owners of Hostel and Garten Eden, with their insider knowledge of the local creative arts scene, are here to help you navigate your way around the bohemian maze that is Leipzig.



LOCATION

Transformed from an abandoned low rise that used to house GDR apprentices, the Hostel and Garten Eden hostel is a symbol of the creative revolution in Leipzig. The hostel is located in the central west, one of Leipzig's most happening and artistic area. It's only a 5-minute walk away from Karl-Heine-Strasse, a street filled with various bars, interesting shops and the Westwerk Gallery and Nightclub. From here you are only a 10-minute walk away from the famous Spinnerei, an old cotton mill converted into numerous open art galleries, which show everything from local artist works to foreign exhibitions. A 30-minute bike ride west through the countryside, and you're at the idyllic Cospudener See, perfect for swimming or relaxing on the beach with a beer. The Hostel is also located right next to a tram station where you can catch a 15-minute tram into the centre as well as other parts of the city.

ROOMS AND BATHROOMS

The hostel is not just your typical backpacker's accommodation. The owners wanted to create a hostel that was not only affordable but that also represented the laid back and trendy lifestyle of the area. Individually styled and created by local artists, guests can choose to stay in a variety of unique themed rooms. One of the double rooms has been a bed built into an old Fiat Fiorino (complete with a working radio). Daily life scenes in the Lindenau neighbourhood have inspired the wall paintings in this room. Alternatively you can stay in a twin room, which was inspired by the Scottish designer and architect Charles Rennie Mackintosh. There is a mix of dorm rooms available. My pick is the 6 bed female dorm where each bunk bed has its own individual design, from Japanese sleeping pods to space shuttle cockpit. Each bed has a large and lockable luggage locker as well as a bed lamp and curtain for privacy.

FACILITIES

The common area is spacious with plenty of room to sit and dine with large groups. There are also books and board games for rainy days. The kitchen is complete with all cooking and storage essentials. Cornflakes, milk, coffee and tea is available for free at all times.

The star feature of this hostel is a beautiful and spacious garden that sits in the rear of the building, complete with a shed, lawn chairs and a sand box for children. It is hugely popular with locals who regularly pop by for a coffee or beer to chill in the garden. The garden is often used by the staff to host outdoor cinema nights, art exhibitions and parties where locals and guests alike are all invited.

TOP TIP

An alternative way to discover the city is to rent a canoe and discover the city through the many canals. For party people, Institut fur Zunkuft is widely regarded as one of the best clubs in Germany. If there are any clubnights taking place there when you visit, don't miss it!





WHAT MAKES THIS A LUXURY HOSTEL

Hostel & Garten Eden is a very original and quirky hostel. I loved the original, themed rooms. Lot of thought has gone into the design of this place. Staff are friendly and welcoming. They give their guests a unique perspective of the city. I would happily come again just to relax in their garden with a book and a beer.



FACTBOX

Bed in a dorm ranges from €10 - €16 while private rooms vary from €35 - 52 a night.

Demmeringstraße 57, 04177 Leipzig.



GSPUSI HOSTEL MUNICH

I've been reliably informed that 'Gspusi' is the Bavarian term for a 'flirt'. While the casual, Bavarian, rustic ambience definitely flirts with your senses for me their excellent speakeasy style bar, different themed rooms plus the fabulous location in Munich's citycentre makes this a fine base for you to discover all the sights and delights of the metropolis.

THE LOCATION

One very good reason to stay at the Gspusi Bar Hostel is its superb location in Munich's centre, just a few metres away from its old town, bar district and shopping district. The hostel is right next to the Sendlinger U-Bahn station and it took me just 10 minutes to walk to Marienplatz.

ROOMS AND BATHROOMS

The interior design is very original. Quirky is the best way to describe the rooms in this hostel. The bunk beds are made of reclaimed wood and rooms have vinyl flooring. Our room with just 2 bunk beds had the rustic feeling of being in a hunting lodge in the Bavarian Alps with all the hunting paraphernalia that you can expect. No room is like the other. Each room features unique artwork from local artists and some are sponsored by brands ranging from Red Bull, Jagermeister to iconic Munich techno club Harry Klein (room guests get free tickets to the club).

All bunk beds are equipped with blackout curtains. Other plus points are the provision of free linen. Towels are available with supplement. Hostel can also provide hypoallergenic bedding.

In terms of negatives, the bunk beds are a little on the small side. My friend who is

about 6ft 2 had his feet sticking out of the bed which was odd for him. The ladders on the bunk beds are tricky to navigate so try and get the lower bunk beds if possible. Also while each bunk bed comes equipped with a reading light, there are no charging points. At the time of writing the review, the hostel management were ordering extra charging points for each room.

FACILITIES

In terms of facilities, the star feature of the hostel is their own onsite bar, which is popular with locals. The walls of the bar are covered with corrugated metal giving the feeling of being a shabby chic bar or underground home bar. The stuffed wild boar is a reminder to guests that we are in Bavaria. They have an extensive list of gin-based cocktails and excellent whisky sours which I sampled during one of their popular club nights. Other facilities worth mentioning include the shared communal showers and toilets, which were clean and well maintained. Staff here are friendly and extremely helpful. Hair dryers and adaptors are available for hire.

On the negative side there was a general lack of atmosphere and common room for guests to relax and meet each other. This is an area that the hostel management are looking to improve on in the near future.

Plus there is no breakfast included but just around the corner, there is an excellent and cheap bakery.

WHAT MAKES THIS A LUXURY HOSTEL

As a design lover, I love the quirky details and different themed rooms in this hostel. Location is a major plus. Staff are friendly. Plus they have a very nice onsite bar to the boot. While there are still some details to improve, overall this is a safe and good choice for sleeping when visiting Munich.



FACTBOX

Bed in a triple or quadruple room with shared bathroom starts at €30 going upto €70 per night for a twin bunk bed room.

Oberanger 45, Altstadt-Lehel, 80331 Munich, Germany.

WOMBATS MUNICH

Welcome to Munich's premier party palace. This hostel strikes a nice balance between being social and also a place to chill out and relax. Clean, comfortable and great value for money: Wombats Munich is a great place to call home for your Munich adventure.



LOCATION

The hostel is just a stone's throw away from the main train station which is also the major public transportation hub.

A 5 minute stroll brings you to the old town and you are also within easy walking distance of the Oktoberfest grounds.

ROOMS AND BATHROOMS

Dormitories are a cheerful affair, brightly painted, spacious and comfortable. All rooms are ensuite here. The bathrooms are small but the water strength in the shower is good. Hair dryers can be hired from reception for a €10 refundable deposit.

Each bed comes with its own locker. The lockers are large and can be securely locked using your own key-card which is handy. Double rooms come with their own terrace. There is a choice of 8 and 6 bed dorms, 6 bed 'female only' dorms, twins and doubles. Plus for a large hostel with over 300 beds, the rooms and all common areas were clean. They take their cleanliness very seriously here and have twice won Hostelworld's 'Cleanest Hostel Worldwide' award.

FACILITIES

Key feature of the hostel is their air-conditioned, glass-roofed indoor patio with potted plants. Lots of beanbags, hammocks and semi-real beach chairs give a very relaxed convivial air to the place.

Another thing I love is the offer of the free welcome drink along with the free linen and city maps. The 'Wombar' is the place to meet fellow guests and kickoff your evening in the city. Happy hour usually is from 6 till 8pm.

A breakfast buffet ticket can be purchased for an additional cost of €3.90, which includes orange juice, tea and coffee, bread, spreads, cereal, fruit, cheese and meats.

In partnership with Gordon's Tours, Wombats offers guests a 3 hour walking tour of Munich's key highlights. Tours leave from the Wombat's reception everyday at 10:45am. Guides operate on a tips only basis so it is completely upto you how much you want to pay.

For a small fee you can park your car in the garage. Spots are very limited so make sure you let the hostel know as soon as possible. Spots are available on a first come, first served basis.

There is sadly no kitchen because of certain local laws.

Other key things to share with you: they have Internet terminals, laundromats for washing clothes and reception is open 24/7. Staff here are all keen travellers, fab and super helpful.





WOMBATS MUNICH

WHAT MAKES THIS A LUXURY HOSTEL

After a long day of seeing the sights it is great to come back to a hostel where you can have a few beers, have good banter with the hostel staff and make new friends. This is the kind of hostel where you can easily spend a few days. The location is amazing.

I really liked my double room with terrace- a nice bit of luxury. Plus I love features like the inner atrium, where you can relax or mingle with fellow guests. Shame that they don't have a kitchen but my guess is that you won't be spending too much time eating in Munich. A fun and very cool hostel in a beautiful city. You won't be disappointed.

FACTBOX

Bed in a triple or quadruple room with shared bathroom starts at €30 going upto €70 per night for a twin bunk bed room.

Oberanger 45, Altstadt-Lehel, 80331 Munich, Germany.

SUPERBUDE HOTEL HOSTEL ST PAULI HAMBURG

Superbude (bude stands for 'digs' in German)
St Pauli stands out as one of the most exciting
design concepts in the affordable budget
accommodation sector.



LOCATION

The Superbude Hostel St Pauli has a superb location. You are in the heart of everything. The hostel is located close to the Reeperbahn, Schanzenviertel and Karoviertel districts. Concerts, clubs, bars, cafes, culture, street art and lifestyle: everything Hamburg has to offer is at your fingertips.

ROOMS AND BATHROOMS

The hostel interiors cleverly mix the outlandish with the contemporary: the walls in my double room were covered in newspaper articles relating to the city of Hamburg.

Konstantin Gricic's 'Mayday' lamps hang from the goal-netting headboards of my bed: a homage to the local cult football club, St Pauli.

The plunger coat hangers in my room are one of the coolest coat hangers I have seen. I also have tiny metallic anchor hooks to hang my stuff in the bathroom. Attention to detail is insane here.

I loved my bed here and had a peaceful nights sleep. Ensuite bathroom was clean with a superb power shower.

The hotel/hostel features stackable beds by Rolf Heide that allow a third of the 89 double rooms to sleep up to four guests.

Other star features of the hostel are the unique Astra Rockstar Suite, which can be hired for the express purpose of private parties. The room has a stage, which folds up into a sleeping area. Astra beer is available in the headboards! There is also a self-service kitchen.

FACILITIES

This is a hostel for design lovers. Designer, Armin Fischer of Dreimeta has created some unique design ideas that you can take away and apply in the home. Old water pipes have been screwed together to create the most amazing magazine rack you will see in any hotel or hostel. Chairs have been created from old wheelbarrows. Even the hostel keyrings have been made from old skateboards. Old beer crates of Astra have been upholstered with old jeans from past

residents.

This hostel is very much a reflection of the past and present. For example the yellow colour is derived from the brand colours of the former residents of the building: a telecom network. Hostel pays respect to the maritime heritage of the city with a rope pattern motif that pops up everywhere, from the wooden panels on the bathrooms and corridors to the carpets.

The hostel common room is pretty much your perfect living room: plenty of comfy sofas, upholstered leather chairs, which you can relax in and enjoy all the latest magazines. They also serve a pretty decent if slightly expensive buffet breakfast here (€9) from 7 till 12 am. That said it is very filling. You have a choice of cappuccino, espresso, latte or organic fair-trade tea. Plus you can choose from a variety of cereals, fresh fruit, boiled eggs, hams and cheeses or simply enjoy the waffles with a good dollop of Nutella.

The hostel is also a huge supporter of the local music scene.

Local bands organise free mini-concerts in the lounge area. Posters and flyers of local bands hang from mousetraps on the walls. With their connections to local clubs and live music venues in the area, hostel staff can get you guest entry access to most of these places. Which is really fantastic.



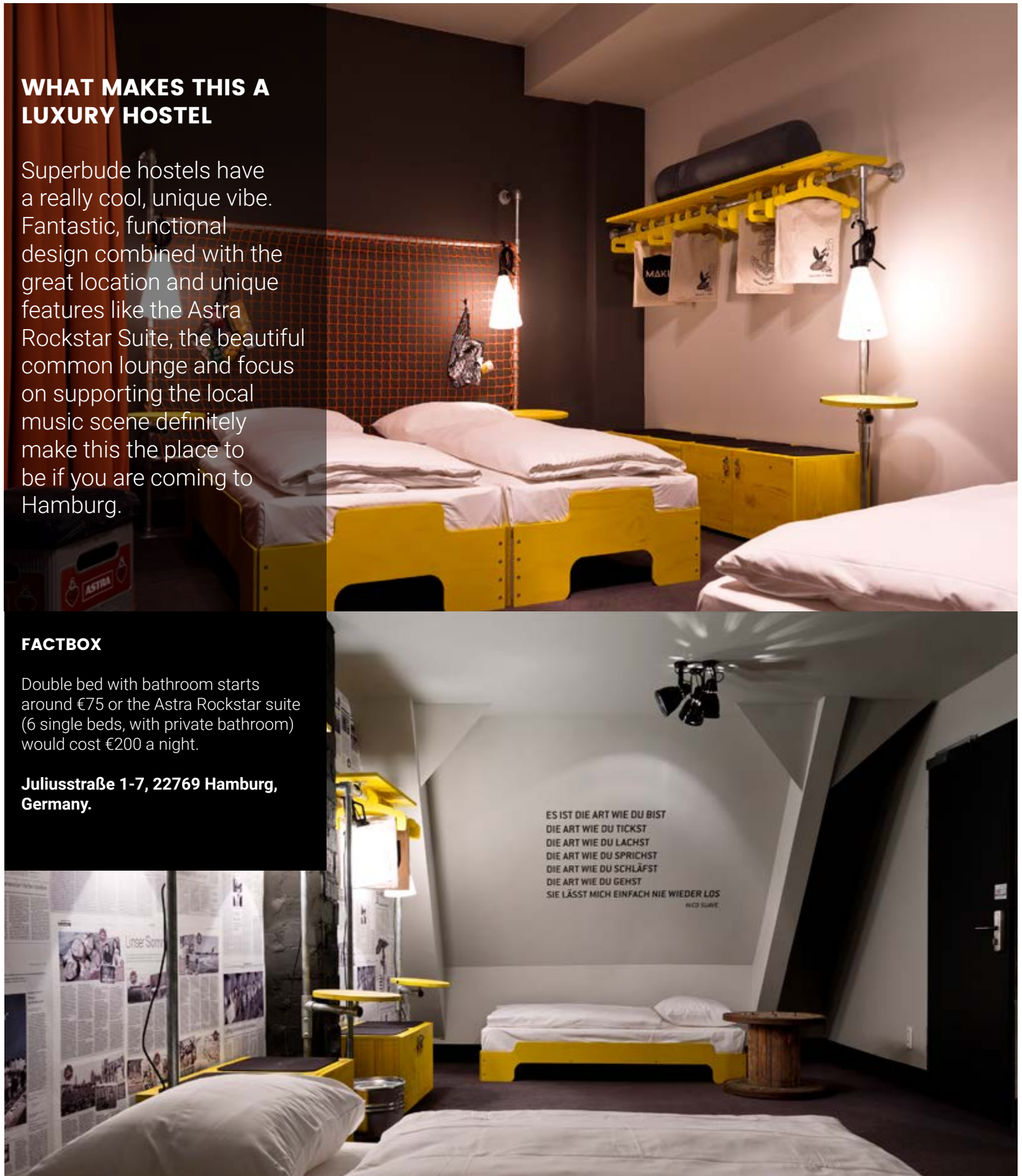
WHAT MAKES THIS A LUXURY HOSTEL

Superbude hostels have a really cool, unique vibe. Fantastic, functional design combined with the great location and unique features like the Astra Rockstar Suite, the beautiful common lounge and focus on supporting the local music scene definitely make this the place to be if you are coming to Hamburg.

FACTBOX

Double bed with bathroom starts around €75 or the Astra Rockstar suite (6 single beds, with private bathroom) would cost €200 a night.

Juliusstraße 1-7, 22769 Hamburg, Germany.



AUSTRIA

WOMBATS CITY HOSTEL THE NASCHMARKT VIENNA

Thanks to its great location at the Naschmarkt, excellent facilities, cool design, and superb breakfast, Wombats City Hostel Vienna Naschmarkt is the perfect base for exploring Vienna.



LOCATION

Wombats City Hostel Vienna Naschmarkt is in a terrific location overlooking Vienna's biggest market. It's a short walk from the Hofburg, Secessionhaus and the Vienna State Opera, making it ideal for those looking to soak up some culture while in the city.

ROOMS AND BATHROOMS

All of the rooms come with comfy wooden beds and ensuite bathrooms.

The female-only dorms have full-length mirrors and come with a hair dryer in the bath-room.

Cleanliness is next to godliness for this hostel staff - they take it very seriously here and have twice won the HostelWorld award for the Cleanest Hostel Chain Worldwide.

FACILITIES

Wombats is very secure with key card access for the front door of the hostel, each floor, the rooms, and personal lockers.

Free Wi-Fi access in the common areas is excellent and at the time of this review, they had started extending it to the guest bedrooms, which is great news.

Linen is included, as is luggage storage.

The hostel offers a free drink on arrival, which you can enjoy at the excellent womBar. The womBar also has special drink offers, three different happy hours each day and a lot of special events.

The front lobby is stocked with lots of brochures, travel guides and maps of the city and onward destinations to help with your trip planning.

There is a small kitchenette for guests to use. Plenty of supermarkets are in the neighbourhood, making it perfect if you're looking to cook and save money.

Wombats offer an excellent breakfast – one of the best ones I've seen in a hostel. The all-you-can-eat breakfast costs an extra €4.50 but offers a very generous spread which includes coffee, bread, selection of cheese and cold meats like prosciutto and

salami, hard boiled eggs, yoghurts, fruit, honey, cereals and lots of Nutella.

Other facilities include an on-site launderette. You can also hire hair dryers, travel guide-books, umbrellas, etc... from reception for a refundable deposit.





WHAT MAKES THIS A LUXURY HOSTEL

The great Naschmarkt location, top-notch facilities, cool design, and superb value breakfast make Wombats Naschmarkt the perfect base for exploring Vienna. Highly recommended.

FACTBOX

Dorms from €18, triples from €26 per person, doubles from €32 per person.

Rechte Wienzeile 35, Vienna, Austria

CROATIA



DESIGN HOSTEL 101 DALMATINAC SPLIT

If you love hostels with great design, friendly staff, somewhere clean and comfortable when visiting Split, then you might want to checkout Design Hostel 101 Dalmatinac.

LOCATION

The location of this hostel is not the best, about a 15-minute drive from the historic centre of Split. Bus services though are pretty regular and there is also now the option of Uber in Split. The hostel is also handily located next door to a supermarket that besides having all the essentials has a very cheap and decent hot food counter.

ROOMS AND BATHROOMS

The strongest feature of this hostel is the design and the rooms. In terms of design and comfort, the rooms here are some of the nicest I have seen in a hostel. The hostel has 19 rooms with 101 beds. Each bed represents an island. The picture of the island is located on each bed wall providing some interesting facts. You can also read a few facts about the islands such as: population, latitude and longitude and even learn about the island's #hashtag. The beds

are really comfortable. Each bed has its own reading light and power socket.

All the rooms have one shower room and one restroom, which is ideal if you are sharing with a few people. The other key feature of the rooms is that they all have air conditioning. Linen and towels are included in the price. Another key selling point is that the hostel does welcome pets free of charge but advance notice must be given in writing.

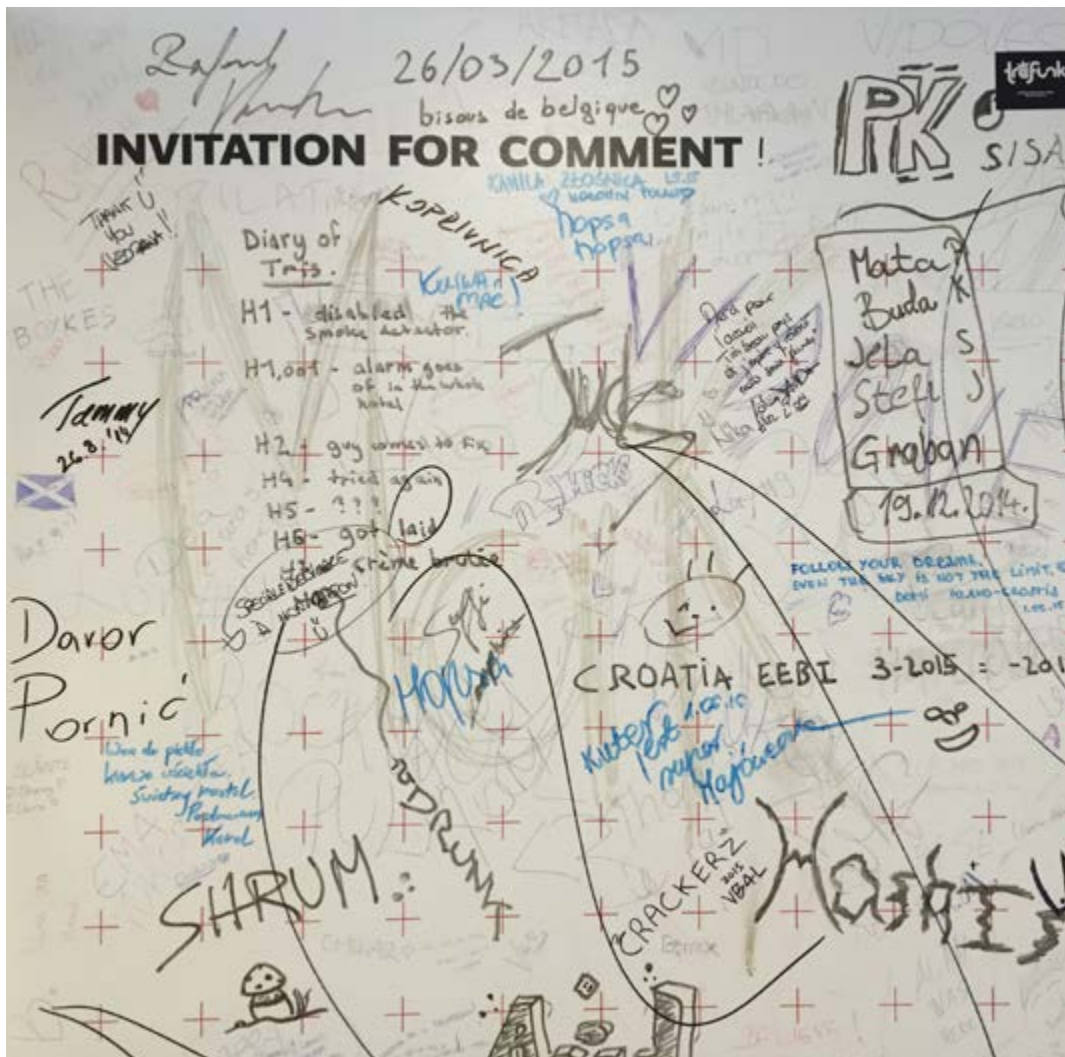
FACILITIES

Besides the rooms the hostel has a nice sized common room with a few bean bags, a big plasma screen TV to watch movies or play games on their Playstation 4.

In the basement of the hostel there is a nice cafe with outdoor terrace. The cafe serves a range of hot or cold snacks, drinks, tea or coffee. You can enjoy breakfast here for a small fee.

Any drawbacks?

The hostel lacks in atmosphere and is really quiet. If you are looking for a hostel to chillout, catchup on sleep and relax then this hostel is perfect for you. If you are looking to socialise and meet people, you might find it tough. This is an area the hostel could improve on. The other key factor that I've mentioned already is the location. If you can get over that, then you will be happy in this hostel.





WHAT MAKES THIS A LUXURY HOSTEL

This is a great hostel in not a very good location. The rooms are fantastic here - very clean and comfortable. You are guaranteed a good nights sleep if you stay here. The staff are friendly and helpful. It's a nice hostel to chill in and relax. If they could work a little more on the atmosphere and organise more events, it could be a really cool hostel.

FACTBOX

Prices in a 6 bed dorm start from €21 a night or €62 for a double. These can vary according to season so always try and book in advance to get the best possible price.

114.Brigade 10, 21000, Split, Croatia



BOUTIQUE HOSTEL FORUM ZADAR

A room with a view. A place to chat. Excellent free Wi-Fi to do it online. Plus they will treat you to pancakes and insider tips about Zadar. Welcome to the Boutique Hostel Forum.



LOCATION

The location of this hostel is fantastic. You are overlooking the ancient Roman Forum, which is right in the heart of the old town. Nikola Basic's fabulous 'singing sea organ' by the quay is just a short walk away.

ROOMS AND BATHROOMS

The hostel colours of blue and orange figure prominently in the design of this hostel. 'Zadar blue' as it is called reflects the cobalt blue sky above and the crystal clear sea below. The Orange colour reflects the colour of the sunset here, referred to as the most beautiful in the world by Hitchcock.

Boutique Hostel Forum has rooms for all types of guests. They have excellent 4-bed dormitories with a private shower and toilet. The dorms are in the style of the Japanese capsule rooms. With pull down blinds you pretty much have your own space in your own pod. With two plug points, reading lights and a mirror (a new feature for me)- these some of the nicest bunk beds you will find on your travels.

If you are travelling with loved ones, you have the choice of the more intimate private twin rooms. The private rooms on the top floor have amazing panoramic views of the forum and the sprawling Adriatic sea in the distance. All rooms have air conditioning, linen and fresh towels included in the cost. Private twins include a mini bar, safe, telephone and a TV. Besides the eye catching design the other wonderful feature of the rooms are the amazing views onto the Roman Forum. 3000 years of history, from the Romans to the Venetians, right in front of your eyes.

If I was to make a quibble about the rooms is that they are on the compact side. There's not a great deal of space in the room for keeping your luggage.

FACILITIES

The hostel has a nice common area where you can watch movies or checkout the latest sports on the plasma screen TV sitting in the grandstand auditorium. There is also a billiards table to play on.

There is also a nice sized kitchen which is available for guests to use. Plus there is a

nice outdoor terrace where you can chill with a book.

