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## How To Choose The Perfect Hotel. Plus: Airlines May Be Declaring War!

by TFB EDITORS on AUGUST 16, 2012

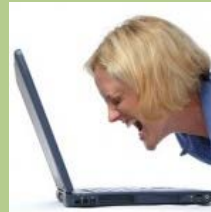
By Jan Ross

I recently went against my own rule of not staying anywhere that had bad reviews online and it turned out fine. Not only fine, the reviews turned out to be completely inaccurate and, in some cases, they actually seemed to be lies. Either the individuals who wrote the reviews simply did not have the same experience I did or they were maliciously trashing the hotel for some reason.

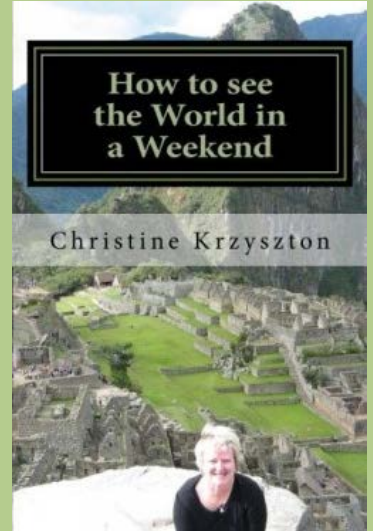
I'll never know, but it did make me more aware of how dependent I am on hotel reviews. This experience didn't make me decide to never use them again because, for the most part, they really are pretty accurate. When *several* people write about stained carpeting, worn-out towels, no hot water in the shower and non-existent customer service in a certain hotel, that's probably not a place you want to stay. When *one* person has a gripe, it might be that this particular person is just not easy to please.

So how do you decide which reviews to believe?

1. **Use reputable review sites.** [Tripadvisor](#) has gotten some flak for possibly using reviews written by paid reviewers, but I still think it's the best place for reviews because most are written by people who have actually stayed in the hotels. But don't just use Tripadvisor. Follow up with reviews on [Virtual Tourist](#) and [Oyster](#), both of which are reputable review sites and will give you a complete picture of the hotel. Oyster actually employs reviewers who work for them, so you will get a completely impartial review. They also have real photos of the hotel instead of the professional and polished ones on the hotel web sites, which may be somewhat misleading.
2. **Check the dates of the reviews.** If someone stayed in the hotel five years ago and had a terrible experience, that's not necessarily the best advice. Hotels can change dramatically if they're purchased, come under different management, or just make changes based on customer reviews. Read the most recent reviews for the most accurate information.
3. **Watch out for people who seem to be whining, not reviewing.** There is just no pleasing some people. If they are complaining about something that no other reviewer has mentioned, or something that really does not seem that important an issue, that review is probably not very helpful.
4. **Just how important is that complaint?** I don't know about you, but a clean hotel is way, way up on my list of important criteria. So if a number of people complain about cleanliness, I'm taking that hotel off my list. Ditto for sketchy neighborhoods. There may be other items that are equally important to you as well.
5. **Does the hotel respond to the complaints?** A good hotel also reads those review sites and will respond to reviews, both good and bad. See what they say about that bad review. Do they apologize for the experience? Explain the situation? Ask the reviewer to get in touch so they can work something out? All of these are important and mean that the hotel is actually trying to fix that specific issue.



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## Is It War — Fare War, That is?

A couple of days ago we told you about [Southwest's new \\$59 fares](#) special. Well, [American Airlines just announced its \\$59 fares](#) — “Each way, based on round-trip purchase. Taxes included; conditions apply.”

Could it be war? A travel hacker's dream come true? Be on the lookout! When one or two start battling, the others are likely to follow... ~ *Kim*



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**D** August 16, 2012 at 7:29 am

Kim, your AAdvantage number can be seen in the hyperlink for the AA promotional fares!



REPLY

**TFB Editors** August 16, 2012 at 8:20 am

Yikes! Thanks for pointing that out, Sage. I've created a new hyperlink. Thanks again!



REPLY

**Jeff** August 16, 2012 at 11:18 am

I realize how easy it is for one “reporter” to ruin the reputation of a hotel, but I still can't help checking for possible bed bug problems at <http://bedbugregistry.com/>.



REPLY

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