

Tips for Travellers - Accommodation

Now that you have your flights booked, you need to think of your accommodation. Your itinerary and your personal preferences will dictate what type of accommodation you are after. If you are staying in one place for several days or more, you may wish to get an apartment. Apartments give you the freedom of choosing which meals that you want to eat in for and which ones you will go out for. They usually have much more room than a hotel room and often have washing machines, dryers, and free internet.

If you are interested in an apartment, a site that I have rented multiple apartments through is www.vrbo.com. It is a site which acts as a brokerage service where individuals put up their apartments for consideration. I have always found the descriptions to be accurate and the apartments in excellent condition. You search by city and then by type of apartment and then you email the owner regarding availability and costs. Payment is then arranged either over the internet or via international money order. There are also other internet sites that rent out apartments and many of these are country or city specific. Make sure you ask about directions on how to get there and where you need to pick up the keys from. Look in the fine print as to whether or not there are hidden fees such as cleaning fees.

A similar service is run by www.airbnb.com.au

If however you wish to get away from the whole routine of housework then there is a whole range of hotels to fit any budget. Your Travel Agent may be able to help you with these as sometimes the airlines have flight and accommodation deals. There are lots of internet search engines that you can assist you with searching for hotels. The most common ones are: www.webjet.com.au, www.hotels.com.au and www.expedia.com.au. Each of these allows you to subscribe to find out about their latest deals. Whilst the spam can be annoying at times, they often do have special deals that give you even further discounts. There are also several overseas sites, however my experience is that their rates are no better than the local sites. The advantage of using local sites is that you can pay in Australian currency. Take care if you are using an overseas site as you may incur international transfer fees. [I will talk about paying for overseas services in another article.]

If you are attending one of the language schools then they will usually have an accommodation booking service that can arrange accommodation for you. This will range from hotels, apartments or full or partial board with a family.

Many of the students at Dante have travelled extensively in Italy and they are a good source of information so don't be afraid to ask them. Another excellent source of information is www.tripadvisor.com. It will give you travellers' reviews on the city you are going to, things to do there, accommodation venues and restaurants. There are comprehensive reviews giving the good, the bad and the ugly of these places. I have found this site to be very accurate and I use it regularly.

Finally, when you return, remember to write an article for the Dante Newsletter and share your experiences with the other students.