

Accommodation Decision Checklist

A tired-traveler proof checklist you can use before you click "Book"

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How to use this (60 seconds)

- Open the listing and keep this page next to it.
- Answer the "Must-haves" first. If any are a hard NO, stop scrolling and move on.
- Do the "Hidden costs" pass (fees, deposits, taxes) before you compare prices.
- Score the place quickly using the 0–2 scale. If it feels borderline, don't book while hungry or sleepy.

Step 1: Your must-haves (non-negotiables)

Tick what you need for this specific stay. If a listing can't meet these, it's not for you - and that's okay.

- Private room (or private bathroom) as required
- Safe neighborhood / building access you're comfortable with
- Quiet enough to sleep (or at least quiet with earplugs)
- Reliable Wi-Fi if you need to work or call home
- Easy check-in time (or self check-in) for your arrival
- Walkable access to food, transport, or your main purpose (work, sights, family)
- Heating/AC appropriate for the season
- Kitchen access (if you're staying 4+ nights or watching budget)

Step 2: Fast deal-breakers (save yourself time)

If you see two or more of these, pause. If you see three, walk away unless the location is perfect and the price is a steal.

- Reviews mention bed bugs, cockroaches, mold, or a persistent bad smell
- Repeated noise complaints (bars, clubs, thin walls, street racing, "lively area")
- Photos look heavily filtered, blurry, or strangely cropped (the classic "hide the problem" move)

- No clear cancellation policy, or it's so strict you'll hate yourself if plans change
- Host/property avoids answering direct questions (parking, noise, Wi-Fi speed, hot water)
- Extra fees are vague or only show up at the last step (cleaning, linens, "service", resort fees)
- Location is described with euphemisms: "up-and-coming", "authentic", "vibrant at night"

Step 3: Quick score (0–2) - so you can decide with a clear head

Score each line: 0 = poor/unclear, 1 = acceptable, 2 = solid. Total it. If the total is under 18, keep looking unless you have a strong reason.

Category	What to check	Score (0–2)	Notes
Price truth	Total price per night after taxes/fees		
Noise	Street/bars/traffic mentions in reviews		
Sleep	Bed quality + blackout + temperature control		
Cleanliness	Recent reviews + bathroom photos		
Safety	Building entry + area comfort + lighting		
Location	Walk/ride to your priorities		
Wi-Fi	Speed proof or consistent reviews		
Check-in	Arrival time works + clear instructions		
Cancellation	You can live with the terms		
Value	Does it match the price (not "perfect", just fair)		

Step 4: Hidden costs & sneaky math (this is where people overpay)

Before you compare two places, make sure you're comparing the same thing.

- Total price shown includes taxes, cleaning, and platform fees
- Deposit: amount, when it's held, and when you get it back
- Resort/amenity fee (hotels sometimes hide this until checkout)
- Parking cost (per night, per day, or "valet only")
- Laundry cost (machine coins, paid service, or none)
- Extra guest fees (even if you're not bringing anyone - check anyway)
- Early check-in / late checkout fees if your flight times are awkward
- Local payment requirements (cash only, foreign card surcharge)

Step 5: Photo sanity pass (spot the missing information)

You're not judging aesthetics. You're hunting for clues.

- Bathroom: Is there a clear photo of the shower and toilet?

- Windows: Are there real windows, and do they open? (Some rooms are basically caves.)
- Bed: Is the mattress visible or described? Are there two pillows per person?
- Kitchen: If included, is there an actual stove/hob and basic cookware?
- Workspace: If you need to work, is there a real table/desk and a chair that won't punish you?
- Heating/AC: Visible unit or clearly stated. "Fans available" is not the same thing in humid places.
- Noise clues: Photos show bars, busy roads, or "view of nightlife" nearby.

Step 6: Review reading method (don't read everything, read the right things)

- Filter to the most recent 3–6 months first. Old reviews can lie by accident (new management happens).
- Search within reviews for: noise, clean, smell, bugs, hot water, Wi-Fi, safety, check-in.
- Trust patterns, not one angry person. Three people saying the same thing is the signal.
- If multiple people mention "great host but...", treat the "but" as the headline.

Step 7: Sleep, comfort & sanity (the stuff you'll feel at 2 a.m.)

- Noise plan: What will you do if it's loud? (Earplugs, white noise app, inner room request.)
- Blackout plan: Are there proper curtains/blinds? If not, do you have a sleep mask?
- Temperature: Can you control it? (Not just "there is AC somewhere in the building".)
- Bedding: Sheets included? Extra blanket available? Winter = not the time for mystery linens.
- Bathroom reality: Strong water pressure? Consistent hot water? Any comments about smell or drainage?

Step 8: Safety & access (simple checks that prevent dumb problems)

- Entry system feels secure (key card, code, reception, or well-managed keys)
- You understand how you'll enter after hours (late arrival, flight delays)
- There is a safe place for luggage if you arrive early / leave late (or you've got a Plan B)
- Stairs/elevator: If you have a heavy bag or mobility needs, this matters
- Emergency basics: smoke detector mentioned, and you can see exits (hotels) or host gives guidance (rentals)

Step 9: The three questions worth asking (if anything is unclear)

Message the host/property with short, direct questions. If they dodge, that's data.

- "Can you confirm the total price including all fees and taxes?"
- "How is the noise at night on weekdays vs weekends?"
- "What is the Wi-Fi speed (download/upload) and where is the router located?"

Step 10: Your decision rule (so you don't spiral)

Use this quick logic when you're tired:

- If it fails any must-have -> No.
- If it triggers 3+ deal-breakers -> No.
- If score is 18+ and you feel calm -> Book.
- If score is 16–17 -> Only book if the location is perfect and you have a backup plan.
- If you feel rushed or uneasy -> Sleep on it (or book a refundable option).

Bonus: Check-in day mini list

- Screenshot address, host contact, and check-in steps (don't rely on roaming data).
- Save the booking number and cancellation terms.
- Pack earplugs + sleep mask at the top of your bag.
- Arrive with water and a snack - tired people make expensive decisions.
- On arrival: check water, locks, and noise immediately so you can report issues fast.

Straight talk: the goal isn't "perfect". It's "good sleep, fair price, zero surprises".