


Airbnb and Similar Lodging Apps Abroad

Students considering Airbnb, Vacation Rentals by Owner (VRBO), couchsurfing.com, or similar applications should do so with the highest caution for their safety and security. Shared economy accommodations do not have the same robust staffing or safety and security infrastructure as hotels or other commercial lodgings. Although rare, there have been incidents of violent crime associated with these services and using them in an unfamiliar city and culture can put a traveler at greater risk.

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

- Research and pick lodging before you travel. Check out pictures, reviews, and amenities online. Avoid places that have bad reviews or few recent reviews. Many places will be listed on multiple sites or apps for cross-reference.
 - Consider multiple options before your travel and have backups lodging planned if something goes wrong.
 - Understand how payment will work and agree on the cost before your trip. Make sure to ask about any additional fees.
 - When you travel, have a charged cell phone and numbers to call in case of emergency (police, friend, host, etc.).
 - Visit lodging during the day and with a trusted companion if possible. **NEVER** arrive at your lodging late at night.
 - Let trusted friends know exactly where you will be staying, including the address and host's contact information. Have a plan to check in with someone after you arrive to report you are safe.
 - Stay vigilant when arriving at your lodging. Make sure there are no other people staying there. Look around with your safety and security in mind. Check the closets and adjoining rooms. Note how to exit in an emergency. Check for smoke alarms and fire extinguishers. Make sure there is an internal lock on your bedroom door (ideally with a chain or bolt lock).
 - **If something does not feel right, leave right away, and stay somewhere else. Any extra money spent is worth the investment in your safety!**
 - Monitor your credit card for any unexpected or unapproved charges. Always get a receipt, especially if paying in cash. If you have a poor experience, post a review to help others.
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- If traveling alone, avoid lodging in an Airbnb or app-based rental. Staying alone can make you more vulnerable to crime, and it's preferable to choose a name-brand hotel with heightened physical security.
 - Research the lodging area online. Ask friends, trusted hosts, and/or a tourist bureau about potential risks or better options in the city or community.