

SENIOR SCAPE: Hostel life for a senior

By Peggy Wrightson

In the fall of 2004, I planned an extended trip to Ireland.

I wanted to keep my travel plans open and because I wanted to stay for two months I needed to look for reasonable accommodations.

I had listened to a younger friend talk about the advantages of staying in a hostel as she traveled the world.

It sparked my interest in exploring the world of hostels. The advantages I discovered made me think it was worth a try.

First and importantly was the price. I could stay most nights for about \$25 (Canadian) and sometimes less. A big hearty breakfast was provided. Cooking and laundry facilities were available. At that time, free internet was available, now there is free wifi.

Most people in a hostel are traveling solo, so connections are made quickly if you want them.

You find likeminded folks to go out with in the evening and sometimes the hostel staff offer group outings. Exploring new places alone during the day is easy. However, going out after dark is definitely safer with more people.

My experience in Ireland was extremely positive. I stayed in eight different hostels. All were clean and safe. I stayed in dormitories (6 ? 12 bunk beds). There are also single rooms, double rooms and family rooms in most hostels.

I met friendly, interesting people, who shared traveling experiences. The more time I spent in Ireland, the more I wanted to explore music venues, so listening to other's stories helped me decide where I wanted to go next, where to stay and some recommended things to do.

When traveling alone and staying in hostels, I use caution to keep safe. I always dress simply and wear no jewelry. I have a waist money belt that fits under my clothes. My passport, credit, banks cards and any extra cash stay in it. It goes with me everywhere, even the shower (in a plastic bag) and I sleep with it on.

I carry only the money or cards I need for the day in a zippered or pinned pocket. I use a back pack and if I don't need it for the day, I tuck it away in my suitcase. I don't have much of value in my suitcase, some functional clothes and toiletries. Some hostels have lockers (bring a lock). I have never had anything taken, but anything of value is always on my person.

I've learned that the showers are busiest in the morning, so I showered late afternoon, before going out in the evening.

You have use of a kitchen. I have put leftovers in the fridge or bought some easy heat-up meals.

My most recent hostel stay was in Chicago in December 2015. It turned out to be a good decision. I paid \$158.00 (Canadian), for four nights of clean and safe accommodations. The last two nights, there was a person who snored and that did interrupt my sleep pattern. If I went again I would probably book a single room in the same hostel. The location was fabulous.

If this type of accommodation might appeal to you, think about the following:

Your personal physical fitness. You may be on a top bunk and bathrooms are down the hall.

Keep your belongings simple.

Some tolerance for others. You are sharing space.

Your sleeping habits. If you are a heavy snorer, it's not a good idea, others cannot sleep (this is my biggest pet peeve).

Research the hostel and location. Call ahead and ask what's included. Sometimes linens are extra.

I don't use hostels every time I travel. Sometimes I want the amenities of a lovely hotel. However, there are other times it's the perfect fit for me.

Upcoming trips at the
Aurora Seniors' Centre

Wednesday, May 11 ? A Chorus Line at Stratford

May 18 to 20 ? Ottawa Tulip Festival

Friday, May 27 ? Woodbine Racing

In addition, some events at
the Seniors' Centre:

April 8, 9 ? Cinderella, Seniorella. Tickets \$5. Bring your family. Children welcome.

April 22 ? Dinner Dance Gala. Tickets \$30 for members and \$40 for non-members.

Tickets for the above events are available at the reception desk of the Aurora Seniors' Centre.

For more information on the Aurora Seniors' Centre and all it has to offer, drop by 90 John West Way, visit the web site www.auroraseniors.ca, or call 905-726-4767 between 9 a.m. and 4 p.m. Monday to Friday.