Another star feature of the hostel is their breakfast. Guests who choose the four bed dormitory receive a free breakfast packed to go. Breakfast is delivered to the rooms early in the morning. Breakfast in bed- I don't know many hostel that offers this. I stayed in their private twin room and enjoyed their all you can eat breakfast buffet. With a great selections of meats, cheeses, breads, burek, juices, yoghurts and coffee- this is a breakfast not worth missing.

Special mention must go to Martina and her team here: they were helpful, friendly, and accommodating. They all speak excellent English and will also give you an excellent crash course in Croatian phrases, things to do, etc... Plus they had some excellent recommendations for places to eat and drink locally. Reception is open 24 hours.

Other key things to share with you. Wi-Fi is free and works well throughout the hostel. The hostel has 2 parking places which they charge € 10 per day. The parking lot is located 100m from the hostel. There is also the possibility of doing your laundry here for a small fee. Power adapters can be loaned from reception when needed.





WHAT MAKES THIS A LUXURY HOSTEL

Of all the cities I visited in Croatia, Zadar was a big surprise. The hostel was a big surprise too. I loved the colours. The design and style of the rooms are up there with the best luxury hostels in this book. Beds were comfortable, very clean. The hostel is very secure too. Staff here are really welcoming and made us feel at home. Plus in terms of location, this hostel is unbeatable. Loved getting up early and going for a walk in the old town when it was completely empty. Plus in terms of hostel rooms with a view, few can beat the view you will get here. Visit soon.

FACTBOX

Prices in a 4 bed dorm start from €21 a night or €40 for a double. These can vary according to season so always try and book in advance to get the best possible price.

Široka ul. 20, 23000, Zadar, Croatia

SWANKY MINT HOSTEL ZAGREB

Mixing elegance with post industrial chic, this hostel is a decadent and very swanky affair in the heart of Zagreb. Think gorgeous sun terraces, beautifully designed rooms with playful colours, fun and friendly staff plus a bar hugely popular with locals. On top of that, a new outdoor pool and bar is launching this month. Welcome to Croatia's most exciting luxury hostel.



LOCATION

Swanky Mint is located in a 19th century dry cleaning and textile-dye factory on the main street Ilica, just a 5-minute walk from the main drag of Zagreb. A clutch of great bars and cafes are clustered around the hostel so you are in a pretty perfect location. Every Sunday, just around the corner on Britanski trg aka the 'British Square' you have an excellent open-air flea market.

ROOMS AND BATHROOMS

Swanky Mint offers guests a choice of rooms to suit your budget. If you are travelling with family and friends then the beautifully designed self-catering apartments are good value. The apartments come with a living space cum sofa-bed, small kitchenette and a double bed on the mezzanine level.

The hostel also has 4 very stylish double bed private rooms with colourful ensuite bath-rooms.

All of the doubles and apartments are equipped with satellite TV, AC and private bath-rooms.

There are also two spacious 8-bed dorms, one 9-bed dorm, a 6-bed dorm and a 4-bed dorm. The dorms all have AC and secured lockers. Most of the beds and furnishings in the rooms have been recycled. For example the dorms with bunks were built from chipboard. The bed in my double room was made from wooden pallets.

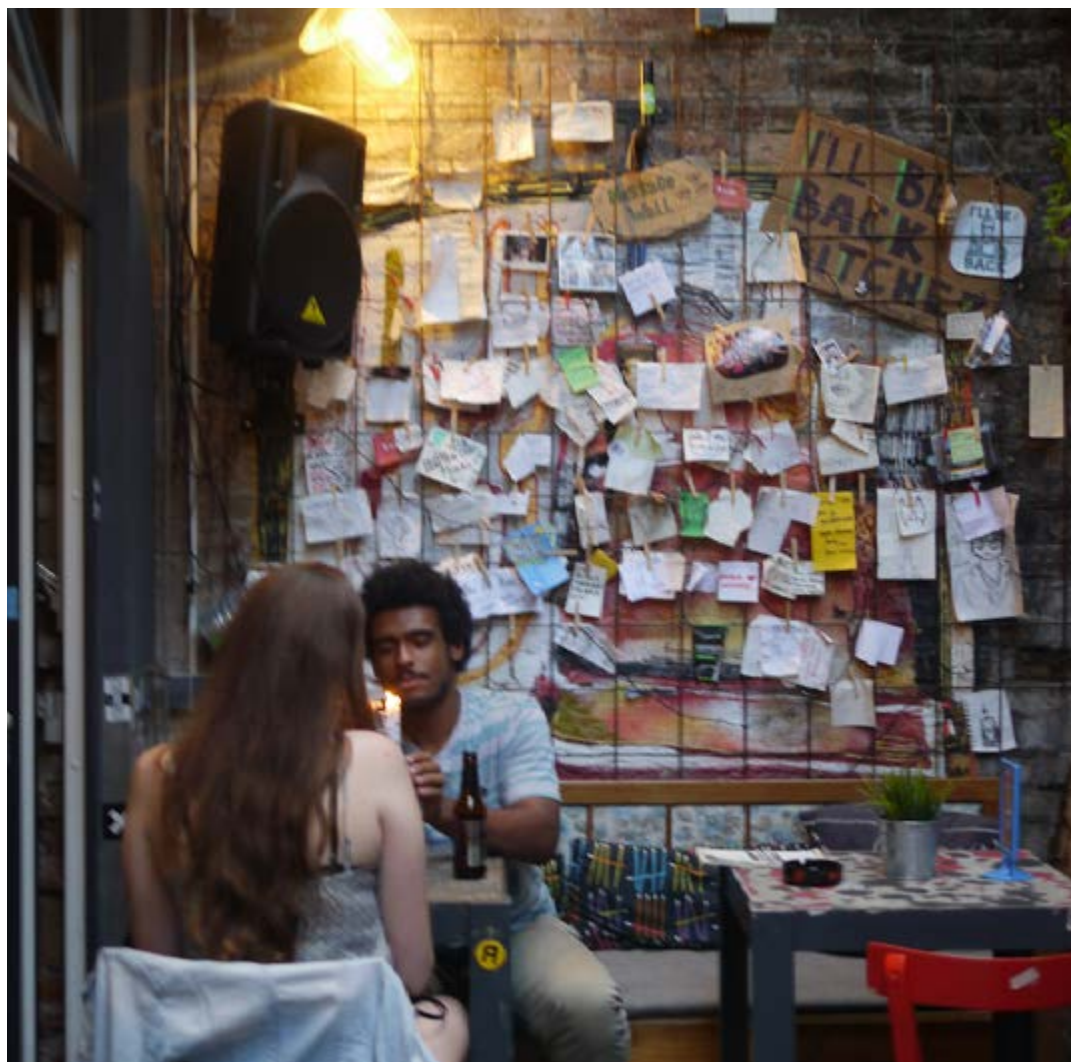
All the usual things are free including Wi-Fi, linens, towels, lockers, keycard security.

FACILITIES

I love the design and how they've incorporated the heritage of the building into the hostel. Exposed brickwork, pipes and steel beams are a nod towards the former incarnation while remnants of old machinery from the old drying factory make an appearance in the courtyard like the huge rolling machine.

All guests are accorded a proper Croatian welcome with a potent shot of the traditional Rakija drink. Fiery stuff.

The meeting point for hostel guests and



locals is the wonderful onsite Swanky bar where the party never stops. Hosting concerts, live DJ sets, art events makes the bar the star of the Swanky show. Spilling outside into a sunny outdoor terrace with lots of tables and cosy corners for drinks and food, this place is always buzzing-morning noon and night. Hostel staff come and take your order so you don't have to queue and wrestle your way to the bar to get a drink. The danger of staying here is that you may never leave the bar and see anything in Zagreb.

Beside the outdoor bar there is a fully equipped kitchen with comfortable sofas. Hostel grows from strength to strength. This August the hostel announced the completion of a smaller pool and two new terraces in the hostel backyard.

Staff are experienced and very attentive towards your needs. They really made us feel at home.

Costing just 35 kn, the hostel serves at the bar the mother of all hostel breakfasts. You can choose from a menu of either toasted sandwiches, croissants or burek (delicious stuffed cheese pastry) and in addition tuck into their breakfast buffet which includes cereals, waffles, bread, jams, nutella plus yoghurt, juices, coffee or tea.

Other cool features to take note of: in the front courtyard there is a rent-a-bike station, hair dryers and adapters can be hired free of charge at reception, there is an airport transfer service (ask via e-mail in advance) plus there is a secure luggage storage option if you check in early or are leaving late.

Hostel also runs a bunch of acclaimed walking tours ranging from their free walking tour of Zagreb to steampunk-inspired journeys into Croatia's science history or investigating the underground abandoned military complexes in the Medvednica mountain area outside of the city.



WHAT MAKES THIS A LUXURY HOSTEL

The hostel claims that you will 'Come as a guest but leave as a friend', a phrase often abused in tourism literature. A rare exception can be made in the case of the Swanky Mint Hostel, which is a really fun, very cool hostel with a lot of soul. Just like Zagreb, the hostel is a hard place to leave and one that I definitely hope to revisit soon.

FACTBOX

Dormitory beds start from €11.80 in low season rising to €17 in high season. Private rooms (double or twin) will cost you €50 in low season rising upto €70 in high season. Breakfast excluded.

Ilica 50, Zagreb 10000, Croatia

MAIN SQUARE HOSTEL ZAGREB

Been on the road for a while? Partying your ass off and need to chillout in Zagreb for a few days? If you are searching for something quiet, clean yet modern in Zagreb, then look no further than the Main Square Hostel.



LOCATION

Main Square Hostel in Zagreb is ideally located right in the heart of Zagreb's city centre, very close to the main square called Ban Jelačić Square. If you are in the city as a visitor it is the perfect place to start your day's wanderings. Most of Zagreb's top highlights are a stone's throw away and can be reached on foot. The hostel is placed in a very cosy neighbourhood, on Tkalčićeva Street. There are an abundance of coffee shops, eateries (Amelie for cakes and coffee) boutiques and galleries nearby.

ROOMS AND BATHROOMS

The dorm rooms here are some of the nicest I have seen in a hostel. They follow the style of the Japanese capsule beds, which give you a lot of privacy. In each pod you have access to a power socket, reading light and a shelf to keep your coins. The bed mattress is comfortable. The rooms are clean and well maintained. Having been opened just over a year ago, it still feels very new and fresh. The double ensuite room is spacious with plasma screen TV and a private balcony offering great views of the

city skyline. The ensuite bath-room has a large fantastic rain shower.

One of the other original features of this hostel are the wonderful illustrations by local illustrator Ivana Kuzmic. The hostel was designed to be a guide through the city of Zagreb. At the entrance area you notice these tram tracks stencilled along the floor that lead you to the bedrooms. Each bedroom is named after a popular tramline, like Mirogoj for example. Inside each room you will have Ivana's wonderful illustrations of the trams themselves and icons, landmarks from each neighbourhood that give you a unique perspective of the city.

FACILITIES

Hostel staff are really friendly and helpful. Reception is open 24 hours plus if you are travelling to or from the airport, they have a shuttle service.

I would call this a social yet quiet hostel. After 11pm, there is a policy of silence to ensure all the guests can settle down to a good nights sleep. The lobby area doubles up as the common room. There is a big

plasma screen TV to watch movies with other guests. They also have a huge fridge filled with cheap local beers. All guests receive a welcome drink on arrival.

They have a huge washing machine and dryer. For as little as €4 you can get your clothes washed and dried. Other things worth sharing: Wi-Fi is free and works well here. The linen and towels are free for all guests. Plus you can hire bikes here if you wish. If you are checking in early or late, they have space to store your luggage. Also if you have any valuables, they have secure lockers at reception for you to store them.

If I was to pick out any negatives, at the moment there are no kitchen facilities and as a result, no breakfast on offer for guests. However given that you are in the main square of Zagreb, there are a tonne of affordable and great places to eat here. The hostel has plans in the near future for creating a new lounge space, kitchen and offering breakfast to guests so stay tuned.



WHAT MAKES THIS A LUXURY HOSTEL

This is a small but really nice, chilled out hostel. The staff are really attentive, helpful and friendly. The rooms are fantastic in terms of comfort, cleanliness and design. Plus you can't get a better location in Zagreb. This hostel is geared towards travellers looking for a clean, comfortable bed and a quiet, good night's sleep.

FACTBOX

Sleeping in the 8-bed dorm in the high season will cost 18 Euros per night per person; 55 Euros per room for the 2-bed room with ensuite bath.

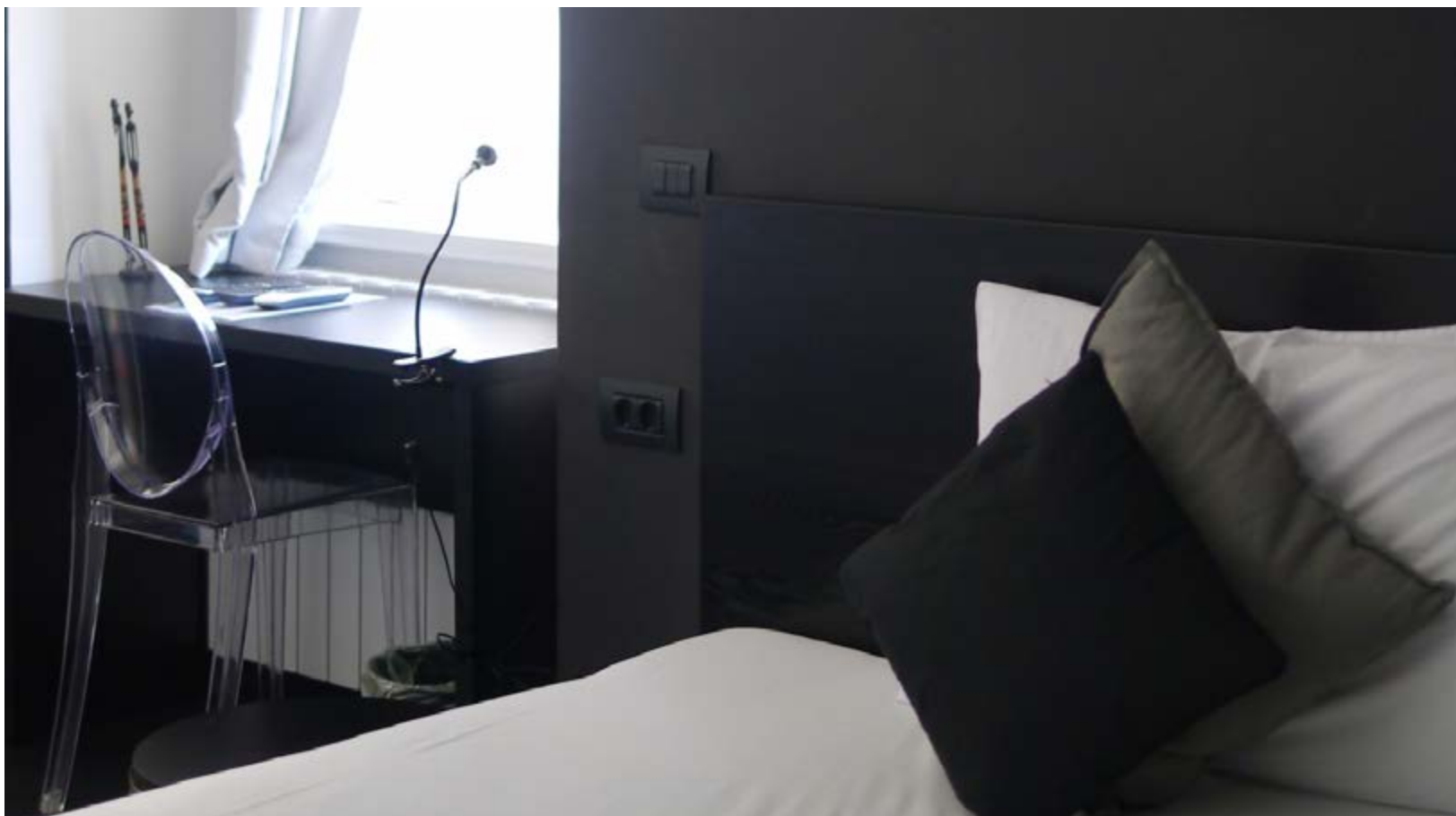
Radićeva 6, Zagreb.





HOSTEL 1W RIJEKA

Beautifully designed rooms, wonderful team of friendly staff and a great location right in the heart of the city make Hostel 1W Rijeka the perfect base for exploring Rijeka and the surrounding area.



LOCATION

The hostel is in the heart of Rijeka, just a 20 meter stroll from the Korzo, the town's main pedestrian zone. It is only a few minutes away from shopping centres with shops and restaurants that serve local food. All the key attractions of Rijeka: St. Vitus Cathedral, the city tower, the city gate, Croatian National Theatre 'Ivan Zajc', the Korzo 'fountain', 'Trsat' castle and more are within close proximity. Plus the hostel is just 300 metres from the bus station and only a 10 minute walk from the railway station.

ROOMS AND BATHROOMS

Where the Hostel 1W clearly excels is the design and style of rooms. I love the dorms here especially. Backpackers can choose from a choice of 8-bed mixed dorm, 6-bed mixed dorm and there is also a female only 6-bed dorm. Each of the dorms have individual themes that include North America, Asia and Australia. I like how the dorms have been designed taking into account, the needs of travellers. The female dorm for example has its own make-up corner. In each of the dorms there's a private

cubicle for changing your clothes. Plus there is a couple of comfy chairs in each dorm which has been designated as the 'reading corner'. All the beds in dorms have a privacy curtain, reading light and power point. Each bed comes with a large storage locker which you can close and open with your keycard. Plus all the dorms have air conditioning.

There are plenty of communal toilets and showers for guest use. Showers are really powerful. Plus they are cleaned on a regular basis.

Privates are more hotel style rooms geared towards couples, families and business travellers. Privates are all ensuite. All rooms have cable TV, hair dryer and a desk.

Bed linen and towels are included in the price.

FACILITIES

Facilities here include a 24-hour reception. There is free, really good Wi-Fi available in all the rooms.

Guests can request airport transfers in advance.

You have a mini breakfast of a croissant and coffee. For a fee of 45 kn you can order a full continental breakfast that includes cereals, bread, juices and coffee.

The common room is quite small here but it has a plasma TV where guests can congregate. Staff gather all guests in the evening in the reception for a free welcome drink of Rakija. It is a simple but great way of getting to meet fellow guests and breaking the ice.

There is also a small kitchen available for guest use with tea and coffee making facilities

Staff here were fantastic and really helpful; always with a smile and happy to help.



WHAT MAKES THIS A LUXURY HOSTEL

I think Hostel 1W has one of the nicest dorms I have ever seen in a hostel. That is one good reason to visit and sleep here. The other great thing about this hostel is the staff: really warm, fun loving people. I loved the welcome drinks in the evening. Being a small hostel it was really easy to meet other guests.

Tourism is the people's business and this is where hostels like Hostel 1w are the future of the hostelling industry. This hostel is one very good reason to visit Rijeka. I hope you visit soon

FACTBOX

A Bed in a 8 bed dorm starts at 105 kn while a private room costs 370 kn (300kn for a single person)

Ul. Erazma Barčića 4, 51000, Rijeka, Croatia

SERBIA

HOSTEL BONGO BELGRADE

Perfect staff. Great location. Great colours.
Homely vibe. This sums up in a few words
Serbia's top rated hostel, Hostel Bongo.





THE LOCATION

One of the best things about this hostel is its great location. It only takes a few minutes to walk to some of the most popular local sites such as the main pedestrian street Knez Mihailova, Republic Square and many of Belgrade's beautiful historic buildings.

This city is known for its nightlife and there are a number of cool bars and clubs within walking distance. Head to Hostel Bongo, make some new friends and then venture out to experience the city.

ROOMS AND BATHROOMS

Hostel Bongo offers six modern colourful bedrooms, each with their own cool unique style. Bathrooms are spotless and very clean. The bathroom floors are heated which is perfect for those long cold Belgrade winters. Everything is designed to be functional but fun. The beds are comfortable with a great mattress. There are tons of plugs in each room (including one right next to the bed), which is great if you have like me (smartphone, camera battery) multiple gadgets to charge. There are little reading lights next to each bed. Linen and towels are included.

FACILITIES

There is a spacious common room with TV and fridge available for guest use. There is a fully equipped communal kitchen that guests can use. Eating out in Belgrade is very cheap so I doubt you will be spending

too much time here. There is also free tea and coffee. A nice feature of the hostel is the backyard garden where you can chill with a pint of Jelen pivo and have a barbecue.

Laundry is also available for a few euros. The Wi-Fi worked perfectly throughout the hostel. They also have a laptop in the common room for guests to use. If you arrive early or checkout late, there is a storage room to store your luggage.

The outstanding feature of this hostel is their friendly and welcoming staff. Whether it is looking up bus times or sharing tips of their favourite places to eat, they really make an attempt to make their guests feel at home. Plus when they keep offering you free rakija, how can you not love this hostel?

- TOP TIP -

Make sure to check out a free walking tour of Belgrade to see the sites and hear the history. Also, don't miss the steaks at a local Italian spot called Casa Nova. It's one of the best and most affordable steaks I enjoyed during several months in Europe. Head to Bearland Pub for a local beer or Jazz Café Bar Sinatra for live music and cocktails. There are also some great spots to sit down, eat, drink and people watch.



WHAT MAKES THIS A LUXURY HOSTEL

Guests love this hostel for its quirky colourful homely vibe and welcoming staff. Location is really close to everything. See the sites, eat great food and then head out for the hostel bar crawl to experience Belgrade's famous nightlife. Free extras like hair dryer and rakija add the icing on the cake.

FACTBOX

Dorms start around €13 and privates start around €36.

Terazije 36, Beograd, Serbia

BOSNIA

FRANZ FERDINAND HOSTEL SARAJEVO

The cool WWI art throughout this hostel is a really interesting take on design. Plus the beautiful rooms, top notch facilities and great staff make this one of Eastern Europe's most unique hostels.





THE LOCATION

Franz Ferdinand is a brand new hostel in the heart of Old Sarajevo, just a one-minute walk from some of the main pedestrian walkways. Enjoy the sounds of church bells, calls to prayer and languages from many cultures in this eclectic and historic city.

Order some local cevapi sausages at one of the many outdoor patio restaurants, people watch and make some new friends. This is a very social city with some kind and caring locals.

ROOMS AND BATHROOMS

Mattresses are very comfortable and new. The bunkbeds are set up like pods with circular entrances to maximise privacy. Large lockers, reading lights, personal power outlets and nicely designed en-suite bathrooms make this a great location for flashpackers and back-packers alike.

Bathrooms are big with new furnishings and they're cleaned regularly. They're well designed and super nice.

FACILITIES

Wi-Fi is fast and free. Breakfast is cooked each morning with eggs, toast, fruit, coffee and tea. It's a great place to meet new people and relax to plan your day. Many people also left extra fruit, snacks and beer out as well. Beer is very good and inexpensive in Sarajevo.

Though the hostel doesn't have a bar, it has a great common space where travellers will bring drinks or food and relax and talk to one another during the day and evenings.



- TOP TIP -

Make sure to check out a free walking tour. Also, there are many beautiful hikes in the surrounding hills. Take some time to learn about the Siege of Sarajevo and consider a paid tour learning about the Siege.

Experience the local culture of having food, coffee or a beer outdoors seated next to countless locals and other travellers.

WHAT MAKES THIS A LUXURY HOSTEL

I met two great groups of people during my time at Franz Ferdinand and have remained in touch with them. The atmosphere here is inviting and conducive to making new friends. The staff were really great and helpful and booked some transportation and tours for me. The design of this hostel is very quirky and original. Like the city, the hostel is very affordable and offers a ton of great experiences. A really cool hostel.

FACTBOX

Cost of rooms is around €10-15 for a dorm or €50 for a private with a double bed. Prices are more expensive in the summer months and cheaper October through April.

Jelica 4, Sarajevo, Bosnia And Herzegovina

BULGARIA

HOSTEL OLD PLOVDIV BULGARIA



THE LOCATION

Hostel Old Plovdiv is located in the heart of the beautiful old city, about a half km from the Maritsa River and lots of great local restaurants. Antique murals, huge common spaces with well-preserved wooden furniture and a cool bar make this place impossible not to fall in love with. Wandering through the historic area, you won't want to leave. This is a great city off the beaten path for many travellers, which adds character and allows the city to maintain much of its authenticity.

ROOMS AND BATHROOMS

The hostel has a charming, antiquated feel. Built in 1868, the house belonged to a rich local tobacco merchant. The wooden columns of the house are constructed from Lebanese cedar and the marble in the bathrooms is from Greece. Functional antique furniture, dried flowers on the pillow, black and white family photos and unique lamps make this one of the most unique hostel rooms you will sleep in during your travels in Europe. The bathrooms and showers here are spotless and well maintained. The cool feature about the dorms here is that they offer individual beds and no bunkbeds. Free linen and towels is included in the price for all guests.

FACILITIES

Lockers are inside antique suitcases, a nice touch. Free Wi-Fi is throughout the building. Towels and linen are included. The best part? The free breakfast! Local meats and cheeses, bread, jam, fresh coffee and tea.

This is well worth a trip on its own. The back garden is fab, with its outside kitchen, bistro sets, trees and fountain. Wi-Fi signal is great all over the house. There are PCs in the common area for guest use.



- TOP TIP -

Plovdiv is a fun and beautiful place to spend time during your trip to Bulgaria. Under-travelled and well worth getting lost in, you'll enjoy time away from tourists and really get to know this place. Make sure to wander the beautiful old cobblestone streets and take in the beauty. If you pass by any locals playing chess, at least watch them for a while. At best, they'll invite you to play. It doesn't matter if you speak Bulgarian or not!

Enjoy!

WHAT MAKES THIS A LUXURY HOSTEL

There isn't anything else you'll need here. Everything is included, no additional things to buy. The whole design and the rooms in the hostel are unique and will leave a lasting impression.

Lots of nice touches and the breakfast here is one of the best hostel breakfasts you will find in Europe. Hostel Old Plovdiv blows other hostels away. It's a place you'll long remember.

FACTBOX

Dorms start around €10 and private singles for €25 and doubles for €55.

