

Introduction

“Come in; please be my guest.” For years, these words of welcome have greeted weary travelers seeking shelter for the night. Providing travelers with temporary shelter is an age-old profession that can be traced through recorded history to the inns of biblical times. In fact, the term *hostel* (meaning inn) can be traced back to the middle ages.

The inns of old, usually no more than simple structures, offered meals and a bed in a room shared with other travelers seeking safety and shelter for the night. By today’s standards, these early inns were very crude. They usually had one or may be two rooms with several beds in each room. The innkeeper would put two, three, or perhaps even four people in a bed. Although many early innkeepers were not always the most reputable lot, they did provide an important service by meeting travelers’ basic needs for shelter and food.

Most early inns looked like any other home along the roadside and could be recognized only by special signs hung by their front doors. As lodging facilities became more sophisticated, they often added taverns, which served as gathering spots for locals. Because these inns and taverns were usually built around courtyards, they became natural entertainment areas for speakers and traveling minstrels and troubadours.

Early “hotels” were usually just overgrown inns. However, it didn’t take long for large structures specifically designed for lodging to appear. Most of these hotels were originally built in or around seaports and train depots as well as at major spa resort destinations in Canada, England, France, Germany, and the United States. In fact, development of lodging facilities closely followed improvements in transportation, particularly steamships and railroads. From these modest beginnings a variety of accommodation choices have emerged to meet the needs of today’s travelers. “It is difficult to imagine how today’s fast-paced globalized economy could function at all without countless hotels around the world offering shelter and services to a burgeoning clientele of international business and leisure travelers” (p. 52).¹

Oh, So Many Choices!

Think for a minute about some of the accommodation options from which you can choose when planning a trip. Where will you spend the night(s) on the way to your destination? Where will you stay once you reach your destination? You can probably think of alternatives ranging all the way from staying with friends and relatives to pampering yourself at a luxury hotel. Over the years, a wide range of facilities have been developed to meet travelers’ accommodation needs. Just like inns of old, these facilities became a focal point for community gatherings and social activities. In addition, they attract visitors and create opportunities for these guests to spend more time and money in the area.

Although accommodations can be found in many shapes and sizes, these facilities have commonly been grouped under the umbrella term **lodging**. The accommodations segment of the tourism industry consists of many popular alternatives such as bed and breakfasts (B&B), condominiums, timeshares, conference centers, hotels, and motels, as well as recreational vehicle (RV) parks and campgrounds.

If you think back to the transportation service providers we studied in Chapter 6, you will also find that many of them that travel over long routes, such as passenger trains, ferries, and even airplanes, often include **accommodations** as part of their total service packages. In addition, resorts provide extensive lodging facilities, and some of the newer mega-cruise ships are often referred to as *floating resorts*. We will not discuss resorts or cruise ships in this chapter but, more appropriately, in Chapter 10 as we explore destinations. As you will begin to see, the range of available accommodation alternatives is extensive.

With so many choices, attracting and retaining guests requires attention to their needs. Marketers have zeroed in on this important group of potential frequent stayers