

lonely planet Hotels & Hostels

Want more Sleeping recommendations than we could ever pack into this little ol' book? Craving more detail – including extended reviews and photographs? Want to read reviews by other travellers and be able to post your own? Just make your way over to lonelyplanet.com/hotels and check out our thorough list of independent reviews, then reserve your room simply and securely.

SLEEPING

top picks

- Soho Hotel (p342)
- Rookery (p354)
- Clink (p356)
- Summer Hotel (p348)
- Petersham (p361)
- Blakes (p352)
- Hazlitt's (p343)
- Stylotel (p357)
- Luna Simone Hotel (p354)
- Hoxton Hotel (p355)

SLEEPING

Accommodation in London is among the most expensive on earth, and you can expect to spend a very large portion of your travel budget on it. At the same time, despite the increase in hotel rooms in recent years, demand still outstrips supply in this, the capital of Europe, so it's essential that you book at least part of your accommodation before arriving, especially during holiday periods and in summer.

Another problem here can be quality – even in the midrange. A large part of readers' letters sent to Lonely Planet about London and the *London* guide concern accommodation, many of them complaining about the quality and cleanliness of hostels, guesthouses and some hotels, 'fauna' in the rooms and the rudeness of staff. Hopefully the descriptions in this chapter will help you make your choice.

Of course it's not all bad news. A miniboom in hotel building continues apace, with thousands of new rooms expected before the Summer Olympics open here in 2012. A slew of upmarket boutique hotels have brought a real sense of style to the city's digs, and scores of midrange hotels and B&Bs are following suit. At the other end of the spectrum, some places have begun to fill a gap in the market by providing boringly functional but affordable rooms. A very exciting trend recently has been the convergence of these two extremes in a new crop of 'budget boutique' hotels, providing a bit of chic at reasonable prices.

ACCOMMODATION STYLES

London has a superb range of deluxe hotels (from £350 per double) and you'll be spoiled for choice with old classics that combine the best in traditional atmosphere and modern comforts. There's also good choice in the top-end category (anything from £180 to £350), which offers superior comforts without the prestige. Also in this bracket you'll find many of the boutique and style hotels that have sprung up in recent years. Below £180 there's a bit of a slide in quality and choice. Although there's an increasing number of terrific places to rest your head without hemorrhaging your budget, it's still not enough. And if you were expecting to spend less than £100 a night on a double room during the week, your lodgings probably won't provide the most cherished memories of your trip. (On the other hand, you will find some good weekend deals for that price.) In London, cheap means less than £80 per en suite double. After B&Bs,

the cheapest forms of accommodation are hostels, both the official Youth Hostel Association (YHA) ones, of which there are six in London, and the (usually) hipper, more party-orientated independent ones.

Hotel rooms in the UK are subject to a 17.5% 'value added tax' or VAT. Many hotels quote rates inclusive of VAT, while others do not so it always pays to ask if you are uncertain. Remember, though, that many hotels – especially deluxe ones – regularly offer promotional deals on the internet that are much lower than their published rates. Unless otherwise indicated, accommodation prices quoted in this book include breakfast.

The accommodation options in this guide are listed by area and then by price, from most to least expensive. See the boxed text, *left*, for more information on accommodation prices. The choice is enormous, but the lower end is consistently oversubscribed, so if your budget is limited it's a good idea to book well ahead. Good resources for finding and booking hotels include www.hotelsoflondon.co.uk, www.londonlodging.co.uk and www.frontdesk.co.uk.

LONGER-TERM RENTALS

Apartments & Serviced Apartments

If you are visiting London for a few weeks or several months, staying in a short-term or serviced apartment is the best way to get a sense of

living in the city. Many agencies in *Loot* (p396) or other small ads have pretty insalubrious properties; ask to see rooms first. Some better agencies and their daily rates are listed here.