3 Chetvarti yanuari Str, Plovdiv, Bulgaria



RUSSIA

SOUL KITCHEN JUNIOR ST PETERSBURG

Not only did this award-winning hostel exceed my expectations (and ruin me for future hostel stays NOT at Soul Kitchen Junior), St Petersburg itself did the same. The hostel owners, both young and fun, truly want you to have the best experience possible, in their accommodation and their city. I definitely left wishing I had more time in both.



THE LOCATION

The Soul Kitchen Junior hostel is located near the center of St Petersburg along the Moika River, and within walking distance of many tourist destinations. From here, you can easily walk to St Isaac's Cathedral, the State Hermitage Museum, and any number of bars and restaurants. The nearest metro stations include the Spasskaya, the Sadovaya, and the Admiralteyskaya.

ROOMS AND BATHROOMS

Dorm rooms come in mixed dorm or female only options. They range from 5-8 beds, many inset in their own nooks and enclosed with a curtain for optimal privacy. Each bed is double sized with plenty of room for two people (if you desire), adorned with reading lamps and power outlets. The mattresses are comfortable, the spaces feel private, and you never have to worry about bright room lights blinding you at 3am thanks to a universal control switch at reception that dims all the lights at night (nice perk!).

Underneath the beds are backpack storage lockers with power outlets inside for securely charging your electronics while you're out and about, or sleeping. These are very flash packer friendly facilities!

Private rooms come in all sizes: double bed ensembles (with and without private shower), luxury ensembles (with fireplace and shower), and family private rooms (shared showers). The ensembles can sleep up to 3 people, while the family room can sleep up to 5.

The family private rooms feature 2 double beds and a single bed. One double bed sits by a window, overlooking the river if you're lucky, while the other is a loft with the single bed underneath. This arrangement provides enough space for up to 5 people, meaning you can have an entire family or travel group in the same room and without feeling like you're on top of everyone's toes. They're cute and quaint, and full of helpful extras like power points on both sides of the bed and a lazy light switch so you can switch off without leaving the comforts of the covers.

All rooms are secure with key card entry.

FACILITIES

The Wi-Fi is free and plentiful at Soul Kitchen Junior, running off multiple routers for best access in all parts of the hostel. Guests also have access to community computers in the lounge room, and free calls to international landlines in 56 different countries.

The TV lounge is the ultimate hangout space, featuring a custom-built couch (with power points conveniently placed throughout) in front of a TV that brings in about 1000 channels.

Breakfast is not included, but the kitchen is so beautiful, inviting, and well equipped that self-catering becomes yet another perk of staying at the hostel - honestly! There is also free tea and coffee available 24/7.

Additional features include:

- Free umbrellas to borrow on rainy days
- Free towels and linen
- Three common rooms for relaxing or meeting guests
- Access to games and books in the lounges
- Modern and rustic interior design that boasts bringing the old building in with the new
- Double doors between TV lounge and dorm rooms to provide extra sound proofing
- Ample bathroom space with 4 shared and 10 private facilities throughout

- TOP TIP -

Visit during the White Nights! In mid to late June, the sun sets for literally only a few hours, meaning the days of sun and fun are longer. For those who only get a few days in this amazing city, this is really the optimal way to pack in more exploring - because St Petersburg deserves it, especially in the summer. During the White Nights, the entire city stays active to all hours with various street activities and festival events. Night boat tours along the Neva River become a bit more magical. Shops and restaurants keep longer hours as well.





WHAT MAKES THIS A LUXURY HOSTEL

Soul Kitchen Junior has taken all the annoyances and quirks of hostel life and provided the ultimate accommodation solution. The dorm rooms provide enough space and privacy to make you forget you're not the only one in the room, and the private rooms with river views and loft beds for friends (who still need a little extra space) make you forget you're not actually staying in a trendy boutique hotel.

As a luxury hostel, staying at Soul Kitchen Junior is an experience, not just a place to lay your head. No wonder Soul Kitchen won the Hostelworld award for the best small hostel in the world and Europe.

Everything from security to convenience to interior decor has been customized for the traveller who wants a safe and fun, community-based environment with the true feel of luxury - perfect after long travel days and sightseeing adventures in foreign lands.

FACTBOX

A bed in a 8-bed mixed dorm starts at around €18 while a double room starts at around the €60 mark.

**62/2 app 9 Moika Embankment
190000 St. Petersburg, Russia**

LATVIA

TWO WHEELS HOSTEL RIGA

This is a wonderfully cosy little hostel, which feels like it has a lot of stories to tell. It seemed more like I was staying at a friend's family house instead of a hostel.



THE LOCATION

Two Wheels Hostel is in a little side street of a green area of Riga called Zemgale, within walking distance of the city centre. From the airport (about 5 miles away), you can catch bus 22 to the 'Melnasila iela' stop and walk to 12 Baložu iela, where you'll see an old wooden two-floored building.

ROOMS AND BATHROOMS

Each of the ten bedrooms at Two Wheels are all designed individually and named after different cities around the world, like New York, Tehran and London. There are plenty of unique design touches like batik print curtains, local Latvian artwork, colourful rugs and eclectic ornaments scattered around the surfaces, as well as thick blankets at the end of the bed for added warmth.

Most rooms have a private bathroom: a wet room with glass walls (which might be a little disconcerting if you're staying with a friend!) and a great power shower. Each room also has multiple power sockets

and various surfaces (little end tables and wicker chairs) to balance possessions, plus drawers and wardrobes in lieu of lockable lockers.

FACILITIES

Each morning there's a buffet breakfast laid out on the reception bar from 9am - 11am which includes toast, boiled eggs, plates of cold cut meat, yoghurt, cereals, black filter coffee and hot water for tea, pitchers of orange juice, and lots of fruit.

The hostel's Wi-Fi has a good, fast connection, and although the reception area – which doubles as a common area – mainly features wooden tables and chairs, there are also comfy armchairs and sofas dotted around the hostel's two floors.

There's a small balcony with little tables and parasols, which is a great place to watch the sun going down while enjoying an ice-cold local Latvian beer – many of which are stocked behind the Two Wheels bar. Two Wheels has motorbikes for rent and the hostel itself is motorbike themed, with

classic bike parts mounted on the walls and hiding in corners.

- TOP TIP -

Riga has a wonderful cafe culture in amongst its striking Art Nouveau architecture, so it's worth spending some hours wandering the streets before stopping for coffee and cake somewhere.





WHAT MAKES THIS A LUXURY HOSTEL

The building of Two Wheels is wonderfully rustic, with creaking wooden floorboards, a twisting staircase and sprawling pots of green ferns trailing their leaves from windowsills. It's a quirky, interesting space that combines historical Latvian architecture with a familial touch, and the resulting rooms are secluded and cosy.

FACTBOX

One double/twin room: £52 a night.
Triple room: £64 a night. Single bed in
6-bed dormitory room: £14 a night

**12 Baložu iela (Balozu Street)
LV1058 Riga, Latvia**

Phone: + 371 6746 8884

LITHUANIA



DOWNTOWN FOREST HOSTEL & CAMPING VILINIUS

Downtown Forest Hostel & Camping turned out to be the perfect place to stay in Vilnius. It beautifully reflects the Lithuanian soul and their love for nature as well.

THE LOCATION

Downtown Forest Hostel & Camping is located a short walk away from main Vilnius attractions yet is in the best district of the city - Uzupis (known also as a self-declared independent republic). It's the artistic and alternative heart of the capital where you simply want to hang out. Since Vilnius is a rather small city you can easily walk everywhere, the main bus and train station is some 20-30 minutes away.

ROOMS AND BATHROOMS

There's a variety of comfortable rooms to choose from: different size of dorms or private rooms (both ensuite and with shared bathroom). They are equipped with storage facilities (dorms have lockers), some of them even have a balcony. All the rooms are bright and spacious, with cozy interiors.

As soon as you step into the hostel you feel at home! The hostel is also the most downtown located place to put your tent or camper.

FACILITIES

Free Wi-Fi is available on the whole property as well as complimentary tea and coffee in the morning. For breakfast you can buy a freshly baked croissant (€ 1,20 per piece) and this is the perfect way to start your day as the pastry is to die for.

In the summer time the terrace is transformed into the bar. Every now and then there are concerts happening outside the hostel. Locals come here to have their own BBQ or chill. That makes the place perfect for meeting locals.

When days get cold you can relax in the small yet lovely common room reading one of the books from the exchange shelf and sipping a local craft beer that can be bought at the hostel.

- TOP TIP -

Vilnius might have the prettiest old town with countless number of churches but the key to enjoy the city is to look for the alternative and quirky things around. And there are plenty of them: Uzupis district, street art, cute little angels or incredible cemeteries just to name a few.





WHAT MAKES THIS A LUXURY HOSTEL

Downtown Forest is one of the most beautiful and cozy hostels you will ever see. Even if it's in the heart of the capital city it feels like a nature getaway, so calm and quiet. It has everything a traveller might wish for and on top of that the atmosphere is unbeatable!



FACTBOX

Bed in dorms start at €7/night, doubles with shared bathroom at 30€/night and doubles with private bathroom at €38/night.

**Paupio g. 31A, Vilnius Old Town,
LT-11341 Vilnius, Lithuania**

GREECE

CITY CIRCUS HOSTEL ATHENS

Billed as 'alternative travellers space for the restless voyager, the escape artist and the life acrobat', whatever your purpose, City Circus is the perfect spot to rest your wandering feet and dreamy head.



THE LOCATION

City Circus Hostel in Athens is a modern hostel housed in a neoclassical mansion that is part of an elegant, nostalgia filled 19th century neighbourhood. The neoclassical elements that have been preserved in the hostel include the frescoed ceilings in the dining area and lounge and the iron balconies.

It is a 4-minute walk from the nearest metro station. It is a mere 2 kms away from the 5th-century Acropolis and the Acropolis Museum.

ROOMS AND BATHROOMS

The hostel rooms here are fully air-conditioned, light and airy with lovely hardwood floors.

Rooms range from 4 bed mixed and female ensuite, a 6 and 8 bed mixed ensuite, a 6 bed female dorm, a budget double room, a double loft, a double standard, a double deluxe, a superior 4 bed ensuite, a superior double and twin standard.

The mattresses are super-comfortable; there is a provision for a hair dryer and lockers too.

FACILITIES

Some of the perks of staying at the City Circus Hostel Athens include 24h reception, free Wi-Fi, air-conditioning, luggage storage, washing and drying clothes service, scanning and printing services, laptops to use upon request, book borrowing and board games. There is plenty here to keep you entertained. There is a common kitchen for you to prepare your own meals.

A continental breakfast buffet is offered complimentary to all guests. One of the loveliest features of the hostel is its laid-back lounge with its beautiful frescoed ceiling. Choose from their extensive DVD library, kick back, relax and watch a movie on their screen projector. Other impressive amenities here include a relaxed rooftop terrace with scenic views of the Acropolis, plus bike rentals and guided city tours.

The hostel has also just made its debut on the Athens gastronomy scene with the launch of their in-house Zampanò restaurant. Inspired by the main character of Federico Fellini's masterpiece 'La Strada',



Zampanò focuses on sourcing fresh, seasonal ingredients and gives Greek cuisine a creative, modern twist. I didn't get a chance to dine here yet but have good reports about the place.

Other key things to share with you: you can avail of tour guides to go on trips and tours or rent your own cars, buses or vans. City maps are available at the reception.

There is a happy hour organised every night, a bar crawl on Saturdays to scout out the Athens pub scene and even wine tastings on Fridays.

Some of the organised tours arranged by the hostel include day trips to Delphi, or the neighbouring islands.



WHAT MAKES THIS A LUXURY HOSTEL

Like life in the Circus, staying here is a non-stop adrenaline rush. Whether you wish to relax and watch a movie, read a book or explore the Athens nightlife scene or just to enjoy a great meal - this hostel has everything. Like a trapeze artist, this hostel walks the fine line between budget and boutique and has created one of Europe's most memorable luxury hostels.

FACTBOX

A bed in a deluxe 6 bed dorm ensuite starts from €21.50 per night, in a 4 bed dorm the same runs to €24.50.

6, Sarri str., Athens 105 53, Greece

SPAIN



U HOSTELS MADRID

A design hostel in a 19th-century palace with its own private cinema room, rooftop terrace, and bar? Welcome to U Hostels, Madrid.

LOCATION

Located in a 19th Century palace, right beside the Alonso Martinez metro station and just a 15-minute walk to Puerta del Sol, U Hostels Madrid is a great base to explore Madrid.

The hostel is located in close proximity to the Malasaña district, which is a rich hive of bars and restaurants and easily one of the most vibrant neighbourhoods in Madrid.

ROOMS AND BATHROOMS

In sync with the rest of the building, the whitewashed rooms have a clean minimalist design that is easy on the eye.

Dorms are air-conditioned and come with private lockers. Bunk beds are custom-made with comfortable mattresses. Each bed comes with a private reading light and power points for charging your gadgets.

You have a choice of dorms with an ensuite bathroom or shared facilities. There is also a female-only dorm.

FACILITIES

U Hostels boasts its own private cinema room. Guests can relax or catch the latest football match or choose a movie from their extensive DVD collection. It's so cosy that you can often find the odd guest dozing away during the day, sleeping off their nocturnal exertions.

Next to the cinema is a nice chill-out zone for guests where they can read a book or plot their travels across Madrid on the huge magnetic wall map of the city.

If you're looking for a quiet drink after a day of seeing the sights, the hostel has an excellent on-site bar with very competitively priced drinks.

Staff members run an excellent programme of daily activities to help guests plug into the city's DNA. From excellent free walking tours to visits to Flamenco bars and pub-crawls, there's something for every type of traveller.

The hostel has recently opened their own basement bar, which is perfect for having an ice cold cerveza at the end of a long day of exploring Madrid's sights. Their weekly karaoke nights are amazing.

The free Wi-Fi is excellent, especially for a hostel of this size, and on each floor there are free computer terminals. There is a nice-sized kitchen for guest use with a fridge to store food items.

For the princely sum of €1 you can order a simple breakfast of toast or churros with orange juice or coffee. If you are feeling a bit more hungry, you can have their big breakfast option for just €3 where you get 4 pieces of toast, coffee, orange juice, ham, cheese, cupcake and fruit.



- TOP TIP -

Choose the six-bed dorm with no bathroom over a four-bed ensuite dorm. It's much more spacious, plus you have a private balcony looking onto the main street. There are tons of bathrooms and showers on each floor.

My other top pick for this hostel are their premium ensuite doubles-very stylish and on par with any boutique 4 star hostel.

Linen is included in the price, and the hostel has free luggage storage.

WHAT MAKES THIS A LUXURY HOSTEL

Many people would prefer to stay central, but I quite liked the offbeat location of the hostel with the metro station at the doorstep. The staff are friendly and helpful. The facilities here are fantastic and in terms of the decor, the hostel is one of the best design hostels I've come across in my travels. A very relaxing and beautiful hostel – for the moment, this is the place to stay when you visit Madrid.

FACTBOX

Dorms start from €15 while doubles are from €50 per room, per night.

Calle Sagasta 22, Madrid 28004, Spain



ROOM 007 CHUECA MADRID

Lively. Vibrant. Colourful. Room 007 Chueca hostel is very much a reflection of its neighbourhood. The rooms are minimalistic and have been tastefully designed by renowned Spanish design group Requena & Plaza. The hostel feels very much like a boutique hotel, not like a hostel. Plus it is home to a fantastic restaurant, Saporem which is popular with locals and tourists alike.



LOCATION

The hostel is in the triangle of Gran Vía, Malasaña and Chueca close to the most popular attractions and monuments of Madrid. You are a 4-minute walk away from the Sevilla metro station, 9 minutes from the Museo del Prado (art museum) and an 11 minute walk away from the Plaza Mayor (city square). You are surrounded by fashionable boutiques, historic tabernas and rooftop bars, great clubs (fabulous jazz club, Bogui is just around the corner on Calle del Barquillo) plus a host of great places to eat.

ROOMS AND BATHROOMS

Room007 Chueca has 32 rooms divided into doubles or dorms of 4 to 11 beds. The coolest dorms here are the spacious duplex rooms with ceiling windows. Every guest has a storage locker that can be opened and closed with your own keycard. Additionally, as is standard with all good hostel dorms, you have a reading light and power point by the bed.

All rooms here are en-suite. Bathroom have power showers. Towels and linen are included in the price for all guests.

FACILITIES

Besides the clean and minimalistic design of the hostel, the other key feature of this place is the roof top terrace. The terrace is adjoined to a fully equipped kitchen and also a chillout lounge area with TV. There are lots of beanbags scattered around to relax on, read a book or if you are feeling more energetic, there is a foosball table where you can enact the bitter Madrid derby: Real Vs Atletico. It is a good place to meet fellow guests. If it's a sunny day which is highly likely in Madrid, you can sit on the outdoor terrace with an ice cold beer or enjoy your breakfast in the morning.

The hostel also has a full lineup of daily events: this includes daily walking tours and pub crawls, flamenco workshops, roller skating, cycling and tapas tasting. Some of these are free.

The hostel's staff is a mix of local and international travellers who all speak English and a number of languages so you should have no issues. I found them to be friendly and very helpful in terms of tips. I couldn't



find the time to do either their walking and pub tours but heard positive things about these tours from fellow guests. Other key things to note. The hostel provides super fast, free Wi-Fi of upto 300 Mbps in all rooms of the hostel. For a small fee of €3, the hostel provides guests with a simple but classic Madrid breakfast of churros, bread and coffee or milk.

The hostel has an excellent in-house restaurant called Saporem. If you want a break from Spanish food and are looking for something modern but varied, this is a good place to visit. Start your meal with one of their excellent mojitos. They do stone baked pizzas and delicious pastas. I enjoyed their chicken curry while my friend had their steak tartar, which he really enjoyed. Great value, great service and a nice ambience - highly recommend.



WHAT MAKES THIS A LUXURY HOSTEL

In terms of design and style, this is a really cool hostel. It has an outstanding location in one of Madrid's coolest neighbourhoods plus features like the rooftop terrace and the in-house Saporem restaurant add to the fun factor.

FACTBOX

A bed in their mixed dorms starts from €15.50 while the doubles are around the €75 mark. Prices may be cheaper or higher according to season.

**Calle Ventura de la Vega, 5, 28014
Madrid, Spain**

Welcome
TOC
MADRID

TOC HOSTEL
MADRID

LOCATION

Located near Puerta del Sol, this hostel is situated in a beautifully preserved heritage building dating from the 19th century. The mixture of classical and modern design definitely gives this hostel the edge.

ROOMS AND BATHROOMS

This hostel offers a choice of rooms based on your needs and budget. If you are on a budget, then their 6 bed dorms are great value. Very stylish and comfortable, each bunk bed comes with their own plug point and reading light. Plus guests here have large storage lockers for storing their belongings. If you are in a group of 4 friends or a family and need some privacy, then their 4-bed rooms are a good choice. I stayed in one of their ensuite double rooms.

The bed was queen sized with a really nice mattress. There was a plug point and reading light beside the bed. The room had air-conditioning which was a relief given that

it was May and already pretty hot in Madrid. I had a peaceful night's sleep. The huge balcony is a nice bonus. There is a separate bathroom and shower cubicle. An opaque glass door separates them from the room so unless you know your travelling partner really well, it can be awkward. The rooms come with free toiletries, toothbrush and toothpaste. In terms of style and looks, it feels much more boutique hotel than hostel.

FACILITIES

The hostel has a really cool onsite bar and lounge. During the day, it is a nice place to have a coffee from the bar and read a book or catch up with friends on Facebook. At night, the place becomes a lot more livelier.

Besides beers, wine and soft drinks they have a nice range of cocktails here on offer. The other aspect I love about the bar lounge area is that original fresco paintings on the ceiling have been preserved giving the place a very regal touch. There is also a pool table in the games room adjoining the

- TOP TIP -

Plaza Mayor Square is only 250m away. This area is packed with bars for tapas and restaurants. It's a good spot to see and be seen. It is a nice introduction to the Spanish atmosphere.

bar. Besides the bar & restaurant, you have access to a kitchen and a nice communal lounge with TV. There's a mini-market on site to buy your essential needs as well as a vending machine for snacks and drinks. The hostel also offers a very generous breakfast buffet at only €5 per person. Other facilities of note: towels, bicycles and hair dryers can be rented directly at the hostel.

My only quibble with this hostel was the lack of atmosphere. It feels more hotel and less hostel. If they can work on this aspect more, then I think it has the ability to be one of the best hostels in Europe.





WHAT MAKES THIS A LUXURY HOSTEL

The location, the design and cleanliness are some of the top features of the hostel. I love the amazing location in Puerta del Sol. The heritage of the building combined with friendly staff make this a great choice for exploring Madrid.

FACTBOX

Dorm bed starts at € 18,50 and a double room starts at €78.

Plaza del Celenque 35, Madrid

CASA GRACIA BARCELONA

As you can tell from the first word 'Casa', the concept of this hostel is all about feeling at home - a 'home in Gracia' - and that's what they focus on offering their guests.



LOCATION

The hostel is centrally located on the grand boulevard of Paseo de Gracia in the neighbourhood of Gracia, close to Gaudi's La Pedrera and Casa Batlló. You are away from the touristy drag of Las Ramblas, Barrio Gothic, and the menace of pickpockets.

ROOMS AND BATHROOMS

Casa Gracia offers a choice of dorm rooms and private bed ensuite rooms, all of which are spacious, cosy and quiet. Bed linen is included in the price and the bathrooms are large and clean. All rooms have en-suite bathrooms.

I stayed at one of their doubles and loved it – with great design and a stunning ensuite bathroom, it was finished to the comfort and standard of a chic four- or five-star boutique hotel.

There are also new apartments in the attached building.

Their superior rooms have balcony and view to 'Paseo de Gracia' Boulevard. There's also a Super Suite with jacuzzi bath including a free package (daily cleaning service, bathrobe and slippers, safety box, welcome pack of fruits and a bottle of wine).

Choose whatever suits your taste and budget.

FACILITIES

The building in itself is not something you would typically associate with a hostel. It's more like an apartment building, which actually was the original idea before the idea of the hostel was born in the owners' minds.

You feel like you're stepping back in time from the moment you walk in through the beautiful wrought-iron gate and then step into the stylish art deco elevator.

The reception area is located in the hostel's brand new restaurant La Paisana. The reception staff are cheerful; check-in is bright and breezy.

Either at check-in or later on in the evening, you'll soon be acquainted with staff. This is part of the hostel's efforts in helping to

create a home away from home experience and looking after their guests' needs.

Minutes after I checked in, a local friend of mine offered me tickets to go to a beach party with some of his friends. It sounded amazing but I realised with three weeks of hostelling and hardly any sleep, I needed to take it easy, so I declined.

Not to worry because later in the evening, the hostel had their own live jazz concert in their basement bar, BIS.

Everyday they had an exciting range of cultural evenings at the hostel: from Microdegustacion Teatral: a series of 4 theatrical plays taking place simultaneously to evenings of Rumba Catalana or Bossanova to photography exhibitions.

There's so much going on here, you'll find it hard to leave the hostel.

The outdoor terrace is another memorable part of staying at Casa Garcia. Lit by candlelight, perfect for warm summer evenings, sit in the cool breeze sipping on a €5 bottle of Rioja wine from the local supermarket and chat to fellow hostel guests for hours on end.

The terrace is also a great place to relax during the day with a book. On Sundays they have a yoga class: €10 for locals but free for guests.

I mentioned earlier La Paisana, their very cool in-house restaurant. On hot summer days you can cool down with fresh, unapasteurized local Moritz beer on tap (€2.20 for a small beer). Or you can try their Vermouth (€2.20). If you're feeling peckish you can pair this with some dishes from their tapas menu like the classic Patatas Bravas (€4.95) or go for an Andalusian style squid served with a lime mayonnaise (€5.95) Their croquettes (€1.50 each) - Jamon Iberico or Anglerfish and prawns are fantastic. This is just a few of many amazing dishes on their menu. On Saturdays they do what they call 'Vrunch'- Vermouth+ Brunch from 12-4pm. Sometimes they'll have some local musicians serenading as you eat. Welcome to the 'gastrocultural' hostel.

My only minor quibble with the restaurant is that the service can be on the slow side.

Otherwise, a lovely place.

Other cool areas in this hostel include their Biblioteca: a library with a large bay window, a set of armchairs and lots of books and magazines to get you thinking: a very stimulating space for the brain and mind.

It is impossible to put into words how cool and fun this hostel is. However, what makes this hostel a great luxury hostel for me is the staff. They made my stay memorable and for me made me feel I was at home.

Rates here are above the median average, but in terms of the experience that you get, I think it's very much worth it.





WHAT MAKES THIS A LUXURY HOSTEL

This is an incredibly beautiful hostel. In terms of design and style, one of the best in the world. With a great calendar of cultural events, wonderful restaurant and basement bar, beautiful outdoor terrace, amazing staff plus living in a cool neighbourhood like Gracia: Casa Gracia is truly one of the best luxury hostels I've stayed in so far.

FACTBOX

Dorms start from €30, doubles from €100 per room.

Passeig de Gràcia 116, 08008, Barcelona, Spain

TOC HOSTEL BARCELONA

A hostel with an outdoor pool and sun terrace in Barcelona? Welcome to the uber cool TOC Hostel Barcelona.



LOCATION

This hostel is in the heart of Barcelona, just 700 m from Plaza Catalunya Square. Metro Universitat is a 2-minute walk from the property and a 25-minute metro ride will take you to Barceloneta Beach. Sagrada Familia is 10 minutes' metro ride away.

ROOMS AND BATHROOMS

Similar to its sister hostel in Madrid and Sevilla, the rooms here are beautifully designed. Whatever budget you are on, there is a room for you here. I am a big fan of their dorm rooms. Bunk beds are comfortable and there is a large locker to store your luggage. If you are travelling with friends or family, the 4 person rooms are a good choice. Premium suites with a private terrace are on par with any boutique hotel. Linen is included in the room costs but requires a €10 deposit. Towels can be hired for €2.

