

'Mingling is part of the adventure': a family trip to Wales shows why hostels are booming

Level 1: Elementary

1 Warmer

a. Discuss these questions.

1. When you go on holiday, where do you like to stay?
2. Do you like to meet people when you are on holiday?
3. Do you like to share living spaces with strangers on holiday?

2 Key words

a. Match the correct word to each definition. Then find them in the article to read them in context.

doubt

awkward

draughty

bunk room

1. _____ a shared sleeping area with several beds, often used in hostels
2. _____ uncomfortable or embarrassing, especially in social situations
3. _____ cold because air comes in from outside, often through doors or windows
4. _____ a feeling that something may not be true or may not work

private rental

mingle

luxury

privacy

5. _____ time or space that is not shared with other people
6. _____ expensive comfort and high quality, often connected with hotels or travel
7. _____ a place to stay that are rented by one person or family, not shared with others
8. _____ to meet and talk with people in a relaxed and friendly way

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b. Complete the sentences with words from the previous activity. You might have to change the form of the word.

1. The old house felt very _____ in winter because cold air came in through the windows.
2. Some students feel _____ when they have to speak in front of the whole class.
3. They chose to stay in a(n) _____, so they would not have to share the space with anyone else.
4. After the meeting, people stayed to _____ and talk in a relaxed way.
5. He had a moment of _____ and was not sure if this was the right decision.
6. The hostel had _____, with several beds in the same room for travellers.
7. She enjoys having _____ at home, where she can relax on her own.
8. The spa weekend felt like _____, with soft beds, good food, and excellent service.

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Forget draughty bunk rooms and awkward social encounters, hostels now provide home comforts and a sense of community that private rentals will never match.

Georgie Duckworth

20 January, 2026

- 1 "Penguins? In Snowdonia?" I asked in surprise when we began talking to another guest in the large kitchen of The Rocks hostel in Capel Curig, where people often chat while they wait for food or drinks. He told us about a walk up Moel Siabod and a lake near the top. He also mentioned a sign about penguins, which made my 11-year-old son very excited.
- 2 Seeing penguins in the Welsh mountains seemed unlikely, but my son loved the idea of a day spent looking for them. Our plans were decided quickly, not by an online search or a guidebook, but through the kind of easy exchange of ideas, which happens so often in hostels. This was the start of our adventure.
- 3 At first, my suggestion of staying in a hostel caused some doubt. My husband remembered school trips with shared dormitories and cold rooms, while our two sons were unsure about living in a place with other guests. Still, I wanted to try something different. Looking for private rentals had become tiring and expensive, and privacy felt more important than enjoyment.
- 4 Hostels in the UK were first created in the 1930s to provide cheap places to stay for young travellers who wanted to explore the outdoors. While the purpose has stayed similar, the standards have changed. Many hostels now offer private rooms, and guests include families, couples, students and groups of friends.

5 At The Rocks, the standard was much higher than expected. The building had bright rooms with wooden furniture and colourful cushions. There was a shared lounge and outdoor firepits, and our private family room was warm and comfortable. Even my eldest son, who usually prefers luxury hotels, was impressed.

6 After long days walking in the hills, we enjoyed returning to the hostel in the evening, when guests shared stories about their adventures. Some people talked while cooking dinner, while others relaxed quietly. The children made friends easily, and there was no pressure to join in all the time.

7 After difficult years during Covid, hostelling is growing again. According to Sam Dalley, who runs the Independent Hostels network, hostels are now in very good health. With places that combine comfort, privacy and community, it is easy to see why more families are choosing them. We never did see the penguins, but our trip showed us that shared experiences are often what holidays are missing.

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3 Comprehension check

a. Answer the questions using information from the article.

1. What do hostels offer that private rentals don't?
2. Which animal does she think is unlikely to be found in Wales?
3. At first, what did the writer's family think of the idea of staying in a hostel?
4. When were hostels first established in the UK?
5. Who did the writer speak to in the hostel?
6. What is the state of hostelling today?

4 Key language

a. Find sentences in the article that have the same meaning as the sentences below.

1. We began talking to another guest in the large kitchen. People often chat in the large kitchen.

2. Hostels now provide home comforts and community. Private rentals can never match those home comforts and community.

3. It was an easy exchange of ideas. Easy exchanges of ideas like that often happen in hostels.

4. Some young travellers wanted to explore the outdoors. Hostels were made for them.

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5. We liked to return in the evening. Guests shared stories about their adventures in the evenings.

- b. Complete the table with the relative pronouns. Then finish the examples in the final column.

where	who	which
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Relative pronoun	Used for	Example
1. _____ or that	People	He was the man _____ helped to find my dog.
2. _____ or that	Things	That's exactly the bag _____ I wanted!
3. _____	Places	Paris, France is _____ proposed.
4. When	Time	Seven o'clock is when I _____.

- c. Rewrite the sentences below using a defining relative clause.

Example: *I met a women. She works at the hostel.*

I met a woman who works at the hostel.

1. This phone has a battery. Other models can't match it.

2. We stopped at a café. You can charge your laptop there.

3. Our decision was based on advice. People shared the advice during the meeting.

4. I spoke to a neighbour. He understood my frustration.

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5. It was dinner time. I realised my fridge was broken.
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5 Discussion

a. Discuss these statements.

- When I travel, I like to stay in places where I can enjoy my privacy.
- I like meeting people who are different from me.
- I wouldn't like to stay in a place where I had to share a kitchen.
- I prefer recommendations that other people give me.

6 In your own words

a. In groups, design your ideal holiday experience and prepare to present it to the class using whatever visual aids you think will be helpful. Consider:

- Where you will stay
- When you will go
- Who you will stay with
- What you will do
- Whether it will be a private or communal experience

b. Present to the class and argue why this would be your ideal experience.