

Look for the Quality Rose and stars

When planning your trip, you'll want to find accommodation that suits your budget and that won't disappoint. Visit England is here to help. Our team of assessors visits 23,000 locations every year, categorising the accommodation and awarding star ratings to help you make your selection.

So their first job is to decide the category – for example, “Is it a hotel or a guest house?” or “Is it a holiday park or a touring park?” There are clear definitions for each, based on our consumer research. For example, to achieve a hotel star rating, establishments, must be licensed, all rooms must be ensuite and dinner must be served at least five nights a week (unless categorised as a Metro Hotel or Town House Hotel).

The categories of accommodation include:

- Hotels
- Guest accommodation, which includes, B&Bs, Guest Houses, Farmhouses, Restaurants with Rooms and Inns
- Self-catering accommodation
- Serviced apartments
- Parks, including Camping, Touring and Holiday Parks
- Holiday Villages and Forest Holidays
- Hostels and Campus
- Boats, including Narrowboats, Cruisers and Hotel Boats

We also assess Visitor Attractions, so look out for these signs.



The assessor's next job is to check the services and facilities offered. To move up the star ratings, there is an expectation that the range of services provided will be greater, most particularly in the hotel scheme. For accommodation in other schemes, generally the more stars, the higher the overall quality.

Hotel facilities

At 3-star, a hotel must have phones in the bedrooms, so you can at least call down to reception and vice versa and limited room service will be available. It is likely there will be a dedicated receptionist.



At 4-star, the service should be much more proactive and flexible, with professionally trained staff and good levels of supervision in all areas.



At 5-star, guests can expect luxurious surroundings, with very high levels of staffing, including concierges and doormen, to allow for personal service such as valet parking, evening turn-down and itinerary-planning for guests.



The third and crucial task for the assessors is to assess the quality of the accommodation. For hotels and B&Bs, this means staying overnight in the first year and regularly from then on. Every aspect of the accommodation is assessed, from the efficiency of the booking process through to the comfort of the bed, the practicality of the bathrooms, the breakfast and dinner, hospitality and service and most importantly the cleanliness. The assessor then agrees the category, reviews the services offered for that scheme and awards a quality score. If an establishment offers the facilities required at a certain level, it must also achieve the quality score, so if you stay at a 4-star hotel, you should expect very efficient check-in and check-out, a very comfortable bed, and breakfast of above-average quality.

With the 2011 review of the Hotel Standards used by all the assessing bodies in the UK, including the AA, a much tougher regime is being imposed and if the quality is not up to standard in all the key areas, a lower star rating will be awarded.

All this means that there are also many 2-star hotels, which tend to be smaller and personally-run, that are of good and even of very high quality. How can you find these special places? It's easy - just look for our Silver and Gold awards. There are 61 Gold award hotels and 110* with a Silver award across England. These are places that regardless of the range of facilities and services they offer achieve top scores for hospitality and service, bedrooms and bathrooms, food and cleanliness.



Silver and Gold awards can be found at all star levels and for Guest Accommodation too.

Top Tip: Remember to check the classification – 4-star guest accommodation cannot be compared to a 4-star hotel. Different criteria apply.

So high star ratings mean top quality in all areas and offering all the services expected of that classification of accommodation. Lower star rating with a Silver or Gold award means limited services or facilities but top quality.

Top tip: Always ask for the classification and not just the star rating.

* figures at 1st August 2011