FACILITIES

Known for its warm weather and sunny days, it's perfect that you can spend your time in Barcelona staying in a hostel with a glorious outdoor swimming pool and terrace. They have a bunch of sun loungers available for guests to lie down and sunbathe after having a swim, or just to relax and have a read- you decide.

Other cool feature is their communal area. There are a bunch of Apple iMacs to browse on, a giant screen to watch movies, a pool table, plus they have a library with books, travel guides and magazines. Wi-Fi works really well throughout the hostel.

For €5, they also serve a fantastic continental breakfast buffet here with juices, coffee, bread, croissants, yoghurts, fruit plus also ripe red tomatoes and olive oil so that you can make the essential Barcelona classic: Pan Con Tomate aka tomato bread.

Other key facilities here include a laundry room, a 24-hour 'market' at reception where you can buy drinks and any other essentials plus they have a book exchange facility in the lounge area.





WHAT MAKES THIS A LUXURY HOSTEL

I will let 50 Cent, who recently filmed his own version of MTV Cribs here, sum up why TOC Barcelona is special

"I've travelled the world and have stayed at some of the most insane places but none of them had the same vibe and energy that I found at the hostel in Barça, I never knew hostels could be that dope."

FACTBOX

Bed in a mixed 8-bed dorm starts at €17 and a double ensuite is €80. It costs €114 for a double ensuite with private terrace.

**Gran Via de les Corts Catalanes, 580,
08011 Barcelona, Spain**



SANT JORDI ROCK PALACE BARCELONA

A 20th century modernist palace turned hostel with rooftop pool and a basement nightclub in the heart of Barcelona? Sounds like the absurd figment of someone's imagination. We are after all in the city that was inspired by Gaudi. Welcome to the Sant Jordi Rock Palace.

ROOMS AND BATHROOMS

You have a choice of rooms to stay in, from private doubles to shared dorm rooms at the Rock Palace Hostel. Ensuite rooms have private bathroom and shower facilities. The bunk beds here are very impressive with an individual reading lamp, storage cubby for keeping all your loose coins and keycard, plus an outlet for charging electrical devices. All rooms include large lockers designed to fit big backpacks. Plus all the rooms have air conditioning and are also sound proofed: even rock stars need a peaceful good nights sleep every now and then.

FACILITIES

Every floor is named after world-famous Rock bar/club venues that were key in the history of Rock music like CBGB, Roxy, The Crocodile and The Hacienda. The rock 'n' roll theme continues throughout the hostel: from graffiti covered toilets to a dedicated lounge/museum on the 1st floor, which has some of the greatest guitars of the world hanging on the walls. A stunning Modernista style stained glass window forms the backdrop of the room. The corridors have a collage of rock posters from classic rock concerts and in the basement you have the stencilled faces of the fabulous four staring at you from the walls of the Beatles themed Cavern Club. It's very quirky and rock and roll.

The rock and roll theme continues on the rooftop. The rooftop has a swimming pool and sunbathing area. Swimming pools in hostels are a bit of rarity but in Barcelona you have the fortune of having two beautiful hostels with swimming pools: the other hostel being TOC Barcelona. The pool here has been designed in collaboration with one of the most legendary clubs of Barcelona, Razzmatazz.

The hostel organises group dinners in the evenings where you can try a traditional paella and also drink sangria or other typical local drinks like the refreshing Kalimotxo (red wine and coke) After dinner, everyday the staff take guests on a tour of some of Barcelona's hottest nightclubs like Razzmatazz for example. Best thing is that you get FREE access to these clubs, which can save you a lot of money. I have paid €15-€20 to get into clubs in Barcelona so this tour is amazing and great value. Sant

Jordi has 4 hostels in Barcelona. With all the reps from the hostels and guests from the 4 hostels coming together, you can imagine the atmosphere. If only I was 21. Nevertheless, I had a really cool time and met lots of really cool people at the Cavern on my only night here.

Worth noting that the basement bar and club also has an adjoining fully equipped communal kitchen which you can use to cook meals plus an outdoor terrace to soak in the sun. There's a nearby supermarket.

- TOP TIP -

Head to this hostel if you are ready to meet people and have a good time. The nightlife and food are world famous in Barcelona and the location, vibe and staff here, are meant to help you enjoy every last piece of it. Spanish people are very friendly and hospitable, talk to everyone you meet. Ask them where they eat and drink and this will help you avoid the super touristy spots.





WHAT MAKES THIS A LUXURY HOSTEL

This hostel is designed with ensuring you have fun. With the rooftop pool, basement bar and nightclub and the awesome nightlife tours- this hostel definitely brings out the rock and roll star in you. Staff by the way are fantastic and really helpful. While this is a party palace the rooms are soundproofed to allow you to sleep off all that excitement. Fun factor, location, design and extras are well worth the cost.

FACTBOX

Dorms start around €26, private doubles start around €65.

Carrer Balmes 75, Barcelona, Spain

TOC SEVILLA





LOCATION

Set in the city centre, this innovative hostel, previously an abandoned building dating from the 70's, is a 1-minute walk away from Archivo de Indias tram stop and 300 meters from Seville Cathedral.

ROOMS AND BATHROOMS

The functional, modern 6- to 8-bed single-sex and mixed dorms come with en suite bathrooms, air conditioning and fingerprint access. The private rooms add desks and 102-cm flat-screen TVs with satellite channels, with some having bunk beds. As with TOC Madrid and Barcelona, I stayed in their ensuite double. This is perfect for a couple - you have a large, comfortable bed with a reading light and well-placed plug above your head to charge your gadgets. By the entrance you have a washbasin with free scented handwash, vanity kit, toothbrush and toothpaste. Toilet and shower are in separate cubicles. Plus there is a flat screen 32 inch TV if that's important to you. My room also had a small terrace that directly overlooked the cathedral: pretty amazing view to wake upto.

FACILITIES

A breakfast buffet is served in the cozy guest kitchen. There's a 24/7 market offering light meals and drinks, as well as a relaxed bar. Other amenities include a fabulous mini movie theatre. They have a nice selection of DVD's to choose from at reception. There is also a small but adequate basement kitchen for cooking your own food. There is also a nice outdoor terrace to enjoy a drink.

The hostel also has its very own tapas bar. You choose from traditional tapas like Patatas Bravas, Jamon serrano, croquettes plus traditional local classics like Salmorejo & Remolacha.

The staff here are also a real asset to this hostel. Blanca, Eli and their colleagues were very helpful and took great care of us during our stay.

One thing missing which I've mentioned about other TOC Hostels is the lack of atmosphere. This is something I hope the hostel staff and management of TOC will look into in the near future. Otherwise this is a pretty perfect hostel.





WHAT MAKES THIS A LUXURY HOSTEL

The staff first and foremost, then the design of the reception and rooms, the ace location plus the TOC Tapas bar make this is a great base to choose when visiting Sevilla.

FACTBOX

Bed in a mixed 8-bed dorm starts at €17 and a double ensuite is €80. It costs €114 for a double ensuite with private terrace.

Calle Miguel Mañara, 18-22, 41004 Sevilla, Spain

LA BANDA ROOFTOP HOSTEL SEVILLA

Overlooking Seville cathedral, this hostel is all about the amazing rooftop terrace. Guests come together every evening to watch the sunset over the cathedral, enjoy musical performances from local artists and then tuck into their excellent daily dinners. This hostel is all about socialising, meeting people from all over the world and having a great time.



LOCATION

The hostel is a 2-minute walk from the tree-lined Canal de Alfonso XIII, 0.5 km from Seville Cathedral and 1.6 km from the Alcázar of Seville. Plus just around the corner from the hostel you have a clutch of historic tapas bars like the fantastic Casa Morales.

ROOMS AND BATHROOMS

Being a proper backpacker style hostel, the rooms here are dorms only. They have 7 mixed dorms ranging from 4 to 8 beds. If you're looking for a superior dorm experience then definitely book a bed in one of their boutique dorms, which feature ensuite bathrooms and beautiful handmade wooden beds. All guests have a secure locker to store their stuff. Just remember to bring your own padlock. Plus also worth noting that all the rooms here have air-conditioning, which is important given how hot the summers are in Seville. If you are travelling with family or your partner, then I definitely recommend choosing one of their luxury apartments. The apartments are offsite and just a few hundred yards away. This option allows you to combine the luxury of having your apartment yet being able to take advantage of the social aspects of the hostel like the staff, the common lounge and also their amazing rooftop terrace dinners.

FACILITIES

The hostel is run by 2 brothers and their best mates. The guys all have a lot of passion for music, people and culture and this reflects in the hostel experience. For me you can tell the difference between a bad hostel and a good hostel by their musical tastes and playlists. Luckily for us all the staff here all have varied but excellent taste in music. Must have spent a few hours just chatting to the staff about bands and exchanging notes about must see music festivals.

On the rooftop terrace where all the magic happens, the guys invite local bands to perform in the evenings. One of my abiding memories of my stay here was watching the sunset over the cathedral spires in the distance, while listening to flamenco inspired local band Caye Cayetana, whilst enjoying a scrumptious dinner of rice and

chicken fajitas with other hostel guests. Their daily dinners cost around €5 and are worth every cent.

Conversations with guests and the mojitos or the wine will continue well into the night. These kind of long (hazy) summer evenings, drinking on a beautiful rooftop terrace with people from all over the world and the amazing, surreal sight of the cathedral lit up at night: must rank as one of my favourite hostelling experiences. The hostel staff then take guests on a free tour of some of their favourite haunts: old man bars, ancient sherry bars and smoky local haunts that haven't changed for years- this is not your run of the mill hostel pub crawl. The hostel also organises flamenco nights out- email in advance to check when this takes place.

The staff here are amazing and besides their awesome musical tastes, have great tips to share on the best, authentic places to eat and also places to visit.

Friends of the staff run an excellent free walking tour (tips are welcomed) of Seville's historic sights during the day and also a late evening tour around the City's Jewish Quarter.

Other cool things to mention: they offer a free, generous complimentary breakfast in their downstairs lounge-choice of cereals, breads, jams, nutella, peanut butter (yeah!) plus juices, tea and coffee.

They also have an excellent communal kitchen. However, given how amazing (and cheap) the food is in Seville, plus the great dinners here, I didn't spend any time here.





WHAT MAKES THIS A LUXURY HOSTEL

La Banda is one of those hostels that lives on in you, long after you have departed. With their focus on atmosphere, socialising and good times, the La Banda team have created one of Europe's most memorable hostels. Wherever you plan to visit in Europe, do not miss out on this hostel and Seville.

FACTBOX

A bed in a 8-bed ensuite dorm starts around €27 while a bed in their 4 bed mixed dorm is around €33.

Calle Dos de Mayo 16, Seville, Spain



GRANADA INN BACKPACKERS GRANADA

Granada Inn Backpackers is certainly a place to indulge in luxury on the budget. Spacious, mellow, charming and filled with Moorish influence, Granada Inn Backpackers is luxurious yet affordable and easily accessible to the sights of Granada.

LOCATION

Only a few steps away lie the Cathedral, City Hall, the old Albayzin neighbourhood, lots of nightlife options, and Spain's best tapas zone. Granada's most famous attraction, the Alhambra, is a 30-minute walk or five-minute bus ride away.

ROOMS AND BATHROOMS

You are spoilt for choice at this hostel – there are options from simple dorm beds to private apartments.

There are 8, 10 and 12 bed dorms, each of which is sectioned off to create a smaller space with three to four beds.

The linen is crisp and comfy, complete with blankets for cold nights. On hot summer days, you'll be grateful for the air conditioning unit in each room.

Each bed comes with a large locker. While several power points were available, it would be nice if each bed had its own power point and shelf.

The spacious bathrooms are cleaned daily, and the showers are hot and powerful. You can also upgrade from the dorm room to an apartment and enjoy a brand new 'Hostel-Inn' Apartment-Style Experience!

The apartments feature double and single beds with a private kitchen. All have ensuite bathrooms.

FACILITIES

Perhaps the best feature of Granada Inn Backpackers is its relaxing patio. It's a great spot to relax or chat with new friends, and you can't find a better place to enjoy the free breakfast each morning.

Self-caterers can take advantage of a fully stocked kitchen. Coffee, tea, biscuits, and milk are available to guests all day.

There is a small washing service as well. There are free Internet terminals open until midnight. Free Wi-Fi is available, but the signal isn't very strong and it's hard to access anywhere but the patio. In the future, I'd like to see them provide free Wi-Fi in all rooms.

The reception is manned 24 hours a day and the staff are polite, charming, and responsive to guest enquiries and needs.

A big added plus for them is their comprehensive activities programme for guests looking to get to know Granada better. I attended the Flamenco Tour, which was both educational and exhilarating. I also took part in Sangria Party Night, which went down a treat.





WHAT MAKES THIS A LUXURY HOSTEL

This is a wonderful luxury hostel with delightful staff, a brilliant location, great facilities, comfy rooms, clean bathrooms, and best of all, a very chilled out atmosphere. I was sad to leave.

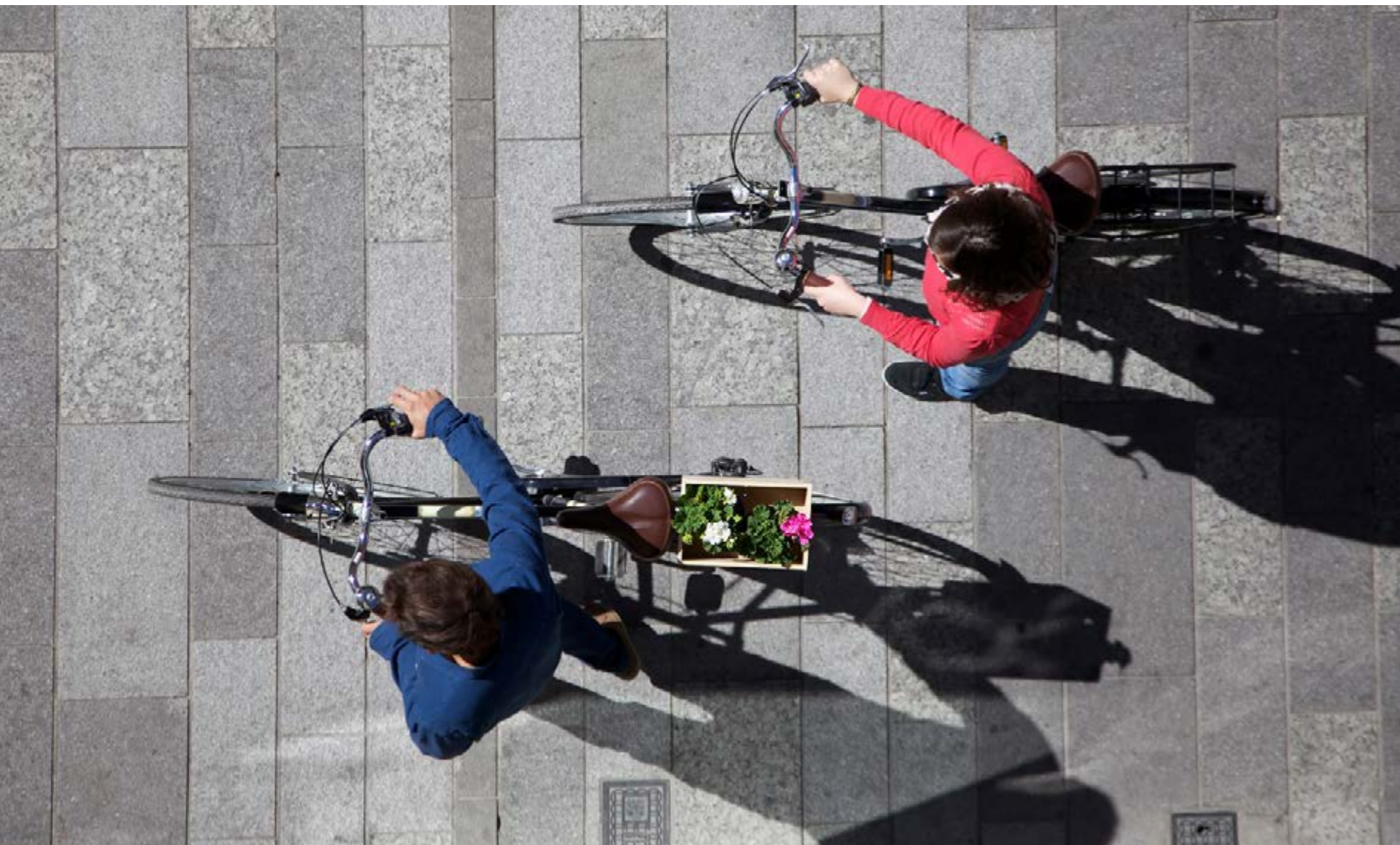
FACTBOX

Dorms from €17, doubles from €50 per room.

Calle Padre Alcover 10 A, Granada, Spain 180

CORDOBA BED AND BE

A cross between a bed and breakfast and a hostel, BedAndBe is a boutique bolthole situated in a beautiful restored 1930's townhouse in the heart of Cordoba's commercial centre. With a lovely rooftop terrace, attractive whitewashed rooms with pearly white bedspreads and original tiled floors and last but not least their fantastic FREE bike and walking tapas tours, there is a lot to love about the BedAndBe Cordoba.



LOCATION

This hostel has a great location on José Cruz Conde, the main commercial street in Cordoba's city centre. The hostel is a ten-minute walk from the train and bus station. The beautiful Mesquita is also a short walk away.

ROOMS AND BATHROOMS

This is a chilled out and intimate hostel with 10 bedrooms. These include twin rooms, dorms for 4 and one dorm for 8. All dorms come with individual lockers. All the rooms feature high ceilings, tall windows, small balconies with pretty ornate wrought iron balconies. All the rooms have their own air-conditioning. The bathroom facilities are shared but clean and adequate. They take great pride in their cleanliness and the hostel is spotless.

FACILITIES

The hostel lounge/living room is beautifully furnished with a plush sofas, arm chairs, a rocking chair, dining tables and there is a big TV. Plus you have a nice little balcony that overlooks the main street. Feels like you are in someone's home. Breakfast is served in the attic and is a simple, do-it-yourself affair.

You have a Nespresso machine to take care of your caffeine fix, fresh bread, cheese and ham plus a manual orange juicer. Roll up those sleeves and put some elbow into it. The oranges are juicy and amazing here so with a few oranges you get a nice large glass of orange juice. Perfect way to start the day. Besides the kitchen is the outdoor terrace where you can enjoy a leisurely breakfast. In the evenings, Jose the owner often organises barbecues for guests.

Once a week he also invites a sushi chef to prepare fresh sushi. Locals pour in for the sushi dinner so it's a great way to meet locals. Jose also organises every evening

a walking and tapas tour where he will take you to a few favourite local haunts. From sampling craft beers at Califa, Andalucia's first microbrewery to trying salmorejo (local soup, similar to Gazpacho) this tapas tour is a gastronomic tour de force. Plus there is no cost. It is a great way to meet fellow guests. There is no better way to bond with travellers than over good beer and good food, right?

The hostel has incorporated all the comforts of modern living to make your stay comfortable like free good Wi-Fi, a dishwasher, washing machine and dryer, oven, microwave, fridge & freezer, coffee maker, kettle and toaster in a fully equipped kitchen.

Also the staff including the owner himself, Jose, is friendly and available for all your needs and questions. I really had a great experience in Cordoba thanks to them.





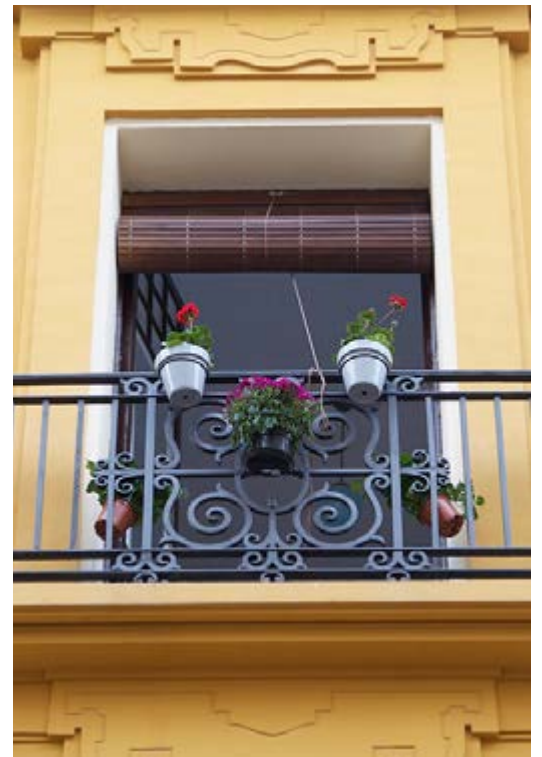
WHAT MAKES THIS A LUXURY HOSTEL

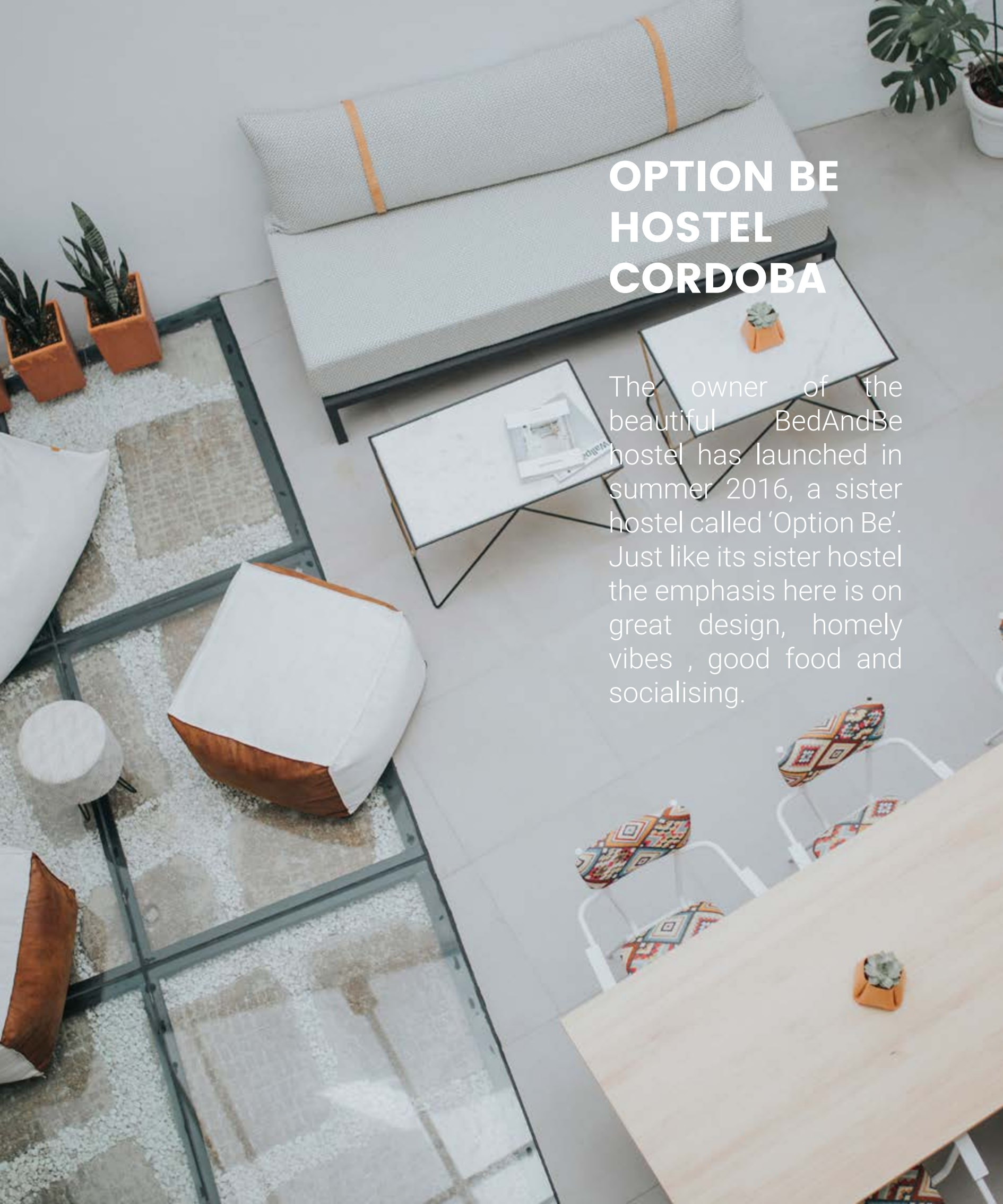
BedAndBe professes to be more than a hostel and they are right. Bikes, beers, great gastronomy, beautiful rooms and lovely staff-this hostel is a very good reason to visit Cordoba which is a hugely underrated city. After the crowds of Seville and Granada, Cordoba and Bed & Be felt like a true adventure & escape.

FACTBOX

Dorm beds start at €17 and doubles €40. Rates include breakfast.

Calle Cruz Conde 22, Cordoba, Andalusia, Spain





OPTION BE HOSTEL CORDOBA

The owner of the beautiful BedAndBe hostel has launched in summer 2016, a sister hostel called 'Option Be'. Just like its sister hostel the emphasis here is on great design, homely vibes , good food and socialising.



LOCATION

Situated in a fully renovated 'casa pátio' in the historical centre of Córdoba, this hostel is very close to the Alcazar and all the key sights of the city. Bus and Train stations are less than a 20 minute walk away.

ROOMS AND BATHROOMS

This hostel is a mix of ensuite twins and double and shared dorms for 4 and 8 people. All the beds come with individual lockers, a reading light and power point for charging your gadgets. The mattresses here are really comfortable. Bathrooms are clean and spotless.

FACILITIES

The patio cum living room is my favourite feature of this hostel. They have a mini-bar, nice selection of books and magazines, lots of green plants: I would love to have a space like this in my own house!

Hostel guests can also relax in their lovely rooftop terrace where you can enjoy panoramic views of the city with a drink from the mini bar downstairs. Perfect place to curl up with a book, soak in the sun and then later refresh yourself in the open air shower. Next year the hostel has plans in place for building a pool.

