

## Airbnb and Similar Apps Abroad

Students considering Airbnb, Vacation Rentals by Owner (VRBO), couchsurfing.com, or similar applications for finding private lodging abroad should do so with the highest caution for their safety and security. You do not have the same robust security acting on your behalf that you might at other well-chosen commercial lodging options. Although rare, there have been incidents of violent crime associated with their use. The fact that you may use these applications to find lodging in an unfamiliar city and culture can put you at greater risk.

### When searching for temporary lodging options, please follow these guidelines:

- Before meeting a host, look carefully at their posted reviews and references. As a rule of thumb, do not stay at a place that has fewer than ten recent positive reviews.

- If traveling alone, avoid lodging in an Airbnb or similar app-based rental.



*Staying alone can make you more vulnerable to falling victim to a crime, so choose a populated location with heightened physical security; name-brand hotels are almost invariably a much safer alternative with hired security and staff and inevitably more people around to reach to for help if in need.*

- Research the neighborhood and surrounding community online. Ask others about the area; call a tourist bureau or similar agency; and/or seek any further resources for the same information.

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*If you have any doubts about the location or host, find an alternative.*

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- Let others know exactly where you will be staying, including the address and host's contact information. Tell someone that you will check in with them about an hour after the scheduled meeting to report you are safe and satisfied with the circumstances.
- Never arrive at the lodging late at night!

- Whenever you go to the lodging or meet the host, make sure you have a charged cell phone and know (or have programmed into your phone) the country's emergency telephone number.

- If you schedule a meeting with the host, only agree to do so in a public place during daylight hours, and if possible, take a friend with you to the initial meeting.

- Stay vigil when arriving at your lodging. Look around with your safety and security in mind:



- Check the closets and adjoining rooms.
- Note how to exit in an emergency.
- Check to see if there is an internal lock on your bedroom door that cannot be opened with a key from the outside (ideally with a chain or bolt lock).

- If you are not satisfied with the circumstances or something does not feel right, leave right away, and find another lodging. Any extra money spent is worth the investment in your safety!
- If you have a poor experience, post an honest review to help others.
- Monitor your credit card bill for any unexpected/unapproved charges. Always get a receipt, especially if paying in cash.