

THE GOOD HOTEL GUIDE

BRIEFING NOTE FOR INSPECTORS

The Good Hotel Guide is on the side of the guest. That's why our inspections involve an anonymous overnight stay to experience a hotel in the same way as any other guest. We don't ask inspectors to tick boxes or to do anything other than sample the hotel's hospitality.

We look for character in the hotels, inns and B&Bs that we select; an inspection report should provide the detail and the colour that helps us capture the spirit of a place. The writers are looking for quotable phrases and anecdotes that allow the hotel's personality to come across.

This briefing outlines the things that matter to the editors – and to the readers. Remember that the *Guide* entries are just 180 words. Succinct but comprehensive inspection reports are especially appreciated.

WHAT TO LOOK OUT FOR

Location You can change most things about a hotel except its location. We like to describe the setting (in a town, village, or the countryside). It is important to identify the possibility of traffic or street noise; the better hotels may triple glaze affected rooms.

Style is a personal choice (I might like minimalism, you might like chintz). Tell us how is the building decorated; is the style convincing and coherent?

Reception First impressions are important. Is reception formal or informal? Was the owner present (see below). Did anyone offer to carry your bags? Conversations at this stage are often indicative of the way guests are treated. Tell us what was said (if it is relevant). The way telephone bookings are handled can also be informative.

The owner invariably establishes the character of a hotel. What impression did the owner or the manager make? How much did you see of him/her?

Bedroom How is the room presented? Is the lighting adequate (bedside lighting is too often a letdown)? Is there anywhere to sit? Is it clean? Are you aware of noise during the night from the corridor or other rooms? Is there plentiful storage (we don't like 'captive' hangers)? What can you see from the window? Did you sleep well?

Bathroom Large or small, in good repair, well cleaned? Is there enough hot water, a powerful shower, good lighting (especially over mirrors)? Is there somewhere to put your bag?

Public rooms Are there private areas for hotel guests? Is there enough seating at busy times? Is background music played?

Restaurant Try to set the scene (decor, lighting, space between tables). We are not a food guide, but we do indicate the style and quality of the cooking. How much choice is offered (for example, can you order just two courses or must you take a full menu)? We often name one or two dishes that illustrate the style of the cooking. Describe any memorable dishes. The character and efficiency of the service is also important.

Breakfast Perhaps the most important meal (the guest leaves after breakfast). Can it be taken in the bedroom? Is there a buffet table? We favour freshly squeezed juices, unpackaged butter, home-made jam, home-prepared muesli and granola, decent compotes. Is the bread as good as that served with dinner (or is the toast thin-sliced supermarket white)? Are the cooked dishes prepared to order; are they interesting.

The little things Small gestures can make all the difference. Fresh flowers in public rooms and the bedroom, fresh milk and home-made biscuits or cake (what kind?) with the tea try, being asked if you are happy with your room. Passing kindness is appreciated and worth mentioning. We prefer not to find bossy notes or house rules.

CONCLUSION

Tell us if you think this hotel merits an entry in the next edition of the *Guide*. Should this be a full or a Shortlist entry? Are there any special factors which might make it better for a short stay or a longer visit.