



## HOTELS

# How is an Airbnb different from a B&B? Which is better for your vacation?

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Is there a difference between an Airbnb rental and a B&B? If you said, "Of course," maybe you're an experienced traveler. But if you just shrugged, then join the rest of us.

The lines between an Airbnb – an apartment or room rented through the home-sharing site – and a traditional bed and breakfast (B&B) are blurring. Even the pros are having trouble keeping up. And that's a problem.

"Airbnb has co-opted the B&B name," says Heather Turner, the marketing director for the Professional Association of Innkeepers International, a marketing organization for the B&B industry. "The terms Airbnb and B&B are being used interchangeably by guests – and by journalists."



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perks and personal touches.

## Why people are confused

It's not just the name that's confusing travelers. It's also that you can find a B&B on Airbnb, says Jordan Locke, principal consultant at Rev Party Consulting, an industry consulting firm. And since Airbnb is technically an online travel agency, you can find professionally run B&Bs on the platform. "Many B&Bs and boutique hotels sell through Airbnb," he says.

Airbnb owners have also been acting like B&B owners in some places.

"One thing I've noticed is that Airbnbs in Europe, specifically Amsterdam, Ireland and Scotland, have been run more like B&Bs," says Betsy Brown, a manager for a nonprofit organization in Raleigh, North Carolina. "That blurs the line even more."

In other words, Airbnb hosts are emulating the more established B&Bs, and maybe inadvertently creating more confusion.

## So what's the difference?

The second "B" in B&B (as in "breakfast") is the biggest distinguishing feature.

"The difference between an Airbnb and a B&B starts with a complimentary full breakfast," says Brian Shields, the owner of Manor On Golden Pond, a small inn in Holderness, New Hampshire. Guests at the Manor begin breakfast with a buffet of fruit, cereal, yogurt, pastries followed by an eight-item hot entrée menu. It's included in the price of your stay.

A typical Airbnb will have a kitchen, sometimes stocked with coffee and tea, but rarely, if ever, will a host prepare a full breakfast.

But there's more:

**A "unique" property with personalized service.** "A true B&B is typically independently owned, and the owner lives on property or nearby, provides daily breakfast and housekeeping and the experience is very personal," explains Hana Pevny, an Airbnb host and the innkeeper at the Waldo Emerson Inn in Kennebunkport, Maine. "In many instances, the B&B is a historic property or has a unique quality about the building or property." A



**Licensing and training.** A real B&B is usually operated by someone with formal training in the hospitality business. And that person has insurance – lots of insurance. Renée Humphrey, who runs the Rainforest Inn in Puerto Rico's El Yunque National Forest, says her property requires expensive liability insurance. "We're also inspected by both fire marshal and health department as part of our licensing," she says. Vacation rentals booked online carry some insurance (you can buy more to cover a possible cancellation), but your hosts probably don't have any formal hospitality training.

**No "hidden" fees.** At least that's the assessment of Pam Willis, who runs The Gables Wine Country Inn in Petaluma, California. The rooms in her property are also available on Airbnb. "The published Airbnb rate appears much cheaper, but the fees drive up the costs," she explains. "While we don't charge a cleaning fee, I've seen guests pay as much as \$70 per night for the service fee. Airbnb charges us 3% of the room rate, so for \$250 per room, that's \$7.50 in commission, but the guest ends up paying a great deal more."

Is one better than the other? No, say guests.

"I think it all comes down to the style of hospitality," says Clayton Durant, the CEO of CAD Management, an entertainment consulting company in New York. "Many B&Bs offer many of the same amenities, like a single bed, bathroom, and breakfast. Each Airbnb has a unique personality of each house and apartment I get to stay at. You can't beat the travel experience."

But now more than ever, it's important to know that there is a difference.

## **Which is better for your next vacation: An Airbnb or a B&B?**

Here are three key questions you should ask:

**Are you a do-it-yourselfer or do you like personal service?** If you like breakfast, daily housekeeping, and concierge-level service, you'll want a B&B. If you like making your own meals (and lots of privacy), go for an Airbnb.

**Cozy or spacious?** Fact is, most B&Bs give you one room – a bedroom – with shared common space. An Airbnb can give you the whole house. If you like to spread out while you're traveling, go with the Airbnb.



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