



*Unique Home Stays... It's not a hotel... It's a home*



PRESS RELEASE

November 05

## **NEW TOURIST BOARD RATINGS FOR ACCOMMODATION IGNITE NATIONWIDE SUPPORT FOR UNIQUE HOME STAYS**

*Following a massive response to our recent press release that emphasised the alternative way we assess the quality standards of Unique Home Stays, it is evident that we are not alone in categorising premium quality home stays in a class of their own. And because our accommodation doesn't fit the regimented star-rating system to be introduced next year<sup>1</sup>, visitors who use the Tourist Board as their first port of call are missing out on discovering some of the UK's finest private house accommodation.*

Our objective is not to challenge the forthcoming changes to the Tourist Board's grading system, but to ensure that the most diverse choice of accommodation is made accessible to visitors. With the evidence laid out below, we feel that our stance on this issue is newsworthy, and hope you can promote our own standards for high quality accommodation that's set apart from 'run of the mill' hotels and B&B's.

Richard Cunningham, like many other property owners, pointed out how he felt pressured into being rated by the Tourist Board in order for his accommodation to get sufficient exposure: "We had to become rated because we wanted to be featured in a tourist board sales publication about houses with notable gardens", he told us. Not being party to the Tourist Board schemes results in omission from any related promotions or publications, and as Andrea Spain.

Whilst the Tourist Board inspectors fill out rigorous inspection forms as they visit each property, here at **Unique Home Stays** we don't believe you can tick boxes to prove what exceptional accommodation our properties have to offer. Amongst an extensive list of what the Tourist Board B&B standards do and don't require, it is revealed that 'rooms do not have to smell fresh' to get a 3-star rating, a 'welcoming smile' isn't necessary until you hit a 3-star rating and not unless you climb to 4-stars do you need to indulge in conversation with your guests. Although many Unique Home Stays don't demand stars and accolades, your hosts are connoisseurs of the luxury lifestyle into which they offer a warm and genuine welcome, and it goes without saying that they will engage you in friendly conversation and share general information about the local area.

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Having strived to meet criteria laid out by the Tourist Board, Amanda Lane of Thurnham Keep

([www.thurnhamkeep.uniquehomestays.com](http://www.thurnhamkeep.uniquehomestays.com)) points out the hilarity of some of its standards:

“We had to fit toilet roll holders in all bathrooms, which we have never had before as there are window ledges conveniently placed by the loo (panoramic views of Kent countryside complimentary of course). When we stayed in a so-called luxury B&B on the Isle of Wight, they did have toilet roll holders installed, but the bathroom was so small that you had to sit sideways on the toilet with your back facing the toilet roll. This maybe sums up the absurdity of the grading structure – plus the establishment in question was in no way luxurious by any stretch of the imagination. Is this really the impression we want to give to foreign visitors, whose first port of call is often the Tourist Board?”

Next to the hosts and the stunning location of the properties, one of the most important criteria on which we rate our Unique Home Stays is the bedrooms. Clean, quality linens, comfortable furnishings and beautiful décor must be accompanied by a private bathroom, soft lighting, refreshments, and preferably a home-baked welcome treat. These are just the basics – often you will find king-size or four-poster beds, sumptuous living areas, antique furniture and plush carpets that beg to be appreciated by bare feet. What you are guaranteed in a Tourist Board rated 5-star bedroom are the sort of qualities that go unsaid in a Unique Home Stay – for example comfortable chairs, a clean headboard and a high degree of comfort.

And what do the tourist boards expect from the breakfast criteria of a B&B? ‘At 4-stars you need to offer a more attentive service – e.g. offer hot drinks and toast’ – when at a UHS, there is no question that you will be served fresh coffee or tea alongside a smorgasbord of the freshest local fare, and often, homemade bread. But don’t take our word for it. One visitor to Little Silver House ([www.littlesilver.uniquehomestays.com](http://www.littlesilver.uniquehomestays.com)) aptly sums up what a Unique Home Stay is all about: “Everything about Little Silver House was special, and the attention to detail overwhelming. From the welcome tea and home-baked biscuits upon arrival (much needed after a 4 hour journey), the hearty breakfast (with amazing kippers!), the roaring fireplace in the drawing room and the amazing views from the bedrooms, to Bill and Paula’s hospitality.”

What Unique Home Stays fall short on when it comes down to the correct positioning of loo-roll holders, we make up for with an exceptional and unique place to stay. The meaning of ‘unique’ is ‘one of a kind’. And a Unique Home Stay is just that. So maybe it’s time that Unique Home Stays had their own seal of approval that’s a high quality mark of something that’s special and unique.

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### Notes to Editors:

- <sup>1</sup> A revised star-rating scheme for serviced accommodation across England, Scotland and Wales is to be introduced next year. The common set of standards for grading accommodation has been endorsed by tourist boards, the AA and RAC.
- For more information about what to expect at a Unique Home Stay, see <http://www.uniquehomestays.com/whatisuhs.asp>
- Unique Home Stays range from romantic hideaways for couples, to unique properties and ‘exclusive’ stately homes for small and medium-sized groups. Our fresh approach to providing the highest quality accommodation offers ‘Classic Chic’ in hand-selected private houses. Prices range from £40 pp to £300 pp per night. For more information see: [www.uniquehomestays.com](http://www.uniquehomestays.com)
- A selection of high-resolution images is available.
- Launched in 2001, Unique Home Stays offers the crème de la crème of privately hosted accommodation that offers a unique alternative to run-of-the mill hotels. Having travelled the world, MD Sarah Stanley knew what she expected from top quality accommodation: Intimate and luxury hospitality, pristine homes oozing with character, excellent regional cuisine and comfortable bedrooms with all the trimmings. Today Unique Home Stays offers superior accommodation in over 100 homes scattered over 14 different countries.