UPTOWN RESERVATIONS

☎ 7937 2001; www.uptownres.co.uk; s/d/tr/q £72/95/125/135, apt per week from £550
Offers short-let apartments or B&B accommodation in stylish private homes, mostly the West End, the City, Kensington, Chelsea or Knightsbridge.

196 BISHOPSGATE

☎ 7621 8788; www.196bishopsgate.com; studio/1-bedroom apt from £180/217, cheaper after 6 nights
Luxury serviced apartments in the City opposite Liverpool St Station. Has longer-stay properties.

ASTON'S APARTMENTS

☎ 7590 6000; www.astons-apartments.com; s/d/tr/f from £68/94/131/173, weekly rates 5% less
The company has three Victorian town houses in South Kensington, divided into serviced apartments of varying sizes.

CITADINES APART'HOTEL

☎ 0800 376 3898; www.citadines.com; 2-person studio £105-149, cheaper after 6 nights
Ever popular French chain has four apartment blocks throughout the city, including a *Holborn/Covent Garden branch* (Map pp72-3; ☎ 7395 8800; 94-99 High Holborn WC1; 📍 Holborn).

ACCOMMODATION LONDON

☎ 8459 6203; www.accommodationlondon.net; s/d from £52/70, cheaper after 6 nights
Has some 300 studio flats and rooms in shared houses for foreign-passport holders (only) in the Willesden Green area. Clean and well-equipped properties, decent prices, popular with younger travellers.

Rooms & Flats

Most newcomers to the city still find leasing expensive (note that almost all rented accommodation in London is furnished). At the very bottom end, bedsits (£300 to £600 per month) are single furnished rooms, usually with a shared bathroom and kitchen, and they are always pretty grim. A step up is a self-contained studio (from £600), which normally has a separate bathroom and kitchen. You'll rarely get a two-bedroom flat for less than £1000. Shared

accommodation offers the best value, at £300 and upwards for a room in a flat or a house with several bedrooms. Most landlords demand a security deposit (normally one month's rent) plus a month's rent in advance.

To get abreast of current prices, consult the classifieds in publications such as *Loot*, *TNT*, *Time Out* and the *Evening Standard's* Wednesday supplement *Homes & Property* (www.homesandproperty.co.uk). Some of the better websites are *Gumtree* (www.gumtree.com), *Move Flat* (www.moveflat.com) and the primarily gay *Outlet* (www.outlet4homes.com).

RESERVATIONS & BOOKINGS

The London tourist organisation *Visit London* (☎ 0870 156 6366; www.visitlondon.com) offers a free booking service with a wide range of accommodation options and always has special deals. There's also the *British Hotel Reservation Centre* (☎ 7340 1616; www.bhronline.com), which has kiosks at Gatwick Airport, Heathrow Airport and Paddington, Waterloo and Victoria stations. There's also a kiosk on the mezzanine level of the Britain Visitor Centre (p400). Another excellent source for hotel bookings and discounts is *LondonTown* (☎ 7437 4370; www.londontown.com).

You can book a hotel through the *YHA central reservations system* (☎ 0870 770 6113; www.yha.org.uk). If you want to stay in a B&B or private home, reservations can be made through the following agencies.

LONDON HOMESTEAD SERVICES

☎ 7286 5115; www.lhslondon.com; per person £16-40
Small family-run business offering B&B rooms in private homes across London.

AT HOME IN LONDON

☎ 8748 1943; www.athomeinlondon.co.uk; s/d/tr/f from £45/69/85/101
This is worth looking at if you're considering staying two to four weeks, as some properties have weekly rates and minimum stays. However, daily rentals are more common.

LONDON BED & BREAKFAST AGENCY

☎ 7586 2768; www.londonbb.com; per person £25-55
Offering spare rooms in London homes. You share with the homeowner, many of whom tend to be of a mature age. Properties are concentrated for the most part in central and North London.

PRICE GUIDE

The symbols below indicate the cost per night of a standard double room in high season.

£££	over £180
££	£80-180
£	under £80