Just like the BedAndBe, this hostel is your home away from home. There is no rush to wake up for breakfast here. You can wake up whenever you want and enjoy their free typical Spanish breakfast of bread, coffee, jams, nutella and fresh orange juice courtesy of their manual orange juicer.

The free Wi-Fi works well. The staff here are friendly and helpful.

Plus every day at 20.30 all the guests from BedAndBe and OptionBe meet together for drinks & tapas with staff members from both hostels. This tour, besides offering you an authentic taste of Cordoba, is a fantastic way to meet travellers and bond over the shared love of good food and travel.



- TOP TIP -

Wake up early to enjoy the Cathedral Mosque and the Alcazar for free! Rent a bike to lose yourself around the city, cross the Roman bridge at night to enjoy the amazing view!

WHAT MAKES THIS A LUXURY HOSTEL

To feel at home when travelling is a luxury. That is where this hostel excels.

A great location in Cordoba, a fully equipped kitchen, beautiful interiors, warm, welcoming staff and their excellent evening drinks & tapas tours make OptionBe another great hostel to call home when visiting Cordoba.

FACTBOX

Private rooms starts from €50 per room, per night going upto €90 in high season.

Shared dorms vary from €19 a night to €30 a night.

Calle Leiva Aguilar, 1, 14003 Córdoba, Spain



LIGHTS OUT HOSTEL MALAGA

Run by a great bunch of folk, this is a proper intimate backpacker hostel where you feel at home instantly. Malaga is like that too - grows on you instantly with its fabulous food markets, great street art, great museums, fab nightlife and nice beaches.





LOCATION

Lights Out is situated in a historical building in a superb location right in the centre of Malaga. The bus and train station is a short walk away. Just behind the hostel you have one of my favourite food markets in Spain: Mercado Central de Atarazanas. Plus just around the corner you have Antigua Casa de la Guardia, the oldest bar in Malaga, where you can sample the delicious local dark brown dry Malaga wine, seco.

ROOMS AND BATHROOMS

I had a great nights sleep in my deluxe double room. Their mattresses are great and really comfortable. There was a single bed in the corner of my room so this would be perfect for a travelling family. The shared bathrooms are clean and well maintained. Their dual head showers are amazing.

Dorms here have custom made dorm beds. With privacy curtains and personal lights for each bed as well as a personal storage lockers it is a perfect solution for backpackers on a budget. There is a nice balcony in all the dorms and doubles. Also they have air conditioning units for the summer and blankets are provided for

the winter. The rooms and hostel are very secure and accessible via keycard. Another fab thing about this hostel is the late checkout of 11.30am.

FACILITIES

The staff here really go out of their way to make you feel at home and enjoy this city. They organise a whole bunch of events, ranging from free sangria evenings on the terrace to beach volleyball in the afternoon at the local beach. They also offer a tour of local bars taking you to some of their favourite bars in the city. This is less a pub-crawl and more a drink with friends where you can leisurely hop from one bar to another. My favourite part of the hostel is their rooftop terrace. Guests all gather in the terrace to watch sunset and enjoy sundowners. Every evening, the hostel staff prepares a delicious dinner, which can be anything from chicken curry to paella.

Veggies are catered for-just ask the hostel staff in advance. Also on Sundays they offer a brunch.

If you've had a long night in the town, then their free buffet breakfast is the perfect cure. From 7.30 to 11 am they serve coffee, tea, milk, orange juice, mix fruit juice, white and

black bread, butter, strawberry and peach jam, 3 different kind of cereals, honey and nutella.

Other key facilities to share with you: there is free Wi-Fi throughout the building and it works well. Hair dryers and straighteners are available free for hire. If you're looking to explore the city on bike or electric scooter ask at the reception. They have a discounted deal with a local company.

Reception is open 24 hours. There is a fully equipped kitchen with all mod cons for your use.



WHAT MAKES THIS A LUXURY HOSTEL

I hadn't thought much about Malaga but like many great hostels, the Lights Out Hostel changed my view of the city. I loved their terrace and their rooftop dinner parties. The staff here led by their fantastic manager, Marie really make you feel at home. The city itself is beautiful. A lot of great things going on. Highly recommend you visit Malaga and stay here. A proper home away from home kind of experience.

FACTBOX

A bed in a 10-bed mix dorm starts at around €15 a night, a bed in a 4-bed mixed dorm is around the €19 mark while their deluxe double room starts at around €50 a night.

Calle Torregorda 3, Malaga, España, Malaga, Spain

PORTUGAL

A bright, cozy hostel room. On the left, there are wooden bunk beds with a built-in wooden staircase. The top bunk has a blue blanket, and the bottom bunk has a red blanket. A colorful, multi-tiered chandelier hangs from the ceiling. A large window on the right is covered with sheer white curtains, letting in natural light. The floor is made of polished wooden parquet. A small blue rug is on the floor near the window. A small white box is mounted on the wall above the bottom bunk.

LISBON CENTRAL HOSTEL

Welcome to Lisbon Central Hostel: your home away from home in Lisbon and home to the best hostel pancake breakfast in the world.

LOCATION

Lisboa Central Hostel is in an excellent location in Marques de Pombal just across from Lisbon's grandest boulevard, the stunning Avenida da Liberdade. Just around the corner is the Marques De Pombal metro station, which is on the intersection of the blue and yellow lines that takes you straight to the airport. Baixa and Bairro Alto is just a 20-minute walk from the hostel or a few stops on the metro.

ROOMS AND BATHROOMS

I stayed in one of their private doubles on the 2nd floor with very comfortable bedding and a big wardrobe. The ensuite bathroom was small, the shower was powerful and excellent.

My room had a private balcony with a hanging basket chair. I spent a few hours there with a book and happily lost track of time.

If you're on a budget, you can choose to stay in one of their mixed dorm rooms.

Bunk beds looked nice and sturdy and there were lockers in the room for valuables. Each bunk has its own power source, a private reading light and an individual fan.

FACILITIES

The staff here are warm, welcoming and from moment one, will make you feel like you're being welcomed into someone's home. They really go the extra mile here to help you with any of your queries like finding the best restaurant, mending a torn pocket in your trouser or even helping you out with your laundry. After a few days living there, I felt like I had known the staff for a long time. It's that kind of place.

Hostel has a daily roster of activities to keep guests entertained. It has a dedicated cinema room complete with projector where they host their weekly film nights. They also host the quirky 'Milkshake Monday' where each guest gets a free milkshake. Plus they run pubcrawls and walking tours every day at 10 am.

In the summer, they have a nice enclosed courtyard where guests can congregate and chat into the late hours. They have a cool mini refrigerator in the reception area where

guests can help themselves to ice-cold beers for €1. Please keep in mind that this is not a party hostel but still a sociable one where you easily meet fellow guests.

Expect random acts of kindness: Hostel owner, Miguel's mother 'Odete' will often treat guests to dinner for free. When I was there she prepared a delicious traditional Portuguese soup called 'Caldo Verde' for me and fellow guests. There is a large common kitchen with plenty of crockery for guests to use. There is a supermarket just a few minutes from the hostel.

BEST FEATURE OF THIS HOSTEL

...is without a doubt, their amazing FREE pancake breakfast. Every morning, mother Odete or one of the members of staff will rustle up the best pancakes you have ever tasted. They make the pancakes flavoured with cinnamon with an apple or banana stuffing. The recipe and technique is a well-guarded family secret. It's delicious and very filling- sets you up for the day nicely.



WHAT MAKES THIS A LUXURY HOSTEL

The Portuguese are renowned for their hospitality and this is a key feature of any hostel I've stayed in Lisbon or Portugal. Lisbon Central Hostel upholds this wonderful tradition and has created a truly amazing, home away from home

experience for their guests. No wonder they are one of the best rated hostels in Lisbon on Tripadvisor. I recommend it highly to anyone visiting Lisbon.

FACTBOX

You can book a private room from around the €40 mark while a bed in a 10 bed dorm starts at just €12 a night.

**Rua Rodrigues Sampaio n0160,
Lisbon 1150-282, Portugal.**



GOOD MORNING HOSTEL LISBON

If you're looking for a taste of warm Portuguese hospitality in an unbeatable location in Lisbon, say hello to Goodmorning Hostel on your next visit to the city.



LOCATION

Goodmorning Hostel is in an unbeatable location in Praça dos Restauradores, just a stone's throw away from a Metro station and Rossio Train Station. The airport shuttle leaves from just across the square.

ROOMS AND BATHROOMS

Warm and cosy are two perfect words to sum up the experience of staying in the Goodmorning.

The dorm rooms are spacious with well laid out, very comfortable beds. Each bed in the dorm comes with a mini-shelf, power socket, and reading light. The owner is in the process of modernising the bunkbeds which will give guests much more privacy, USB and regular plugs plus towel hangers.

Travellers looking for more privacy can choose from one of their private ensuite doubles on the top floor of the hostel. All rooms come with a balcony and panoramic views of the city.

If you're looking for a romantic break in Lisbon in a great location, choose the double ensuite room at the top of the hostel with its beautiful comfy bed, great views, and quirky decor.

FACILITIES

Goodmorning Hostel is typical of the breed of designer hostels in Lisbon. You have warm wooden flooring, bright bold wallpaper, and rooms filled with a cornucopia of vintage curios and recycled furniture pieces.

The staff are the outstanding feature of this hostel. They make the best waffles, put on great tunes and introduce you to some cool bands. Get together for a good old singsong in the evening over a few beers or a glass of sangria.

They have a friendly, personable approach and are full of great enthusiasm and ideas of cool, unusual things to do in Lisbon. It's rare to meet such a great group of nice staff in one hostel. By the time I left after a few days, I felt like I was part of their big family.

The staff organises a bunch of events for guests. Tatiana takes guests for a ramble

through town all the way upto the castle. Joao runs a biking tour, sharing some of his personal highlights of the city. Also every day there is an excellent free walking tour of the city. Friday is free sangria night and the hostel also runs tours to the beautiful hilltop city of Sintra. My favourite event at Good Morning is the 'Moustache Cooking Class' with Joao. Joao, with his magnificent moustache introduces guests to local Portuguese dishes. In this instance we were cooking a Portuguese feijoada.

Guests can join in with the cooking if they like. Cooking with Joao, eating the feijoada and sharing stories with my fellow hostel guests-this is definitely up there with my favourite hostelling experiences. The staff often offer a glass of red wine, port wine, or Ginginha to the guests for free. If you need more booze or food, there's a cheap and excellent supermarket just a stone's throw away, which is quite handy.

The free breakfast is fantastic and something different from your standard hostel fare - they offer freshly made waffles, as well as good filtered coffee and juices. It's also served until 11:30 AM, which is nice. Free coffee and tea are offered throughout the day.

The hostel has a dedicated Internet room where guests can surf the web for free, as well as a separate TV room with a large flatscreen TV and DVD player to watch movies. The free Wi-Fi is decent and available throughout the hostel. There is a free left luggage facility in case you are travelling later in the day.





WHAT MAKES THIS A LUXURY HOSTEL

Staying at the Goodmorning Hostel is like being invited into a friend's home. The superb central location, generous breakfast, and friendly, knowledgeable hostel staff make this a great base for exploring Lisbon.



FACTBOX

A bed in a 10-bed dorm starts from €12 a night, a bed in a mixed 4-bed dorm starts at €17 a night, while a double costs €50 per room, per night in low season.

Praça dos Restauradores, no. 65, 2nd floor, 1250-188 Lisbon, Portugal.





THE INDEPENDENTE HOSTEL & SUITES LISBON

Lisbon is blessed with the best luxury hostels in the world – and the art deco-inspired Independente Hostel is one of its most glorious creations. The hostel is the brainchild of three or four brothers who envisioned a different concept in hospitality: creating a meeting point where ‘travellers as well as locals can come together’.

LOCATION

Overlooking the Miradouro de Sao Pedro de Alcantara, Independente Hostel is in a great location at the intersection of three of Lisbon's most vibrant and celebrated neighbourhoods: Bairro Alto, Principe Real, and Avenida da Liberdade.

ROOMS AND BATHROOMS

In terms of design, imagine a juxtaposition of Scandinavian minimalism with ornate architecture. This hostel is a happy contradiction, and it works beautifully.

Formerly the Swiss ambassador's official residence, the building was converted into a luxury hostel in 2011 with 90 beds housed within 11 spacious dorm rooms.

The rooms have preserved the original character of the building with high ceilings, ornate wall mouldings, and detailed wrought-iron balconies that open onto the Tagus River.

The dorm rooms have sturdy wooden bunk bed frames and come with private reading lights and plug points. Each dorm is tastefully decorated with a mix of antiques and family heirlooms alongside reclaimed furniture pieces.

Besides the 11 modern dorm rooms, you have four private suites with balconies where you can linger with an espresso from the self-service coffee machine. Perfect for a couple or a family that would like to enjoy some privacy.

FACILITIES

The outstanding feature of this hostel is that it also houses one of Lisbon's most stylish and popular restaurants. The Decadente is known for serving up modern Portuguese cuisine using locally sourced ingredients.

Outside the restaurant you can lounge with one of their signature cocktails in the outdoor beer garden, which doubles as a live music venue on weekends. The bar attracts a steady stream of trendy Lisboaetas, making you feel like you're part of the city's DNA.

The free breakfast, consisting of orange juice, cereals, coffee, bread, cheese, and cold meats, is a great way to start your day. For guests staying in the private suites their breakfast is served at The Insólito, their new rooftop restaurant, and it is truly the breakfast of kings.





WHAT MAKES THIS A LUXURY HOSTEL

In terms of interior design, this hostel is a notch above most other hostels and boutique hotels. When you pair that design with a cracking restaurant, cool bar, and friendly staff, you have all the makings of a great experience. A very special and unique hostel.

FACTBOX

Dorms from €11, suites from €70.

Rua São Pedro de Alcântara 81, 1250-238 Lisbon, Portugal.

HOME HOSTEL LISBON

Welcome to the world's best medium sized hostel, Home Hostel Lisbon.



LOCATION

The location of this hostel is fantastic. It's in a cracking location right in the middle of the Baixa district. Several of Lisbon's key sightseeing attractions are within walking distance plus there is a clutch of fantastic, moderately priced restaurants and bars nearby.

ROOMS AND BATHROOMS

Guests can choose from a choice of 4, 6 and 8-bed dorms. The rooms are spacious with each bed having a huge secure storage locker – large enough for a big backpack to fit in. Bunk beds are custom made wooden beds, very sturdy and don't creak and are very comfortable to sleep in. You have a private curtain so you have your own privacy. Each bed comes with a private light and power point. Rooms are air-conditioned so it's easy to get a good night's sleep. The bathrooms here are all shared but of a nice standard. They are clean and two on each floor so it never gets overcrowded.

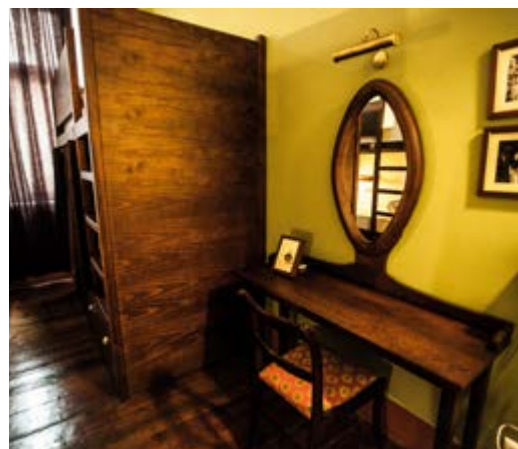
FACILITIES

Home Hostel is one of those hostels, where from the moment you step in, you feel a warm blanket of happiness around you. Every member of staff I met was friendly and helpful. Even the team of cleaning ladies I would meet in the morning would greet me. The staff make a real effort to know each and every guest.

Besides the cool staff, the colourful ambience of the hostel's common, social spaces makes this a unique hostel.

The lounge here is my dream lounge. Lots of plush comfy sofas that you just sink into and can happily fall asleep on. During the day I would happily be sitting on the sofa, checking my mails on my laptop using the hostel's excellent Wi-Fi connection. You have the biggest widescreen TV you can imagine with a DVD library of more than 150 films. The interior decor is a pleasing mix of vintage and contemporary minimalism.

They have a very cool, well-stocked bar, which also doubles as the reception desk. In the evenings, the small intimate bar area



with a few long tables becomes the meeting point where guests congregate and get to meet each other. In the mornings, they serve a simple but nice breakfast that consists of bread, cereals, jam, nutella and coffee.

Don't forget to try 'Mamma's homemade pumpkin and nut jam' - I think I must have wolfed down 5 slices of bread pasted with that delicious stuff.

Other few cool features to point out: there is free Wi-Fi available in the common room areas and it is excellent. There is a common kitchen for guests to use.

They have a blackboard in the common room called 'Share my ride' where guests share details of their rides to the airport and pick-up times allowing fellow guests to share their ride & save money. Every hostel should have a board like this. Brilliant idea.

The outstanding feature of this hostel? Checkout Mamma's dinner

My personal highlight of my visit was 'Mamma's' superb 3-course meal. For just €10 you can book a place at one of 'Mamma's' legendary dinners, where you are treated to a delicious three course authentic Portuguese dinner with wine or beer or sangria. Nothing breaks down barriers amongst strangers like good food, company and nice wine and all these three ingredients are available in abundance at Home Hostel. Plus you have the warmth and magnetic personality of 'Mamma' who really makes you feel like you are a guest in her 'home'.

The dinner ends with a toast where guests get a small shot of 'Ginjinha', the excellent local cherry brandy or a small glass of Madeiran Port Wine.



HOME HOSTEL

WHAT MAKES THIS A LUXURY HOSTEL

No ensuite bathrooms or private room? How can this hostel qualify as a Luxury Hostel...

I hear you screaming at me from behind your computer screen. I know. I am breaking the rules here.

If there was one area this hostel could improve on, is the availability of private rooms and ensuite bathrooms in some of the dorms.

I had a chat with one of the owners, Andre and this is an area he is keenly looking to address in the very near future.

However, when it comes to tourism, the one quality that trumps everything, be it design or facilities, is the people. No small wonder that Hostelworld users have voted Home Hostel Lisbon as the best medium sized hostel in the world for the last few years.

FACTBOX

Room rates start from €10 for a bed in a 8-bed dorm to €14 for the 4-bed dorm.

Rua de São Nicolau, 13, 2E, Lisbon, Portugal



LISBON POETS HOSTEL

Lisbon Poets Hostel was a pioneer in the hostelling movement along with the Living Lounge Hostel. As artists, the owners were more concerned about creating an experience rather than just a cheap bed to sleep in.

In many ways they have set a new standard and continue to lead the way for other luxury hostels in Lisbon and the rest of the world.





LOCATION

This is a hostel with a great location, right at the foot of the Chiado Metro station and Lisbon's famous cafe 'A Brasileira'. Guests entering the living room are treated to a breathtaking view of Chiado, through the huge floor-to-ceiling windows and can admire the beautiful architecture of the buildings of the area, most of which were restored after the earthquake of 1755.

ROOMS AND BATHROOMS

The hostel is located on two separate floors. On the top floor you have the dorm rooms, which share the colourful vibe that is present throughout the hostel. The beds are wooden bunk beds, sturdy with the possibility of a great night's sleep.

On the fifth floor you have the Lisbon Poets Hostel Privates.

There is a choice of 7 double bed private rooms (2 with a king size bed), 2 twin-bed private rooms and 1 single bed private room.

My walls were a double private room, daubed with lines from various poems. I felt a psychedelic, slightly disorientating experience of having all these unknown words staring at me.

Still, it's a nice feeling to fall asleep in a cloud of words. That night, I dreamt of words and that I had started writing poetry again.

It was pretty humid when I visited but I was glad to see that they have air-conditioning in the room.

Some of rooms are ensuite and some come with a shared bath and toilets, separated by sex. There are plenty of them on each floor and are very clean and well maintained.

The dorm rooms are available with two, four and six beds. There are also 2 beautiful Studios just a few steps away from the hostel if you are looking for a more exclusive stay.

FACILITIES

It's a stunning space – one of the most impressive common rooms I've seen on my Luxury Hostels tour. You have a choice of colourful beanbag chairs where you can relax and surf the net on your tablets and laptops with the help of the hostel's excellent free Wi-Fi.

Or you can just chill out on the sofas and daydream, or maybe read from the extensive collection of books that adorn the shelves of the room.

The living room has a quirky feel with the odd typewriter lying around, as well as a few book of poems by local poets. The hostel even has its own postcard collection.

It's a very creative space. The moment I sat down, I felt an irresistible urge to grab pen and paper and start writing poetry again, something I haven't done for a while now.

Adjoining the living room is a well-equipped kitchen where guests can cook their meals.

A continental breakfast is included in the price and is a nice affair with toast, jams, pastries, fresh orange juice, and pretty decent coffee.

The hostel staff are a massive credit to this place. From the moment you walk in, there is a feeling that the owner Ricardo and his staff really want you to experience and enjoy their hometown.

Lisbon Poets Hostel organises a great range of activities for guests to get a feel of the spirit of the city.

They are unstintingly helpful and take pride in organising a plethora of great events for guests, from free walking tours of Lisbon, evening dinners, guided visits to a Fado bar, and visits to the Alfama market.



WHAT MAKES THIS A LUXURY HOSTEL

I loved Lisbon Poets Hostel. Great location, great space, great people and a great experience.

FACTBOX

Dorms start from €19 and doubles start from €50 per room.

If you are also visiting Porto and staying at their sister property, The Poets Inn, you get a 10% discount on your bookings.

**Rua Nova da Trindade, no. 2,
Floor 5, 1200 Lisbon, Portugal.**

LOST INN HOSTEL LISBON

Formerly a beautiful monastery convent, the building luckily survived the big earthquake of Lisbon, in 1755. The moment you step into this hostel you realise you are in some sort of time capsule. Expect vaulted ceilings, époque tiles and rooms with wooden floors decorated in a casual chic style.



THE LOCATION

The hostel is in a fab location. Lisbon’s downtown area ‘Baixa-Chiado’ and the famous party district ‘Bairro Alto’ are just a wee jaunt up the hill. The metro station ‘Baixa-Chiado’ is an 8-minute walk away while the Metro and the train station, Cais do Sodré is just a 3 minute walk away.

ROOMS AND BATHROOMS

Depending on your budget you can book a private room (doubles and twins) or a dorm of four, six, eight or ten beds. Shared bathrooms for males or females are large and modern, with 24 hour hot showers. The showers are great. The bathroom itself is clean and well maintained.

The dorms are mixed or female only. All dorms beds have electronic lockers, which can be opened and locked only using your keycard. No need for faffing around with locks. Each bed has a reading light and electrical outlets. Bed linen is included. It is possible to rent towels.



FACILITIES

The star feature of this hostel are the staff. Beatriz, Jose, Ruben and Rui really go the extra mile to make you feel at home. Every evening at 8pm they offer free sangria and chorizo to guests. Plus depending on the day you stay there, there is a host of events to look forward to from cooking classes, day tours to Sintra, to karaoke nights.

Lost Inn Lisbon Hostel has a great common area. People come here to socialise sitting in their nice couches, reading, or playing music on their acoustic guitar. You can find vending machines as well as coffee/tea making facilities. There’s also a large TV with cable, DVD player and sound system that guests can use to watch movies. Wi-Fi is available throughout the entire building.

There’s also a room with free use computers. You can also ask for laundry service, if needed.

Breakfast is another star of the show here: It’s FREE and super good! Every day from 7.30 to 11 you’ll have bread, cheese, jam, ham, vegetables, butter, milk, coffee, juice, tea and eggs at your disposal. Plus Portuguese coffee is the best...

- TOP TIP -

Join the Sangria and chorizo evenings in the dining hall. Learn from other guests the best tips to visit the city.



WHAT MAKES THIS A LUXURY HOSTEL

Location, chic decor and a lively atmosphere - Lost Inn ticks all the boxes. However, for me its the staff and their events that really make this hostel special and one of the best in the world. From dinners with the chef, to joining beach or pub tours, there’s no shortage of opportunities to have fun and make new friends!

FACTBOX

Dorms start at €14 per night.
Double rooms start at €56 per night.

Beco dos Apostolos 6, Lisbon, Portugal.

LISBON CALLING HOSTEL LISBON

Part of a charming 250-year-old building, Lisbon Calling Hostel is stunning, overflowing with beautiful period features and vintage charm. It is easily one of the most stylish and romantic hostels in Lisbon.



LOCATION

Situated just a short walking distance from the city centre of Chiado and the nightlife hotspots of Bairro Alto and Cais de Sodré, this hostel is in a fantastic location.

ROOMS AND BATHROOMS

Staying here is an experience. With quirky interior decor, stonewalls, and hardwood floors, the rooms here are bright and spacious with a nice rustic charm.

If you are looking for something romantic and exclusive, stay in the doubles wing, which is in a separate section of the building and feels like having your own apartment in Lisbon.

Guests get their own keys to come and go from their rooms as they please. There are only four rooms, each one with a cool theme.

I stayed in the '1812' room, charmingly furnished with retro pieces. The tall ceilings and large windows offered me panoramic views of the square below and the beautiful church of Sao Paulo. I shared a very clean, well-maintained bathroom and kitchen with the other residents, but I didn't find it to be much of an issue.

4, 6 and 10 bed dorms are excellent value and comfortable. The beautiful wooden bunk beds are custom-made and raised so you can catch views of the church square. The ceilings are adorned with frescos.

FACILITIES

This hostel is a living exhibition of eclectic furniture pieces and fittings that the owners have procured from all over Portugal and Europe. There is everything from an antique bathtub converted into a table, to 1950's Rock and Roll memorabilia and outlandish kitsch decorations. Altogether, it creates a very colourful vibe.

One of the great features of staying in the doubles is the very cool free breakfast. Rather than having a fixed breakfast time, bread rolls are placed in an embroidered cloth bag and hung on your room's door handle in the morning.

Once you're up and running, you take them

to the common kitchen and are free to make coffee or tea, help yourself to orange juice, have muesli, and toast the rolls, enjoying them with butter or delicious fruit jam. Given that you are sharing with only three other couples, you have a good chance to having the kitchen to yourself.

