

Booking hotel accommodation – a logistical challenge to put it mildly

Part of our role as a Project Officer includes booking accommodation for reviewers, a simple task you might imagine but sometimes it can be a real challenge.

We select hotels on criteria including; closeness to event, transport links, type of hotel and rates. We have found chain hotels are the most reliable when it comes to the standard of accommodation. We have had one or two experiences of independent hotels being less clean or pleasant to stay in. To ensure reviewers do not have to repeat this experience we now only use branded chains such as Premier Travel Inn and Best Western. That way we, hopefully, know what we are getting.

It can be difficult to book good hotel accommodation when you are relying on accurate and up to date websites, at times it seems a bit of poetic licence creeps in, and maybe they have been trained by estate agents (e.g. for spacious room read size of a broom cupboard or for well appointed read there're is no lift, don't forget to bring your own hair dryer and some extra tea bags.....) Although we always check independent hotel reviews we can not guarantee they contain reliable information, they are after all the different opinions of people who have previously stayed at the hotel. As our experience grows on the project so too of course will our data base about the hotels.

We are very careful when booking hotels and ensure that it is stated on the hotel website that restaurants are within a reasonable distance. Unfortunately, the websites do not always specify what type of restaurants are available. We have been alerted to the fact that occasionally the restaurants near a hotel are not suitable, in one case a fast food restaurant. Sorry about that. We both welcome and need your feedback, if a hotel is unsuitable or in an unsafe area that information is invaluable and we would endeavour not to use the hotel again.

We take the point about reviewers having to pay the bill, so we have set up business accounts with two major hotel chains. This means where possible HLSP will pay the bill directly and reviewers will not have to make the initial outlay for the accommodation and reclaim it with their expenses. Although these hotels can not be used on every occasion, we do try to use them wherever possible.

We are grateful for both positive and negative feedback on the hotels selected for Monitoring/Approval events. Most of the time we achieve our goal and reviewers are happy with the selections we make. We do want everyone to have a good experience while staying away but sometimes it can be tricky.....