

How to Choose a Lodging

So many places to stay. How to choose? Steven and I have a very scientific method: a complicated algorithm that combines price, location, intuition, and search fatigue. We like to stay in off-beat or unique places ([Mt. Peale Animal Sanctuary](#) or [Monument Valley Tipi Village](#)). Sometimes we get a little practical. Here's how we think about it:

We understand there's a quality difference between the Baymont Inn and the Four Seasons, or even the Holiday Inn Express, but if we are arriving in North Platte, Neb., at 8:30 p.m. and leaving at 6 a.m., all we need is a clean place to sleep. So what if the shower fixture is pulling away from the wall as long as the water is hot? Do we care if we get a \$3.50 breakfast credit to the diner across the parking lot? No! North Platte is a place that makes Starbucks look fabulous. We'd rather save the \$60 or so. No frills, no worries.



If we're planning a trip of longer than a week, we try to find a place with laundry and some privacy in the middle of the tour. That usually means AirB&B. If you're staying at least a week, you can find many owners who give a discount. Plus, the cleaning fees are spread out over a longer time and you can do a bit of your own cooking. We like to have the whole place to ourselves and getting to do laundry mid-trip without spending time in a laundromat makes packing so much easier. Another benefit is that many are in neighborhoods, so you're away from the most touristy areas and get a more

realistic vision of the places you're visiting. We're not looking for new friends, but if you are, you may find some this way. Unless you find one that's considerably cheaper than a motel, I wouldn't stay in one for one night. The fees end up making it less than economical.

I am not a big fan of staying in motels on the main drag. I try to look for one or two unique features or experiences I can't have at home. That's how we ended up at Mt. Peale and Red Moon Lodge. (Above is the pond at the lodge.) Neither is within walking distance to the strip in Moab, but both were beautiful, contemplative, and full of friendly people. Monument Valley Tipi Village just seemed like someplace silly to stop for a night. I don't know that I'd recommend it, mostly because the owners are very disorganized, but we got a strenuous and informative hike on Navajo land and got to talk to the young man (our guide) whose family owns the land plus several of the other folks staying there. I like to have at least a few lodging experiences that offer the opportunity to meet people I wouldn't encounter in my daily life.

There's nothing wrong with a regular motel or hotel room; I just find them confining. I would much rather relax on the beautiful grounds of a bed and breakfast, or have a two-bedroom home on a hill for just the two of us.

Most of the places we stayed, I found either through AirB&B or Googling it. George at Red Moon Lodge said that they are listed on AirB&B but also have their own website, where you can book without paying any extra fees. That's a helpful hint: If you find a place that seems more lodging than true AirB&B (which I think of as more of a single space as opposed to a space with multiple rooms), find its website and look for a price differential.

We do our homework and haven't had a bad experience, but some of that is our attitude about it all. It's an adventure!