The kitchen area in the main part of the hostel is a very cool, social space where the owners encourage guests to use their fridge and often invite guests to join in their lunch or dinner at no extra cost. It really feels like you're visiting a friend's or relative's home.

The free Wi-Fi is excellent and the staff here are friendly and helpful with lots of great tips to make the most of your stay here.

There is free secure storage with individual lockers, locks and keys, as well as 'all day do-it-yourself coffee and tea', in the words of the owners.

- TOP TIP -

Across from the hostel is Rua de Nova Carvalho, formerly the red light district of Lisbon. There are some cool bars here, but the pick of the joints is Pensao Amor, once a cheap pension with rooms rented by the hour to prostitutes. Today the place functions as a bar and concert venue. It also has a leopard and gold decorated room used for pole dancing lessons and workshops.





WHAT MAKES THIS A LUXURY HOSTEL

I love the quirky character of this hostel, the eclectic furniture pieces, the period features & the themed rooms. Staying here was a wonderful experience.



FACTBOX

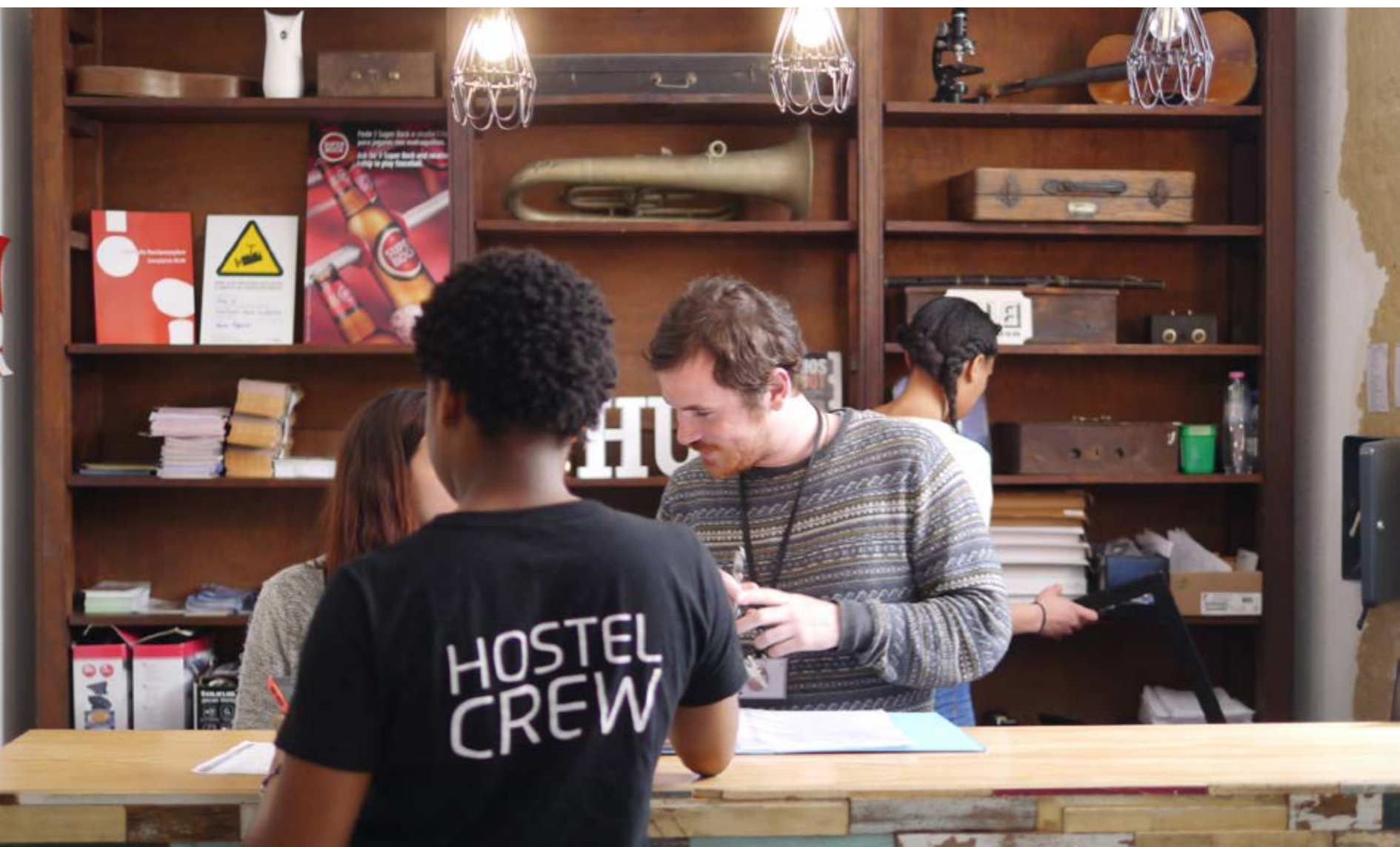
Low season, shared rooms range from €12 and doubles from €41 while in the high season it starts from €20 shared and from €56 for doubles.

**Rua de São Paulo, 126 – floor 3D,
1200-429 Lisbon, Portugal**



HUB NEW LISBON HOSTEL LISBON

Situated in a beautifully renovated 18th century building, Hub Hostel is the hub of all things fun in Lisbon. A young, energetic team of staff led by the charismatic Nuno, a wonderful onsite bar, clean and comfortable rooms plus an amazing ball pit all combine to make this a very fun, cool hostel to choose as your base for your Lisbon trip.



LOCATION

The hostel is a really cool location on the historic street of Rua do Seculo which is very close to the party district of Bairro Alto and also to the upcoming cool neighbourhood of Principe Real. While Bairro Alto is a hive of great bars, Principe Real is packed with great independent fashion and design boutiques, great cafes and some of fab restaurants. So you are in a great location here. Given that getting direct access via public transport is difficult, grabbing a cab or uber from the airport makes sense.

ROOMS AND BATHROOMS

There is a nice variety of dorms and also private rooms here that cater really well to travellers on all types of budget. You have a choice of 4, 6 or 8 bed mixed dorms, some with shared facilities and some ensuite. You can choose from the very original colourful 'Cube' room, which resembles a Rubix cube. You also have the 'Cross': black very modern looking bunk beds that contrast nicely with the 18th century azulejo panels on the walls.

Nice mix of classic and modern. All the bunk beds here have a nice degree of privacy. The beds each have 1 individual reading light, 3 sockets (generous and fantastic) plus a large secure locker beneath the beds to secure your personal belongings. There is one exclusive floor just for female travellers who can check into their pink bunk bedrooms.

The private rooms on the 4th floor have mesmerising views of Lisbon's skyline. Bathed in the magic light of Lisbon, these rooms are quiet, comfortable and offer a good night's sleep. The only slight quibble is that there is no elevator to get to the top floor and the bathrooms are shared. If you can look beyond this, you should be fine. Linen and bath towels are included.

FACILITIES

The hostel offers everything that a modern day backpacker would look for in a hostel. You can savour a proper free breakfast every morning. Another star feature of this hostel is the onsite BUH bar. In their BUH bar, you can discover their Portuguese signature drinks as 'Pastel de Nata', or even something more adventurous like



'Caipirinha'. Other key facilities to know about is that they have a communal kitchen where you can prepare an elaborate dinner for friends or just make snacks for your backpacker days away

You also have a private games room where you can challenge a friend or fellow guest to a game on FIFA.

The outstanding feature of this hostel has to be the ball pit. Dive in. Bring out the inner child in you.

Other key things to remember: The hostel offers free working Wi-Fi and computers to surf on if required. The reception is open 24 hours a day for check-ins. The team of staff here are very helpful and have lots of good tips to share about their neighbourhood and the city.

WHAT MAKES THIS A LUXURY HOSTEL

The hostel walks the fine line of being a low budget yet stylish hostel. I love also the mix of old and new: how unique features of the old building like the azulejo tiles, the fresco paintings on the ceilings and the original wooden floors contrast with the modern bunk beds.

FACTBOX

A bed in a standard 12 bed female dorm starts at €14 a night, a bed in a 4 bed mixed dorm costs €19 a night while a deluxe double private (shared bathroom) will set you back €50 in the low season.

Rua de O Século nº 150, Lisbon, Portugal

GALLERY HOSTEL PORTO

Located in the trendiest quarter of Porto, between the art district and hip nightlife, the eco-friendly Gallery Hostel characterizes the concept of the luxury hostel – service, cleanliness and facilities are top priorities along with friendliness and a familiar atmosphere.



LOCATION

When I came to Porto a few years ago, unloved was the word that came to mind. These days, however, there is a sense of renewal and energy around Porto. New chic cafes are springing up with free Wi-Fi, great coffee, and awesome cakes, catering to the hipster crowds.

Old buildings lying in ruin and severe decay are being brought to life again. Shuttered wine cellars once famed for their white marble floors, vaulted ceilings, and beautiful chandeliers are now being converted into nightclubs, the new subterranean refuges of the city's young, brash and beautiful people.

The Gallery Hostel on Rue Miguel Bombarda, just a 10-minute walk from the centre, is one of the impressive faces of this new reimagining of Porto's landscape. The hostel is a rehabilitation of an impressive 1906 building and seeks to maintain the original aspects of a traditional Porto house, while blending it with modern decor and furnishings.

ROOMS AND BATHROOMS

I stayed in one of the six-bed dorms. It's well spaced out and each room comes with its own ensuite bathroom, complete with a stellar power shower. The room even has its own private balcony, perfect for sitting and enjoying with fellow travellers and friends.

At just €18 a night, it's a steal. The doubles, just as nice as the dorms, come in at around the €60 mark.

I am only here for two nights, but I easily could have stayed at least a week.

FACILITIES

The hostel is an excellent poster child for the stunning metamorphosis that Porto has undergone.

Formerly an 18th-century villa owned by a member of the local aristocracy, the building has been restored to its former glory by two friends.

They had the unique idea of creating a designer hostel that could also function as an art gallery.

Twice a month, the hostel opens its doors to the public. When I visited in April, there was an exhibition from a local photographer.

Huge, colourful prints on canvas were set against the whitewashed walls, juxtaposed with the gleaming, polished wooden floors.

From the moment you walk into the building, to the right is a cosy reception room. Straight ahead is the long narrow corridor with the art exhibition.

Walking through the corridor, to my right is

a computer room for guests, replete with gigantic Mac desktops and also a well-stocked library, packed with books about the local history of Porto.

Further ahead, you come to an opening with a skylight - I love this part of the building. To the right, you have a staircase that winds down to the lower level of the building.

Tucked beneath the staircase is this very cool, open-plan bar with lots of cushions and seats to sink into after a long day roaming the streets of Porto.

Beside it is a living room with huge comfy sofas and a projector screen where they show movies and occasional local football derbies.

Plus, they have a karaoke machine. Yep. Karaoke machine. Awesome!

Straight on from the bar to the right is a glass-enclosed seating area where smokers congregate. Beyond that, you have the kitchen/dining area. It's a beautiful space.

You get an awesome breakfast buffet spread that would not look out of place in a five-star hotel.

In the evenings, you can choose to dine with the guests and sample some great, authentic cuisine typical of northern Portugal. The meals are cooked by the hostel's very own Brazilian chef. It's the kind of food your mother-in-law would make, it's that good. Meals come to €10 including dessert and copious amounts of wine.

Beyond the kitchen, you have the hostel's own little garden. Facing the garden is a set of private rooms. Above the rooms, there is a sun lounge terrace.

Hospitality is one area where I know hostels often excel, but truly, at the Gallery, each guest is looked after with great care. It partly can be attributed to the owners' training at Lausanne, where the best go to learn the art of hospitality.

Their newest project 'We Care' is an effort to protect the environment through a variety of green initiatives such as recycling, solar water heating and more.





WHAT MAKES THIS A LUXURY HOSTEL

The owners have managed to create a place that marries the old world charm that Porto is famous for with great, modern design and comfort, plus a liberal sprinkle of charm and hospitality for good measure. You leave this hostel intoxicated and already dreaming of your next visit.

I loved the Gallery Hostel. It's probably my favourite of all the luxury hostels in this ebook.



FACTBOX

Dorms from €20, doubles and twins from €59 per room, triples from €75 per room in low season.
Dorms from €22, doubles and twins from €70 per room, triples from €90 per room in high season.

Rua Miguel Bombarda, 222, 4050-377 Porto



TATTVA DESIGN HOSTEL PORTO

Great design.
Location. A superb
value Indian
restaurant. Plus a
rooftop terrace and
bar. There's a lot to
love about Tattva
Design Hostel.



LOCATION

The hostel has a great location, in the heart of Porto and the 'world heritage' protected area. All the main sights of Porto are within walking distance. Ribeira district is a 15-minute walk. The hostel is a 3-minute walk from Sao Bento Train and metro station (direct link to the Airport) and the Rede expressos bus terminal.

ROOMS AND BATHROOMS

This is a beautiful hostel, designed with the traveller in mind. Great design is not something you would normally associate with a hostel, a nice balance of bold but not overpowering colours, well furnished and beautiful light features.

The hostel has a capacity of 116 people in total, 16 rooms in total, which are a mix of Female Dorms, Mixed Dorms and Double rooms. All the rooms are ensuite. 15 beds in the hostel and all the common areas are wheelchair accessible. Hurray.

They also have a small building across the road of the hostel, which has three well-designed ensuite doubles and a private kitchenette and dining space at the entrance level for guests to use. Handy for couples or families who are looking for their own space but still wanting to take advantage of the facilities of the hostel.

The compact dorms have probably one of the most well equipped dorms beds I've seen on my travels. They each have large orthopedic beds, individual curtains in each bed providing full privacy, individual fans (first for me) plus each have spacious individual lockers with free locks so no need for locks. Yay.

The rooms and the building have key card access so it's very secure.

FACILITIES

Free Wi-Fi is available throughout the building and worked well during my stay. The common areas are very relaxed, informal and homely. I spent a lot of time in their aquarium room, catching up with my writing on the laptop, the huge 3 metre aquarium tank filled with its exotic looking fish, my soothing eye candy.

They have a fully equipped and spacious kitchen. There is a grocery store just down the road with all the essentials, which is handy. They also have a fab rooftop terrace and bar: I visited in February when it was closed. I can imagine it would be perfect for sundowners in spring and summer.

The free breakfast is awesome. Any hostel breakfast where you can enjoy freshly made pancakes, fruit and help yourself to a bottomless tub of Nutella, is a good breakfast in my mind.

Other cool features of the hostel are their free walking tours. Plus if you wish to explore the Douro valley and beyond, they run a couple of day tours. The staff I met during my stay were friendly and helpful so that is another major plus point of the hostel.

THE BEST FEATURE OF THE HOSTEL

The food! Tattva have an in-house restaurant which specialises in Indian cuisine. Usually the culinary fare you find in hostels is pretty naff but the food here was tasty (I am always suspicious of Indian food in restaurants. Mum's and dad's home cooking is always a tough act to follow) and great value for money. You can treat yourself to a three course dinner for just

€15. Chicken curry (vegetable curry was equally good) was delicious as were their samosas (with chutney, mint dips). They also serve an amazing chocolate and lemon souffle, presented in a glass jar with a crunchy biscuit base. Words do not do their desserts justice so even if you don't have dinner, just order the dessert.

They also do a 'dinner with locals' where staff and guests gather together for a 3-course dinner. With a glass of wine, it costs just €10.

Other essentials: you can store your luggage for free in their luggage room after checkout if you have a flight late in the day. They offer a laundry and drying service for €8 if you've been on the road for a while.



WHAT MAKES THIS A LUXURY HOSTEL

I've been planning for a few years to visit the hostel and am glad to inform that it does live upto the high expectations. Nice design, one of the best dorm beds I've seen on my travels plus a fab restaurant. Altogether, a great experience that doesn't cost the earth. Porto is lucky to have not one but two world-class hostels.

FACTBOX

Room for twin or double room starts from €47 while a bed in a 10-bed mixed dorm is just €15. Bed in a 6-bed dorm is €17.

28, R. do Cativo 26, 4000-160 Porto

Traveler

SWITZER

LAND

BACKPACKERS VILLA HOSTEL INTERLAKEN

A mishmash of modern design and old-school Swiss comfort, Backpackers Villa provides the luxuries of top-notch service and all-inclusive perks in the adventure capital of Europe.



LOCATION

Backpackers Villa is conveniently located directly behind the Höhematte, Interlaken's famous green space where paragliders land, and right in between the town's two train stations.

ROOMS & BATHROOMS

The hostel is split into two parts: the historic Chalet side and the modern extension that opened in 2009. On the modern side, you find Comfort Rooms, which are the newest in the hostel and have an ensuite toilet and shower. These rooms have one to six beds.

On the historic Chalet side, there are either the cheap Eco Rooms, which have two to six beds, private lockers, and a wash basin, or the Jungfrau Rooms, which have four to seven beds with a balcony and view of the mountains. All rooms on the Chalet side have shared bathrooms.

Power adapters and hair dryers are available at reception.

FACILITIES

Though the hostel is quite large and can accommodate up to 200 backpackers at one time, it still feels intimate. Whether you want to relax on your own or hang out and be social, you will be well accommodated. The common room was cosy and inviting with gorgeous parquet flooring, big screen TV and more than 100 films on offer.

For those who want some Zen, there is also a great meditation room on the top floor of the Chalet with a wide selection of spiritual books and religious texts in several languages.

The kitchens are incredibly well kept and large, which is great because cooking for yourself is a surefire way to save money while in expensive Switzerland. There is technically a kitchen in each building, but they're adjoined. You'll find extensive dining space downstairs, upstairs, and on the patio when the weather is nice.

There is also a nice-sized garden with an outdoor pool table and excellent view of the mountains.

With so many things to do in Interlaken, you don't have to worry about getting overwhelmed – the staff are there to advise you and make bookings, whether it's adventure sports or day trips. Free guided walking tours of Interlaken are also offered three times a week during the summer season, and upon check-in you are given a card that entitles you to complimentary use of public buses, entry to nearby swimming pools, mini-golf, and discounts at a few local restaurants.

If there's one drawback to this hostel, it would be the selection they have for breakfast. Though it is 'all you can eat', they just serve basic cereal and slices of white bread with jam, butter and cheese spread. Considering that this is an adventure town, it would be nice to see the hostel offer a breakfast that provides people with the fuel they need for adrenaline-filled days.

That said, there is a Lidl about a seven-minute walk away where you can stock up on groceries of your own.



- TOP TIP -

If you don't drink much tea or coffee, you can use the two daily coins they give you for hot drinks to do your laundry. It costs two per load to wash and using the dryer is free.

It gets busy down there, especially at night, so try to get your laundry done in the morning.

WHAT MAKES THIS A LUXURY HOSTEL

The quality and atmosphere at Backpackers Villa is that of a clean and modern hostel for independent backpackers and families alike – but the element of luxury is evident in the service they provide for their guests.

FACTBOX

Eco Rooms from 37 CHF (€30) per person, Jungfrau Rooms from 41 CHF (€33) per person, Comfort Rooms from 45 CHF (€36) per person.

Prices include our all-you-can-eat continental breakfast, bed linen, a comfortable duvet, towel, a personal locker, free entry to public swimming pools, mini-golf, free parking facilities and all taxes (both VAT & local). They are also 100% climate neutral.

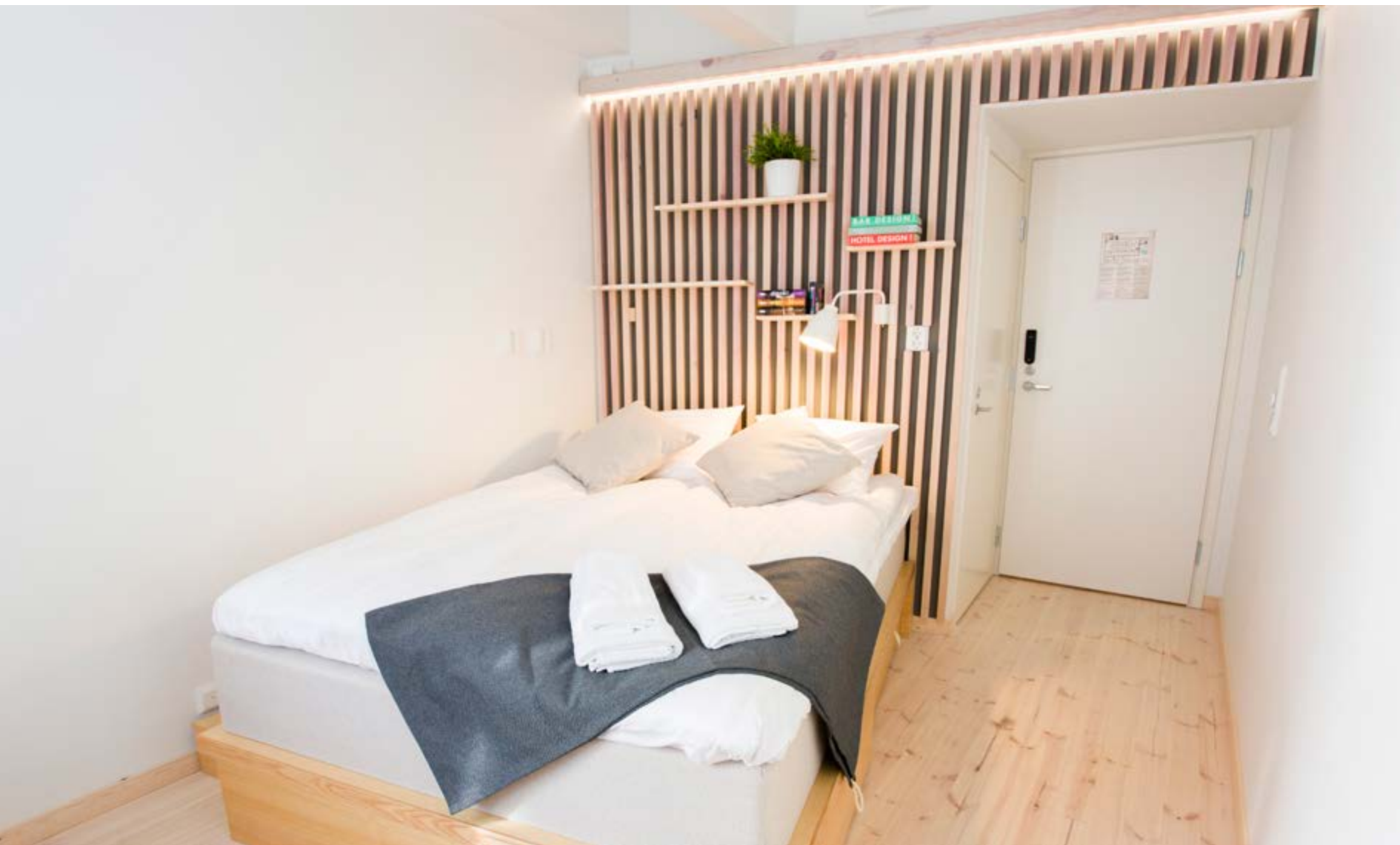
Alpenstrasse 16, Interlaken, Switzerland.



FINLAND

DREAM HOSTEL & HOTEL TAMPERE

A perfect blend of blue and white, warm hospitality and Finnish design philosophy makes Dream Hostel and Hotel, the best hostel in Finland and possibly the best in the rest of the Nordic countries.



LOCATION

Just a few minutes' walk from Tampere train station, Dream Hostel is in a great location near several well-known local landmarks like Tampere Hall, Tampere University, Pakkahuone and Sorsapuisto Park.

Situated in the university neighbourhood of Tulli, the hostel is in the hub of the city's nightlife: trendy bars, local restaurants, an outdoor market, secondhand stores, and a grocery store are just a stone's throw away.

ROOMS AND BATHROOMS:

Depending on your budget and your travel style, there are rooms to suit all types of travellers here.

If you are looking for more privacy and comfort, then go for one of the 20 newly designed ensuite rooms in the hostel's new hotel wing on the 2nd floor.

The rooms have a very peaceful natural ambience with slim strips of timber lining the walls behind the beds. Beds are really comfortable. With hanging baskets and potted plants lining the corridors and the smell of wood, you have that sense of almost being in a forest. Very Finnish indeed.

If you are on a tight budget then you can choose one of their dorms. These rooms are air-conditioned and spacious with beds nicely spaced out. Big heavy doors and thick walls keep it quiet and peaceful. The beds are sturdy and come equipped with discreet reading lights and power points to juice your gadgets.

The rooms in the hostel are not ensuite. There are plenty of shared toilets and shower facilities as they are cleaned on a regular basis. Showers here are probably one of the most powerful showers I've ever experienced in a hostel. Awesome.

Guests can choose from twin rooms, 4 bed private rooms, 4 bed female only dorms & 4, 10 & 16 bed mixed dorms.

FACILITIES

Finland has remained a relative unknown in the backpacking community because of the lack of good quality hostels but that changed thanks to the launch of the Dream Hostel a few years back. I was recently back at the Dream Hostel & it was really exciting to go back and see how the place has developed.

The hotel wing, situated on a separate floor is a new development. Besides the beautifully designed private ensuite rooms, there is a cosy common lounge complete with Nespresso machine & unlimited free coffee.

The hostel itself remains as convivial and cosy as before. It's not your usual busy hostel- more of a quiet hostel where you can relax and meet people. 'Something different' is the motto of the hostel and is a slogan that could apply to Tampere itself.

The centrepiece of this hostel is the kitchen, which also doubles as a social space. There are lots of board games to play, there is a great selection of books to read, and there is also a collection of maps and guides for you to get inspiration for your trip. Guests chill out on their tablets or laptops using the hostel's excellent free Wi-Fi.

Help yourself to unlimited refills of top-notch Colombian coffee from the filter coffee machine. Other perks include free pea soup on Thursdays and free popcorn when it rains (which it does a lot in Tampere, so your chances are good!) and on Friday nights.

The hostel offers a very filling and hearty breakfast buffet for €6.50 which is a great deal for Finland.

For around €10 a day, you have the option of renting bikes to explore the city and the great Finnish outdoors.

