

# The Benefits of Booking Direct

Travelling is a competitive field - especially when you are focused on getting the ideal trip for the best price. From flights to hotels, there are many companies fighting for your business - and it is not just between brands. Third party booking sites have joined the contest, and while many offer the best price for your trip, it might be that these offers are not always what they claim to be.

We have taken a look at the benefits of booking directly with your chosen hotel, so next time you are planning a trip, you can do so armed with all the best information. Happy travelling!

## Direct customer service

Do you have a question about the hotel or the surrounding area? Do you wish to book a specific room or would just like to ensure you can book a spa treatment, on a specific day, before committing to a trip? While some third party booking agents are able to help you with these kinds of enquiries, there is no one better placed to answer these questions than the hotels themselves. Not only will you be able to get the information you require from them first-hand, you will also find you get through to talking to someone much quicker than you would with a third-party.

## Preferential rates

Many find that booking a hotel direct is actually a much more transparent process than going through a third party. Once all the accompanying terms and conditions have been read (*if you can be bothered*), these "super-cheap offers" from third parties can often end up about the same as the prices offered by the hotels themselves when compared like for like. Cancellations are often not allowed through a third party and can leave you out of pocket if you book the wrong date accidentally or need to change your plans.

## Loyalty

The saying that loyalty pays, is especially true when booking a hotel room directly. Many hotels offer their own reward or loyalty program for those that choose to book with the same hotel brand time and time again, something which may not be credited if booked through a third party, and many hotels also have their own special offers, deals and promotions too.

Moreover, hotels often participate in different airline Frequent Flyer Programs, which give you the possibility to add more mileage to your accounts with each stay. These programs generally deal directly with the hotels themselves, and guests may not be eligible for mileage claims when booking through a third party.

## Upgrades & Extras

Most hotels will always over book the cheaper room type or the room type they have, free upgrades will always be given to those clients who have booked direct as there are no commissions being paid to a third party therefore the hotel is actually achieving more revenue from direct bookings and will upgrade you first.

You will find direct clients even though paying the same rate will often receive added bonuses like a welcome drink in the bar or free breakfast, this is because a commission is usually paid through a third party and the extra bonus is given to you as a thank you for your loyalty as a direct client.

## **Clarity**

When booking with a third party, it becomes all the more important to read the terms and conditions. Even though this is true for bookings made anywhere, some providers don't always visibly highlight that they cancelation policy's or extra bedding charges that the hotel may charge when you arrive.

You could also have to pay the full amount for the room in advance - something that is usually optional when booking directly with a hotel – and may not have any cancellation protection when booking through a third party. Similarly, booking directly with a hotel means that guests are protected by the hotel's guarantee policies, ensuring stays run smoothly.

A hotel's management will also be much more vigilant in providing an up-to-date picture of the hotel and its amenities in any advertising literature and on their website – any changes are far more likely to be reflected, whereas third party sites may not be updated anywhere near as regularly.

## **Fraud**

With the rise of online booking, the barriers to setting up a false shop front are much lower – there are sites out there that pose as travel intermediaries with no intention of actually completing the reservation for you. At best, they are simply trying to record your data for advertising purposes – at worst they may be trying to capture your credit card information. It is rare, but it is still a risk.

## **Direct confirmation**

Standard practice when booking just about anything online is to issue a reference or confirmation number. When booking directly with a hotel, you can rest assured that the confirmation number you have been given will be recognized at the time of check in at the hotel. When booking through certain third parties, the reservations process is often handled outside of the hotel's own reservation system, which can cause a lag in the delivery of reservations between various systems, multiple confirmation numbers or, on occasions, even inconsistent information such as room type, departure date, policy conditions, and rates.

This is because third parties often have their own platform, and may not always issue you a confirmation number from the hotel. The simplest way to ensure you reach the check in desk with the right details in hand, and a room waiting for you without any misunderstandings, is to book directly with the hotel.

In short, hotels are, at the end of the day, the ones that will have to deal with any complaints or customer service issues - they are the ones responsible for guaranteeing your happiness, so they will endeavor to ensure everything is clear and concise for their guests. Though many booking agents are great at involving themselves with the customer, there is a degree of separation there that can act as a shield should anything problematic occur.