Ville and the rest of the team at Dream are very enthusiastic and passionate about the city and the beautiful surrounding countryside - feel free to ask them for any tips and recommendations, plus check out the noticeboard for the staff's daily tips. The hostel has excellent connections with local adventure sports tour operators, so if you're looking to go mountain biking, hiking or canoeing, you've got plenty of cool options.

- TOP TIP -

One of the great Finnish traditions is to visit the sauna and Tampere has three public saunas to choose from. Costing as little as €5, it's a fantastic rejuvenating experience.

WHAT MAKES THIS A LUXURY HOSTEL

Excellent design, great hospitality, and comfortable rooms make this a very cool luxury hostel. No surprise that it has been voted the best hostel in Finland. I love the city’s relaxed easy going vibe. With the world’s first dedicated Moomin museum launching next year, definitely exciting times ahead for the city and the hostel. This is a place to consider for your next backpacking adventure in Europe.

FACTBOX

A bed in a 16 bed dorm starts from €19.80, 4 bed dorm from €25 per room while a double room in the hotel segment starts from twins from €65 per room, per night.

Åkerlundinkatu 2, 33100 Tampere, Finland.





7 FELS HOSTEL YLLÄS

A new eco-friendly hostel located in beautiful Ylläs has opened up in Lapland to the backpacking community. Run by Tinja, a 'retired backpacker', this hostel is the perfect place to take a break from the rest of the world and immerse yourself in the beauty of the surroundings.

LOCATION

7 Fells Hostel is located in a small town called Kolari near Äkäslompolo lake and right below the Kuertunturi fell. The hostel is a good starting point for hiking in the summer, snowshoeing and skiing during winter thanks to its proximity to the ski resort of Ylläs. The supermarket, pubs and restaurants are within walking distance from the hostel.

ROOMS AND BATHROOMS

If you are on a budget, their 4 and 6-bed dorm are very comfortable and great value.

If you are looking for some privacy they have beautiful doubles. All the furniture in the rooms is second hand, upcycled, which gives the rooms their own personal character.

If you are travelling with family and your loved one and looking for more privacy, they have a bunch of fully equipped studio apartments with kitchenette and shower.

FACILITIES

Nestled in the forest, this is THE place to escape and relax. A common lounge area with its relaxed atmosphere and warm fireplace is the perfect place to relax after spending the day exploring the surrounding nature and wilderness. Read books. Chat with your friends on Facebook messenger with the excellent free Wi-Fi connection in the lounge.

I visited the hostel this summer in July when the region experiences the amazing phenomenon of 'midnight sun' – i.e. 24 hours of sunlight. One evening, I think around 11pm, after a long hike up one of the nearby peaks I popped into their communal sauna (advance notice required and a small fee).

Afterwards at around midnight, bathed in still clear daylight, we enjoyed a barbecue around the open fire with some local beers from the supermarket. My body and mind felt at complete peace. This stay is definitely up there with one of my most memorable hostelling experiences.

It would have been perfect obviously if I had seen the Northern Lights. For that I will

have to return to the hostel between autumn and winter, when you observe the natural phenomenon from the hostel and your dorm bed.

It is a small but friendly team of people who run this hostel led by the friendly Tinja. She is a beacon of knowledge about all things local and is quite popular in the local community. Thanks to her I met a lot of lovely people here.

There's lots to do here in both the summer and winter months. On one of the days, we went cycling around the lake at midnight with Tinja and went picking cloudberry, which proliferate at this time of the year. One day we went hiking up the fells and again on my last day. One day with the help of local herbalist, Eveliina Nina, we went for a ramble through the forest picking wildflowers and local wild herbs. Later we made a delicious wildflower tea and I remember having the deepest most peaceful sleep ever.

These kind of unique beautiful experiences make 7 Fells a one of a kind hostel.

Other things to share with you: this is also a pet friendly hostel, which is fantastic. So if you are looking for a great big adventure with your dog or cat, bring him or her to the 7 Fells and he/she will be accorded a grand welcome.

Linen and towels are not included and are available for hire. If possible, bring these with you. Also, the hostel doesn't serve breakfast but you can help yourself 24/7 to organic coffee/tea in the shared kitchen and lounge area. There is the excellent, well-stocked Jounin Kauppa supermarket nearby where you can gather all the items you need. Also you can get your laundry done here for €2 and this includes environmentally friendly detergent.

- TOP TIP -

For food visit Ravintola Rouhe, probably the nicest restaurant in the Ylläs Äkäslompolo region. They do a great range of stonebaked pizzas and traditional Finnish dishes. It's the perfect place for a romantic dinner or meal with friends. Nearby Pub Selva Pyy brews their own beer, does nice burgers plus hosts an excellent live music night. The Routa cafe inside the fantastic Jounin Kauppa supermarket building does good coffee, cakes and also offers a great value Reindeer soup lunch.

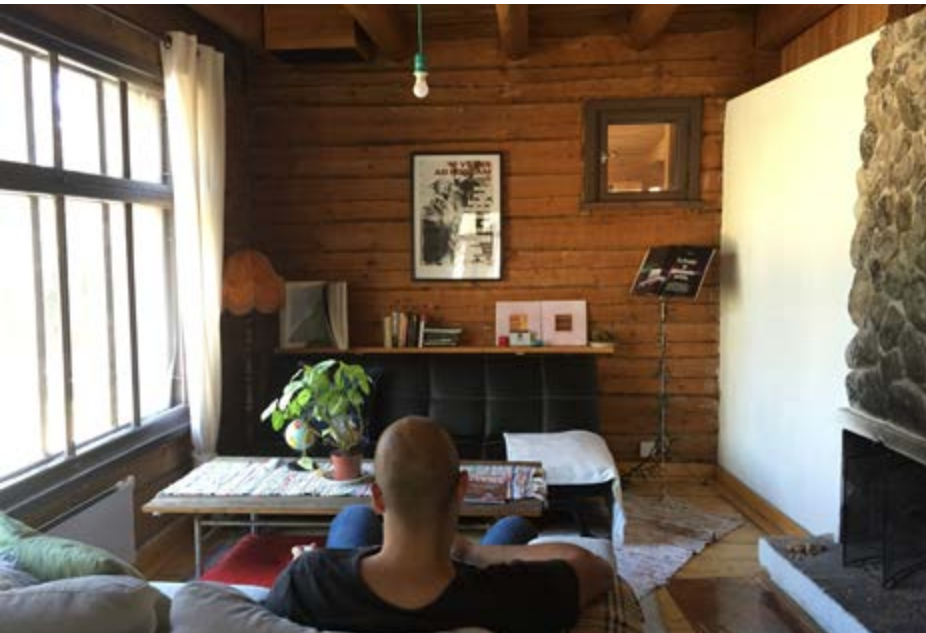
WHAT MAKES THIS A LUXURY HOSTEL

Staying at 7 Fells was an amazing experience. From midnight barbecues to riding bikes around Äkäslompolo Lake at midnight, picking cloudberries or going for an epic hike up the fells nearby- this hostel, offers you a range of simple yet amazing experiences. In winter, it must be a completely different experience altogether, especially with the Northern Lights. This is a hostel I see myself coming back in the months and years to come.

FACTBOX

A single room starts from €35 per night while a bed in a 6 bed mixed dorm costs about €22 per night.

Kartanontie 2, Akaslompolo, Finland.



DENMARK



GENERATOR COPENHAGEN

A great location and top-notch facilities, including a stunning outdoor patio, make Generator Copenhagen the hippest hostel in town.

LOCATION

Generator Hostel benefits from a superb central location in Kongens Nytorv, the main square, just a few hundred yards away from the metro station.

The hostel is just off Stroget, the high street and main artery of Copenhagen, so you're very well located.

ROOMS AND BATHROOMS

A signature of the Generator brand is the variety of lodging: you have the choice of private rooms, 6-8 bed dorms and also female-only dorms. The hostel caters well to the needs of female solo travellers, couples and larger groups.

- TOP TIP -

I highly recommend the private ensuite rooms on the sixth floor. You get great views of the city skyline and it's very peaceful - plus you can insulate yourself from the partying crowd downstairs and get a good night's sleep. The room comes with a separate shower and toilet cubicle, plus a washing basin in the room.

Beds are very comfortable and also have conveniently placed reading lamps and power points to charge your smartphone and gadgets.

FACILITIES

On the first floor, you have the hostel bar, which is huge and almost the size of a full-size football pitch.

Towards the rear, it has lots of comfy chairs and beanies in which to lounge and relax. Towards the front, it has a bar and seating area that converts into a dance floor at night.

The hostel has a busy schedule of activities to keep guests entertained.

Tuesdays is games night: get ready for a great night of board games, pool tournaments and beer pong. Wednesdays is live music night while on Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays they have a resident DJ spinning some tunes. Or you can enjoy their 'Chillax Movie Night' where you can watch a movie on their giant projector screen. Buy a soft-drink or a beer and get popcorn. By the way, the bar is pretty reasonably priced for Copenhagen with a pint of Carlsberg costing around 45 DKK (€6).

Best feature of the hostel? The wooden outdoor patio - especially when the weather's warm. Guests were flowing out with their drinks. Often they'll have DJ sets here. There's no shortage of partying options at Generator Copenhagen.

Other novelties of the hostel include a pétanque bar.

Free Wi-Fi is available and signal strength is best in reception and the bar but was sporadic in my room on the sixth floor.





WHAT MAKES THIS A LUXURY HOSTEL

I really enjoyed my stay at Generator Copenhagen. It's a very cool hostel with the perfect location for exploring the city.

FACTBOX

Dorms from 135 DKK (€18) per person, per night and doubles from 490 DKK (€65.50) per room, per night.

Adelgade 5-7, 1304, Copenhagen K., Denmark.

URBAN HOUSE COPENHAGEN

Not a hostel or a hotel. A curious hybrid mix of both, this hostel/hotel breaks the mould with an impressive range of facilities that include a large lounge area with bar, hot dog restaurant, a cinema, an in-house bicycle shop and last, but not least, a private tattoo studio. Weird but amazing. Welcome to Vesterbro and the Urban House Copenhagen.



URBAN HOUSE

THE LOCATION

The hostel is located in the heart of busy Copenhagen, in the happening district of Vesterbro. It is ideally situated, a mere three-minute walk away from Copenhagen Central Station and a five-minute walk away from the beautiful Tivoli Gardens.

ROOMS AND BATHROOMS

You can check in advance into the hostel online and are given a pin code, which gives you access to your room. Which means there is no need to queue up when you reach the hostel. This has its benefits and disadvantages when it comes to a hostel. The rooms are basic but look beautiful.

There is the option of shared dorms or private rooms. The basic rooms are jazzed up, however, with the cool and funky pop or graffiti art adorning the walls. The rooms come with private bathrooms. The dorms are either mixed or female only with 2-5 bunk beds. Towels and bed linen are included and there are provisions for free lockers in all rooms. Power sockets are placed by every bed. All your needs are taken care of basically.

The rooms and dorms are given quirky individual names like the 'Shoebox' (single room with 1 bunk), the 'Doubleheader' (double room), the 'Bunkalow' ideal for family (1 double bed and a bunk), even to the 'Bunkloads' with 6 bunks.

FACILITIES

There is free Wi-Fi on the hostel premises. Other add-ons include bike rentals, opportunity to play games with a pool table and foosball. You can do your own laundry via the coin-operated laundry and cook your own meals in the communal kitchen. A bar, a restaurant and terrace grace the premises. What really makes the place stand out is the addition of a classic movie theatre and a tattoo parlour. What more could you ask for? You can buy a delicious breakfast at the on-site Urban Bar for 75DKK or a bagged breakfast for 40 DKK. The breakfast includes fresh fruit, juice, yoghurt, Danish Buns served with butter and cold cuts. Wash it all down with a good coffee.

The Urban Bar is popular with locals. You can listen to live music, drink a few beers

and avail of the happy hour specials from 7-9 pm.

If I was to point out any drawbacks, I struggled with the lack of interaction with staff. While the automated, code operated system is efficient, for me personally it is weird. For me hostels and travel in general is all about the personal touch and people.

WHAT MAKES THIS A LUXURY HOSTEL

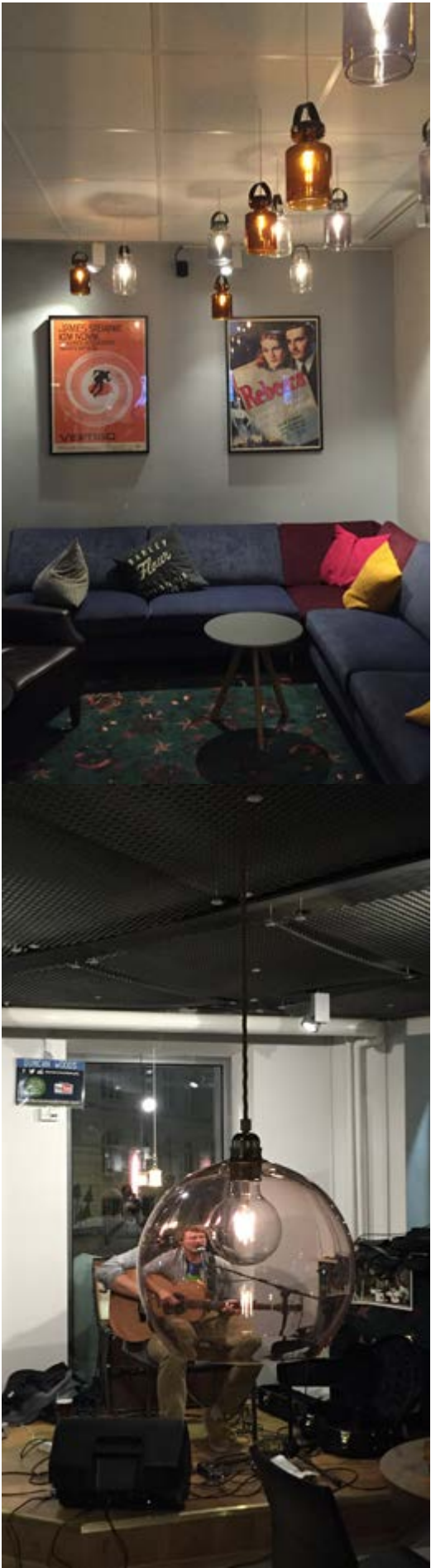
What makes this hostel cool is the beautiful design and the amazing range of facilities.

A place to sleep, to work and to party, the Urban House is a brave new concept. While I am unsure about whether the lack of interaction with staff is a good idea, overall the quirkiness and creativity that has been poured into this hostel makes this definitely a hostel worth experiencing.

FACTBOX

A bed in a 10 bed mixed dorm starts from 207 Kr per night, a bed in 8 bed female dorm starts from 223 kr per night, but the prices vary with the season. A single room – the 'shoebox' starts from 900 Kr per night and a double room from 990 Kr. The Big Family room sleeping 6 persons starts from 1395 Kr.

**Colbjørnsensgade 11, 1652
Copenhagen V, Denmark.**



ICELAND



KEX HOSTEL REYKJAVIK

Looking more like a retro hipster lounge in Brooklyn than an Icelandic abode, Kex Hostel is one of the most stylized hostels in Northern Europe.



LOCATION

Reykjavik is a small, colourful, and very walkable city. Kex Hostel is located right on the water at Skúlagata 28. Cafes and shops can be found within a two-minute walk; the epicentre of the town is a 10-minute walk away.

ROOMS AND BATHROOMS

My private room was simple but had everything I needed: two twin beds with chubby pillows and big, fluffy duvets. Out the window is a view of the water and the distant mountains.

Nearly all of the rooms use shared bathrooms; a few doubles have ensembles. Many of the showers and toilets are private, rather than a large room filled with showers. A few days later, I moved on to the six-bed mixed dorm, which happened to be all-women at the time. While the design in the dorms is basic, they have enough space for all guests. Lockers are provided - though they are tall and skinny, I can fit my valuables but not my whole backpack.

They offer three different double rooms:

- The Double Plus offers one double bed, a private bathroom, linens, towels and a fantastic seaside view.
- The Double Standard has one double bed, shared bathrooms, linens and towels - the same fantastic view.
- The Twin Private offers two single beds, linens and towels.

They also offer female-only dorms.

As for Families, a few of their four-bed dorms are equipped with bunk beds which can be pushed together to form a 'double bunk bed'. Baby cribs are also available.

Children under the age of 3 stay for free and children under 12 pay 50%. The same is true for many of the excursions, which can be booked directly from the hostel reception.

FACILITIES

Travellers to Iceland most often spend their days chasing adrenaline: climbing glaciers, rafting, hiking through the volcanic landscape, snorkelling in near-freezing water. At the end of a day in the chilly outdoors, all you want to do is curl up with a book or your computer.

Kex understands that, and their hostel is

outfitted perfectly. The massive common room is filled with hammocks and comfy couches. Vintage maps dot the walls, and a library with leather chairs and dozens of books takes up one wall.

Vintage pieces are blended with a modern aesthetic. One wall is covered with magnetic letters for instant poetry. In another corner, you'll find a 1940's-style barbershop!

Free Wi-Fi is available in the common room only.

If you're stumped when it comes to the dozens of excursions on offer in the Reykjavik area, the staff at Kex serves as a travel agency and will help you choose and book them. Nearly all excursions will pick you up and drop you off at Kex.

While Kex has a bar and restaurant and often hosts events for outside organizations, I don't find there to be a community spirit amongst the travellers. Most of the guests here keep to themselves. I think it's because travel to Iceland isn't spontaneous - most people arrive here with flights booked and activities scheduled, leaving little time for serendipity.

On my final night, I decided to try out Kex's restaurant and order the roasted bone marrow, served with crostini and a salad.

It was fantastic. Never did I imagine I'd be eating bone marrow at a hostel!

The dessert is Icelandic-style tiramisu, made with layers of tart skyr yoghurt instead of mascarpone. As picky as I am about my tiramisu, it's strangely delicious.

- TOP TIP -

Splurge on the Flybus +. While most of Reykjavik is walkable, the bus station is a bit further away and it's a 20-minute walk to Kex - a bit long when you're carrying luggage!



WHAT MAKES THIS A LUXURY HOSTEL

This is one of the absolute best-styled hostels I've ever seen. It's fun and offbeat with loads of retro charm. While the rooms themselves don't have the same style factor as the common room and the hallways, Kex is a welcome respite from run-of-the-mill hostels. The location is convenient and the prices are very reasonable for this expensive country. I'd love to see them put on activities for the hostel guests and foster some community spirit.



FACTBOX

Dorms from 2300 ISK (€14), singles from 8400 ISK (€53) per room, doubles from 9400 ISK (€59) per room.

Skúlagata 28, Reykjavík 101.

HÉRAÐSSKÓLINN' HOSTEL ICELAND

Héraðsskólinn's atmosphere will immediately bring you a sense of warmth and belonging in a country with a low population and often even lower temperatures! Despite being situated in a small town, this hostel's location offers a natural stopping point with the ability to travel either west to Thingvellir National Park, or east to Geysir and Gullfoss Waterfall.





THE LOCATION

Situated almost perfectly at the halfway point along Iceland’s Golden Circle, Héraðsskólinn provides a charm and warmth that harkens back to its roots as an original Icelandic schoolhouse. Located in Laugarvatn, a town of less than 200 people, the hostel dominates a spot on the awe-inspiring Laugarvatn Lake - perfectly situated for a breakfast sunrise. The hostel is accessible via the island’s public bus service, Straeto, using bus number 73, but be warned that it only departs the N1 gas station in Selfoss once per day and times vary throughout the week. Luckily, upon arriving in Laugarvatn, the hostel is only a short walk from the bus stop. There is also ample parking in the hostel’s lot for rental cars.

ROOMS AND BATHROOMS

Héraðsskólinn Hostel offers accommodations for all size groups and all types of guests from single rooms to a 10-bunk dorm in a sub-basement room with plenty of windows. The bunk beds are situated next to outlets and their wooden construction contributes to the warmth that the entire hostel exudes. Regardless of how you arrived, a night’s rest on Héraðsskólinn’s immaculately comfortable mattresses will leave you ready to adventure the next morning! Private rooms have bathrooms inside, while the dorm shares several individual bathrooms - all extremely clean and well-maintained facilities. Unfortunately, the dorm lacked lockers for all guests to use.

FACILITIES

The owners have managed to blend the charm of this former schoolhouse with the luxury and feel of a ski lodge. Guests are asked to remove shoes upon entering and wear any number of provided slippers while inside, and are provided access to a gorgeous study with full library. Outside of the hostel’s doors lies nearby Laugarvatn Lake. Guests can mosey down any number of the paths located just outside the hostel door to enjoy a dip in the lake during the summer (or winter if they’re brave enough!).

At night, Héraðsskólinn Hostel provides two open-air balconies from which you can enjoy a drink and catch the Northern Lights – far from the lights and bustle of Reykjavik!



WHAT MAKES THIS A LUXURY HOSTEL

Unlike big-city hostels, where owners are tempted to solely provide a place to sleep, Héraðsskólinn Hostel works to blend traditional Icelandic culture and nature with 21st century amenities. The location provides access to the amenities of the lake, a place to enjoy the Northern Lights, an ability to immerse yourself in an Icelandic atmosphere, and a magnificent night's sleep before continuing to explore Iceland.

FACTBOX

Very popular during the high season (June through August); rooms are very often full.
A bed in a dorm starts around €25, a double with shared bathroom is €80 while an ensuite double room will cost you €120.

Intersection of Laugarbraut and Laugarvatnsvegur (Route 37), Laugarbraut, Laugarvatn, Iceland.

HUNGARY



WOMBATS HOSTEL BUDAPEST

Wombats City Hostel Budapest is much more than a hostel. Not only with the soul and joy of a hostel, but also the services and professionalism of a hotel, it receives hundreds of guests from different countries.

LOCATION

The hostel is located in the Jewish neighbourhood, (a strategic location to visit every touristic spot of the city- in district VII) a few meters from the metro station Deak Ferenc Ter and surrounded by bars and restaurants for all tastes and budgets.

ROOMS AND BATHROOMS

The building, a former 4-star hostel, has 112 rooms and it can host 461 people. Rooms are spacious, bright, well ventilated and equipped with lockers that would only open pushing your cardkey against a small button. Also each bed has a light and a socket. Bathrooms stand out for their size and cleanliness. The hostel is impeccable all the time, no matter how many people have been in the hallways, bar and lobby. Everyday they clean all bedrooms and bathrooms.

The mattresses here are pretty good, better than average hostel mattresses.

FACILITIES

As is standard with all Wombats Hostels, you have a 'Wombar'; here too where you can drink beer, a Hungarian wine or any drink you like. Of course there are many options to go for a drink in Budapest, the Ruin Bars are spectacular and they are a few blocks from Wombats. Our favourite: Szimpla Kert.

If you are a fan of good music, in August don't miss the Sziget Festival, one of the most important music festivals in Europe. Also you can enjoy classical music concerts at The Hungarian State Opera at affordable prices.

The Wombats has a fully equipped kitchen for guest use. There is a supermarket a few blocks from the hostel, so there's no excuse to not cook a delicious meal.

On the other hand, if you want to go out for dinner, one option is Frici Papa - Király 55. There you will find Hungarian food at great prices. The bad thing is that you might queue for a few minutes and they only take cash. If you want to eat hamburgers, in front of Frici Papa there's an excellent place called

Zing Burger - Király 60. Also next to the Wombats there's a pizza place that makes delicious Italian style pizzas.

Don't worry if you ran out of clean clothes. Sometimes it could become an issue if you've been travelling for several days around the old continent. With little money you can do laundry at Wombats and it's much cheaper to do it there than any other laundry service in Berlin or Prague.

Wombats is a great place to meet other travellers. There are lots of people from different continents and all spaces are designed as places where guests might connect with each other. From breakfast, at the lobby, playing pool or some foosball, there is always someone there to talk to and share stories. The lobby is huge here and there are many places to relax and read a book. It is also worth noting that the hostel offers a simple breakfast buffet for as little as €3. Also the Wi-Fi is good and perfect for making Skype calls to friends and family.

Top tip: If you arrive too early you can put your stuff in the luggage room and relax at the back of their huge lobby where there is plenty of room to stretch your legs.



WHAT MAKES THIS A LUXURY HOSTEL

Because of its energy, excellent location, professional staff, cleanliness, modern common areas, complete breakfast, and safety, Wombats City Hostel Budapest, is a great place to stay for a reasonable price. The adventurous spirit of a hostel combined with the comfort of a hotel, makes them luxurious hosts.

FACTBOX

The rate for a double room with bathroom is €55 euro and a bed in a dorm starts around the €14 mark.

Wombats City Hostel Budapest
Budapest, Király u. 20, 1061 Hungary



**CZECH
REPUBLIC**

MOSAIC HOUSE HOSTEL PRAGUE

If there was one word to describe Mosaic House Hostel, I would use the word 'hybrid.' It is a cross between a hostel and a hotel, a music, design and eco hostel, plus a place where you can socialise, party hard and then have a good night's sleep. An intriguing mix of many features, whatever reason you choose to stay at Mosaic, you are guaranteed to have a pretty good time.





LOCATION

It is located in the centre of Prague, an easy walk to Old Town Square/Charles Bridge - about 15 to 20 minutes.

The nearest metro stop is Karlovo náměstí - 10 minutes' walk from the hostel.

ROOMS AND BATHROOMS

With 55 shared and 41 private rooms, all with ensuite bathrooms that include shower or bathtub plus rain-dance shower, whatever your budget there's something comfortable and stylish for you at the Mosaic House.

Or if you're looking for something more upmarket and salubrious, rent out their penthouse suite, complete with its own garden and epic views of the city.

There are mixed dorms and female only dorms. The rooms are spacious and offer acceptable privacy. The female dorms have extras like mirrors and hair dryers. Dorms come with security lockers which can be accessed by your keycard. Bunk beds here come with personal storage spaces, reading lights and plugs. Beds are comfortable. Bed Linen is included while towels are available

for hire for a small fee. Most rooms offer air conditioning: check with the description of your room before booking it.

Note that just across the road from the hostel they've renovated a beautiful art nouveau building, where on the ground floor they've opened a place called Mingle Hostel, which has a bunch of cool 4-6 bed dorms (beds with private lights, plug points and a storage space for iPads/phones/keys) and a beautiful shared kitchen space.

On the floors above they have private apartments, which are perfect if you are visiting with family or friends.

FACILITIES

The Mosaic House is proud of its green credentials as the first hostel in Czech Republic to have a water recycling system, to use 100% renewable energy and also the first to receive the BREEAM In-Use 'Excellent' certification.

Other unique features of this hostel is the La Loca MUSIC BAR & LOUNGE, an in-house music bar and lounge which is a destination in its own right with live music and entertainment every night - from tango nights and Karaoke to hosting upcoming

and established acts.

The hostel offers a fantastic breakfast buffet for €7. Price is steep but you do get a generous spread: unlimited coffee, tea & fresh juices, eggs, bacon or sausages, fresh fruits, organic yoghurt, homemade muesli and fresh breads from a local bakery.

Breakfast is served from 7.00 till 10.30am on weekdays and till 12pm on weekends. Other key facilities to note: The hostel does have do-it-yourself washing machines and dryers on site for 280 CZK (€100). If you have limited time (or are feeling a bit lazy) the hostel also offers an out-of-house laundry service. Ask about both at reception. Also at the moment there is no guest kitchen at this hostel. If you are hungry the bar does offer range of classic traditional pub fare, burgers and drinks (rocking cocktails, spirits, Czech beer and more).

The hostel can also organise tours of the city by bike or segway.

WHAT MAKES THIS A LUXURY HOSTEL

In my opinion, what makes this a cool, luxury hostel are the sustainable/green features and brilliant design. They're not part of a big chain and keep the positive, relaxed vibe of a small hostel.

FACTBOX

Prices for the private rooms start from €65 mark while beds in dorms start from €10-€15 mark depending on the season.

Odboru 278/4, Prague 2, Prague, Czech Republic





CZECH INN PRAGUE

We absolutely loved staying at the Czech Inn. It is in an excellent location, a beautiful property to stay at, a great place to meet other travellers, and fantastic for experiencing Prague outside of the touristic city centre.

THE LOCATION

Located in Vršovice Neighbourhood in Prague 10, which was once a working class area but has recently transformed into a hipster/artist neighbourhood with plenty of bars, cafes, and restaurants nearby. Some of our favourites included the amazing vegan restaurant Plevel and craft beer bar Bad Flash, which are located across the street from Czech Inn. If you want a real local Czech experience check out BAR v Krymský. It's a small, albeit smoky, bar with great music, friendly people, a few craft beers, and a super laidback vibe. If you're lucky enough to be in Prague for the Korso Krymska street festival, it's not to be missed. People from all over Prague converge on Krymska Street where local businesses set up stalls to sell their wares, musicians perform on various stages, and, of course, ample beer is on offer.

Tram Stop: Krymska for the 10, 16, and 22 Tram. You can also take the 135 bus from Florenc bus station.

ROOMS AND BATHROOMS

The Czech Inn offers guests everything from luxurious private apartments and rooms, to 4 to 36 bed dorms, and all female or all male dorms. Each room has a different, clean and minimalist design with lots of character. You can choose from en suite bathrooms or shared facilities.

The private rooms, which feel more like hotel rooms, are among the nicest we've seen in any hostel around the world. The one thing we would like to see is a mini-refrigerator in every private room, but otherwise they are incredibly beautiful, cozy and comfortable.

If a private room is out of your budget but you'd like to upgrade from a standard dorm, their top floor premium dorms are likely to be perfect. Premium dorms consist of two bedrooms that share a common kitchen and living room area, have at least one bathroom, and no bunk beds. The premium dorms feel more like a private apartment and are a great place to meet and mingle with other guests in a more intimate setting.

The standard dorms are really nice too but rooms on the 1st and 2nd floor do need a facelift (which we hear is in the works)



so guests are more comfortable and have individual bed lamps and sockets. Unless you're on a super tight budget we would recommend opting for one of the smaller dorms, because although the 36-bed dorm room is partitioned, we can't really imagine sleeping in the same room with that many people!

FACILITIES

Free linens, free Wi-Fi throughout the building, and free maps of the surrounding area promoting local businesses. Towels can be rented for a low fee and guests can borrow hair dryers, irons, alarm clocks, or adapters free of charge.

Czech Inn also has an in-house social network called Comundu where you can arrange to meet other travellers. It's ideal if you're not staying in a dorm, or if you're a bit shy but still want to find other likeminded travellers to hang out with.

Czech Inn has an onsite basement bar with amazing microbrew beer, and entertainment and socializing options for guests like movie nights, quiz nights, and sports screenings. Guests can also partake in a free city walking tour with bus pick up from the hostel. There are also self-service laundry facilities on site. Unfortunately, the hostel doesn't have a kitchen but it is something that is planned for the near future.

Czech Inn does offer breakfast for guests at an extra €6, but it's a bit lacklustre so we

recommend going straight to their coffee corner next to the reception desk for a cup of super high quality brew supplied by from La Boheme (one of the absolute best coffeeshops in Prague) before heading out for breakfast at either Moment Vegan Cafe or Marthy's Kitchen at Francouzská.

- TOP TIP -

Get out of the overcrowded city centre and stay in the ultra cool Vršovice Neighbourhood. Once you've had a chance to visit the unique little shops in the area, have a Czech cider from InCider bar (the only cider bar in Prague), and had a few cups of coffee from Cafe v lese. You can easily walk to either of the two other interesting neighbourhoods in Prague that are near Czech Inn. Vinohrady and Zizkov are not far and also have incredible nightlife, beautiful architecture, and plenty of great restaurants to choose from. For an absolutely stunning sunset, head to Riegrovy Sady, which is a 15-minute walk away, with a few bottles of beer and grab a spot on the lawn overlooking the city!



WHAT MAKES THIS A LUXURY HOSTEL

The Czech Inn is a beautifully decorated hostel with unique decor. Bright colours pop against muted tones and vintage furniture, and the odd baubles throughout the building, make it one of the most visually attractive and interesting hostels we have ever seen.

FACTBOX

Dorms Beds: €12 (low season), €18 (peak)
Premium Dorm Beds: €19 (low), €26 (peak)
Private Twin Rooms: €51(low), €73 (peak)
Private Double Rooms: €60 (low), €83 (peak)
Apartments: €96 (low), €142 (peak)

Francouzská 76, 101 00 Prague

SOPHIE'S HOSTEL PRAGUE

Staying at Sophie's Hostel was a real treat. Everything about the hostel is perfect and the location couldn't be better if you want to experience local life in Prague but still be a short tram ride from the centre. The hostel's design is brilliant, their staff are all highly professional and pay special attention to each guest, and everything is excellently organised.



THE LOCATION

Sophie's Hostel is tucked away on a quiet side street in New Town, on the edge of Vinohrady, in one of the most picturesque areas of Prague. The hostel is a short tram or metro ride from the historic city centre and is surrounded by local shops, restaurants, bars, and cafes. So, it's an excellent option for anyone who wants easy access to all of the main tourist attractions but still wants a taste of local Prague life.

Sophie's is within walking distance to IP Pavlova (surrounded by shops, restaurants, and cafes and host to a small farmers market) and gorgeous Namesti Miru, that is home to various events and markets throughout the year. The Christmas Market located in Namesti Miru is our absolute favourite in all of Prague.

Sophie's receptionist, who has a degree in history and art history, puts on a neighbourhood tour once a week for guests looking to learn more about the surrounding area. You can even check out the neighbourhood before you book your stay on their Facebook page by searching for the hashtag #SophiesHood.

Metro: IP Pavlova stop on the Red C line
Tram: IP Pavlova on the 10, 11, 16, or 22 Trams

ROOMS AND BATHROOMS

Apartments, private rooms, dorms, Sophie's Hostel has it all! Dorm rooms have beautiful wooden floors, brushed steel bed frames, comfy mattresses and big, plush pillows. Some dorms have their own kitchenette and no bunks but our favourite thing about the dorms are the rainhead showers!

Every guest also has their own locker, a shelf, personal light, and electrical outlet. The female only dorms, which all have their own kitchen and bathroom, are also available which makes Sophie's Hostel a fantastic option for female travellers. In fact, something curious about Sophie's is that it is probably the most popular hostel in Prague for Asian female travellers.

FACILITIES

Facilities include: free linens, Wi-Fi, and custom maps promoting local businesses. Towels can be rented for a low fee and guests can borrow hair dryers, irons, alarm clocks, or adapters free of charge.

Sophie's Hostel has a lovely bar that's open 24/7. Guests can start their day off here with a fantastic and inexpensive homemade breakfast buffet. There are two options, €6 for a cold buffet including breads, meats, cheeses, jams, yoghurt, granola, fruit, juice, tea, and coffee. However, we highly recommend upgrading to the €8 hot option that will get you sausage, bacon, eggs, pancakes, and pan-fried veggies. You can also grab a coffee or tea at the bar during the day, or have drinks late into the night!

Sophie's also has daily events like morning 10K river runs, and free pancake nights! All of their events are posted on their website.

- TOP TIP -

Upgrade to the hot option breakfast. Even though it is €2 more, you'll be so full you won't have to eat lunch and you'll be fully fuelled for one of the urban walking tours the staff puts on for the surrounding area. It's a fantastic way to experience a sweet slice of local life.





WHAT MAKES THIS A LUXURY HOSTEL

Beautiful decor, friendly staff, comfortable, clean, and affordable accommodations (did we mention the rain head showers?) in an incredible neighbourhood makes Sophie's Hostel one of the best hostels in Prague.

FACTBOX

Dorm beds: €14 in low season, €21 in peak season

Twin/Double Rooms: €66 in low season, €93 in high season

Apartments: €97 in low season, €138 in high season

Sophie's Hostel: Melounová 2, Prague 120 00, Czech Republic

A photograph of a rustic interior room. The walls are made of rough-hewn stone and are decorated with several framed pictures and certificates. A large, patterned sofa with a green and red floral design is covered with a red blanket and has two pillows. In front of the sofa is a wooden coffee table with a glass top featuring a colorful geometric pattern. To the right, there is a desk with a typewriter and a lamp. A green armchair and a brown leather armchair are also visible. The floor is covered with a red and blue patterned rug. The ceiling is made of dark wood beams.

SIR TOBY'S PRAGUE

Lovely rooms,
amazing staff,
fantastic times had
by all. We highly
recommend it!



THE LOCATION

Sir Toby's is located in, Holesovice, a traditionally industrial, and gritty, neighbourhood in northern Prague. Despite the fact that the purely industrial area has transitioned to one that caters to the more artistic minded, it has yet to shed it's authentic industrial feel entirely.

Home to the DOX Modern Art Gallery, the notable Cross Club, and Pražská tržnice (Prague Market) you'll have plenty of weird and wonderful things to see and experience in this part of town. There are also a number of good cafes to get your caffeine fix, including Paralelní Polis, Phil's Corner, and Phil's Twenty7.

It is about a 15-minute tram ride from the historic city centre and can be reached by the number 1, 12, 14, and 25 tram via the Dělnická stop.

ROOMS AND BATHROOMS

Guests at Toby's can choose from 5 to 12 person dorm rooms (including female and male only dorms), or cozy and tastefully

decorated private rooms decorated with interesting antiques. Each room has beautiful dark wood floors, richly painted or wallpapered walls and gorgeous furniture, fixtures and drapes.

Smaller shared rooms are bunk free, all beds come with big fluffy pillows and smaller dorms have individual sockets, bed lamps, and lockers where guests can store their phones while charging. All of the bathrooms in the dorms and most of the bathrooms in the private rooms were renovated in 2016.

It's worth mentioning that the 12 bed dorms at Toby's all have 3 level bunk beds. Which, while not an ideal experience for us, does mean that anyone travelling on a tight budget can still afford a hostel with an incredible atmosphere and social experience.

FACILITIES

Sir Toby's scores high on cozy vintage design and has one of the best social experiences you'll get from any hostel today. It's nearly impossible to stay at Toby's and not have a great time. From the frequent

complimentary (yes, FREE!) BBQs, to their pub with beer, food, live music and trivia nights, to the garden terrace, you'd have to make a real effort not to socialize and enjoy your stay here.

- TOP TIP -

Go with the flow at Sir Toby's and join in on the fun and activities. You really can't go wrong staying here if you are looking for an incredible social atmosphere, great location, and interesting and unique hostel design. Be sure to participate in the trivia nights and/or BBQs for a real treat.



WHAT MAKES THIS A LUXURY HOSTEL

Sir Toby's has both style and substance. It's one of the most unique and visually appealing hostels we've seen to date with a design that can be described as Art Nouveau meets antique. The hostel is also a fantastic place to mingle and interact with other guests. From the communal breakfast, BBQs, onsite Pub, and the amazingly friendly staff, anyone staying here will want to extend their stay!

FACTBOX

Dorm Beds: €11 in low season, €17 in high season

Twin Rooms: €43 low season, €66 high season

Double Rooms: €54 low season, €78 high season

Dělnická 1155/24, 170 00 Praha 7, Holešovice

SLOVE

NIA

HOSTEL CELICA LJUBLJANA

Ever considered spending a night behind bars without getting arrested? Welcome to Hostel Celica, a former jail turned hostel.





LOCATION

Hostel Celica is located just a few metres from the main bus and train station in Ljubljana and a 10-minute walk from the Ljubljana city centre.

ROOMS AND BATHROOMS

My room was Prison Cell #107. It was quite a radical departure from all the other hostels I've stayed in, complete with a barred metal door.

As it swung open and made that all too familiar whining sound, it felt surreal – after years of watching prison dramas, I was starring in my own.

My immediate instinct when I shut the door behind me and dumped my rucksack on the bed was to escape – to find a ventilation pipe or drain and dig a tunnel under the bed with my ballpoint pen.

The cells are quite tight and clammy. Everything is neatly squeezed in, bunk bed on the bottom and top, reading light and a power point conveniently situated behind the pillow.

Each of the cells is beautifully illustrated by local artists, giving them a unique feel and look.

None of the cells are ensuite. Instead, there are a handful of toilets and showers located on each floor. Given that this is a relatively small- to medium-sized hostel, they thankfully never get overcrowded.

Air conditioning is available in all the rooms, except the 1st floor because of its local rules and regulations (which they hope to overcome in the near future).

FACILITIES

Like all good hostels, Celica excels in looking after its guests and offering a home away from home experience.

From the reception staff to the breakfast staff to even the cleaners, everyone has a smile on their face.

The hostel benefits from its alternate ego as an arts and culture centre, but its true piece de resistance is its fantastic garden.

Overgrown with huge tall trees and a nice spread of colourful tables and chairs under umbrella shades, it is an oasis of calm in the middle of the city. Towards the back of the garden, there is a separate area with hammocks and beanie chairs - perfect for grabbing a book and relaxing.

Breakfast is available for €4. A great way to start my day in Ljubljana.

Every evening, the candlelit garden becomes a meeting point for guests and locals who flood into see a wide variety of live concerts, art exhibitions, and themed parties, all of which are free for guests to attend.

Monday to Friday, there is a steady trickle of locals coming in to drink coffee and meet friends in the hostel bar or to take advantage of Celica's excellent lunch

specials. For as little as €7, you can enjoy a three-course meal (Main dish + 2 additional courses of your choice which can be either the soup of the day, salad or dessert).

I tried the three-course lunch for myself: a delicious soup, chicken curry and rice, and a nice slice of melon for dessert. A simple but great meal, just what one needs after days of hostelling, eating street food, and drinking way too many beers.

On hot summer nights, the hostel organises an excellent all-you-can-eat barbecue (€5.90) for guests on certain days of the week.

The hostel also organises a make-your-own-pizza night for €5, Burger Night (€5.90) plus there are live concerts every Tuesday with jam sessions afterwards.

Hostel Celica for this reason feels like a meeting point between the world and the locals of Ljubljana. It is the place to be. Everywhere you walk in Ljubljana, there are signs pointing to Hostel Celica. It's great to be in a place that is such an intrinsic part of the community and its history.

Luxury is not just a concept that can be simply defined by a double room with ensuite facilities in a hostel. Luxury is an experience.

At Hostel Celica, I did not feel like a typical tourist; instead, I was a guest of the city and its people. That for me is what makes staying in Hostel Celica an unforgettable luxury experience.



WHAT MAKES THIS A LUXURY HOSTEL

In the era of mass tourism and globalization, where cities have been homogenised and there is less emphasis on character and individuality, it's rare to find experiences that provoke, inspire and move the human imagination. Nominated by Lonely Planet as the N°1 hippest hostel in the world, Celica is a truly unique experience, situated in a stunning city. Come and visit Celica and Ljubljana before the hordes of tourists come.

FACTBOX

A bed in a 12-bed dorms starts from €18; triple bed dorms from €22 per person while the 2 bed prison cells start from €24 per person, per night. Note that the prices do NOT include the tourist tax €1,27/person/night.

Metelkova 8, SI, 1000 Ljubljana, Slovenia



IRELAND



GENERATOR HOSTEL DUBLIN

Have you ever looked at something online only to be utterly disappointed when you see it in real life? Well, happily Generator Dublin is not one of those let downs, in fact it is one of the rare gems that lives up to the expectations built from online photos and representation.

LOCATION

The hostel is situated in the Northern section of Dublin while the main tourist attractions and nightlife hotspots are located on the south side including the famous Temple Bar. However, Generator is conveniently located between two bike hire stations, one block from the light rail tram (known as the Luas) and two blocks off the city's Hop On Hop Off Bus tour stops and the Town Buses (including the Airport Bus) stop on the main street a block beyond the end of the Square. The hostel itself backs onto the famous Old Jameson Whisky Distillery, which in itself is a top tourist attraction with a café, restaurant and the famous 360 degree bar that gives you a beautiful panoramic view of the city.

Being away from the main tourist centre, the place is quiet, perfect for a good night's sleep. A great little pub sits at the top of the Square called the Cobblestones, and features regular traditional music sessions, while once a week, Generator also have musicians frequenting their bar, playing some tunes on their way to Cobblestones.

The walk from town to Generator is about 10-15 minutes depending on your pace, but takes you past some of Dublin's pretty bridges and also right by the oldest pub in Ireland, The Brazen Head. Often a desirable trait of a hostel is it's proximity to the action, but Generator manages to balance location with useful transport connections, walkable distance to the centre of the city.

ROOMS AND BATHROOMS

The décor in reception is bright, bubbly and trendy cool without being overwhelming and the style and attention to décor detail is continued throughout the building and rooms with a stylized wall panel brightening up one wall and offsetting the cool blue tone of the ensuite walls.

My twin room was small but not cramped and perfect for two friends traveling together, though a couple might hope for a less linear layout. The hostel also offers a range of triple, quad and multi bunk dorms, with a large portion of female only 'Luxurious Ladies' dorms, depending on your needs. All rooms feature ensuites and full-length mirrors.

The main pluses of the twin room were it's wonderful large windows letting in the sunshine, the ability to open the windows and let some fresh air in, comfortable and sturdy beds that don't sink as you sit on them, decent pillows and small but clean ensuite bathrooms complete with towels (not included for dorms).

FACILITIES

Generator offer a range of excellent facilities that include large spacious common areas where guests can enjoy a pint from the bar or a meal from the pop up restaurant or onsite café.

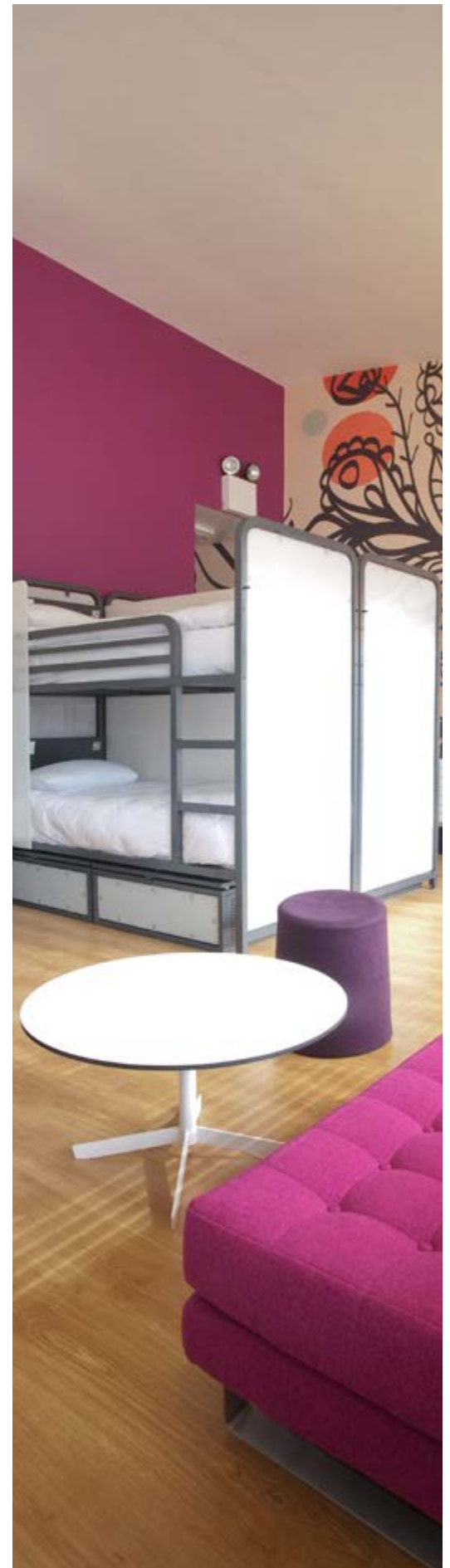
The free Wi-Fi extends throughout the hostel and signal is strong on all the floors. The password changes weekly so if you stay over on a Sunday night, you'll need to pick up the new password or check the daily board where it is listed.

A free walking tour starts at the Hostel Lobby at 10.30am every morning. Generator also run a travel desk where you can book city tours and gain assistance with planning your travel itinerary.

Just as with their other properties, the hostel has a bunch of exciting events taking place in the hostel from free beer and whisky tasting evenings to beer pong, quiz nights and live music session featuring local bands.

Other key features of this hostel: you have a variety of different breakfast options to choose, from full continental breakfast to a simple cup of coffee and croissant. Prices start from €3.50. You can buy breakfast online when you book, or at reception when you arrive.

Generator Dublin caters really well to groups, be it hen parties, stag nights, tour groups, families or just groups of friends, with a variety of packages available, some of which can include breakfast in bed, or even your own DJ and cocktail lessons when booking the Ladies Jacuzzi suite.





WHAT MAKES THIS A LUXURY HOSTEL

Being further away from the hustle and bustle of the city centre, the hostel has a much more appealing atmosphere to cater to a wide variety of travellers and it's quirky art and accents give the place a really positive energy.

The staff are friendly and helpful whether they worked at reception, at the bar or in the café and pop up restaurant.

The thing I noticed most about Generator was the look on people's faces as they entered the lobby, always looking around in slight awe or wonder, smiling at the uniqueness and appeal of this design hostel.

It is incredibly female friendly, solo traveller friendly and even suitable for large groups. All in all, I would stay again and look forward to seeing what developments are implemented over the summer.

FACTBOX

Dorms start from €15 per person while Privates start at €50 per room, per night.

Smithfield Square Dublin 7, Ireland

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It has been an amazing journey from the moment (one bitterly cold Scottish morning back in December 2011) when the idea popped into my head to this moment: the book in your hands.

The book is a team effort. They are a few people I'd like to thank for making this project and book a reality.

First of all I'd like to thank all of the Luxury Hostels featured in this book. It has been a pleasure meeting each of you and an honour to be able to tell your story to the whole wide world. Each hostel has a special memory in my heart and no doubt, without their support and enthusiasm, this project would have never seen the light of day.

A special mention goes to my partner in this project, Hostelworld. The Hostelworld team, Freya, Celia and Otto, have been hugely supportive of my efforts. Thank you for showing your faith in me and supporting this project.

Thank you to my copyeditor, Arpita Bhattacharya of BagfullofBooks.com fame who was generous in donating her time to help me pull this e-book together.

Then, there is also the creative genius that is Rodrigo Rodrigues and Filipe Freitas from Semilha Studio, who have done an amazing job designing this e-book.

Also, big thanks to Ana de Sousa, an incredibly gifted illustrator who put together the beautiful cover for this book.

Big love also to Rui Dantas Rodrigues from Terminal 7 who has helped me put together videos for over 40 of the hostels featured here. I'm very excited to share these videos with you on the blog, which will give you a deeper insight into the people who make these hostels very special.

Visiting all the 96 hostels personally was difficult so I am incredibly grateful to the following travel bloggers for contributing and taking the time to review some of the hostels featured- Michael

Miszczak and Randi Delano from Justapack.com, Kate McCulley from AdventurousKate.com, Kamila Napora from MyWanderlust.pl, Ana Sofia Vasconcelos from FromMadeiratoMars.com, Alejandra Foti from Ahivamos.info, Cameron Cobb from CamEscapes.com, Flora Baker from FloratheExplorer.com, Laura Porter from AboutLondonLaura.com, Brooke Schoenman from HerPackingList.com, Ed Remy from rexyedventures.com, Larissa Olenicoff from the blonde-gypsy.com & Nick Martin from TheDollarAdventurer.com -thank you! Please do checkout their blogs and follow them.

Thank you also to the amazing people who have been with me on this journey from the beginning: Sijad Shah, Shona Maguire, Melvin Boecher, Keith Jenkins, Kim Heinen, Jaume Marin, Colm Hanratty, Steve Lowy and the Umi Team, Nicholas Montemaggi, Paul Dow, Michael Ball, Steve Keenan, Gonçalo Castanho, Chris Richardson and Jordi Sinclair.

To my sister Arpita Bhattacharya, Raja, Meli, my Ma and Baba- thank for your love and for always encouraging me to go after what I want.

I'd like to thank my lady, Sofia Vasconcelos. Thank you for your love, your passion for life and supporting me through thick and thin.

Finally, thank you to you, the reader for downloading this book. I hope you enjoy reading about these luxury hostels and it inspires you on your future travels.

