

STAY AT MY PLACE

Airbnb makes any home a vacation destination BY AMY SCHNEIDER

First there was couch surfing, then thanks to the web and social media there was CouchSurfing.org, which let people all over the world find couches to crash on. Now savvy travelers looking for a unique and local place to stay in Eugene or across the planet can use Airbnb.com to find a room, studio or cottage for their vacation getaway.

Airbnb.com is a self-described “community marketplace” that allows users to search for privately owned lodgings in locations all over the world. Hosts advertise their properties with pictures and descriptions while guests

simply type in their destination of choice and can look through pages of available bookings, including rooms, studios and cottages.

“I’m sold on Airbnb,” Margot McDonnell says, who uses the service to rent out her studio apartment near the UO.

McDonnell, a retired elementary school principal, says she started using the site in May 2011 after meeting with a friend who recommended the service. Since then, McDonnell says she and her husband have hosted around 30 guests, all of whom were “great and conscientious.”

Airbnb-listed properties are typically less expensive

than hotels, she says, which contributes to the appeal of booking with Airbnb. Nightly prices in Eugene range anywhere from \$18 to \$450, but the majority of properties fall well under \$100.

The bed-and-breakfast finder is a portal to a variety of destinations. In Portland, over 500 rentals are listed for \$100 a night or less. Shakespeare lovers will appreciate the 68 rentals in Ashland (and beer lovers, too; one rental touts “Learn about Beer — Stay with Us”), while skiers can lodge in Bend by choosing from 76 locations. For the world traveler, a penthouse overlooking the harbor in Copenhagen, Denmark, goes for \$107 a night, a private room in Reyðarfjörður, Iceland, is \$41 a night, and for those looking to be a bit warmer, \$500 gets you your own island in Fiji. The economy-minded can stay in a shared room on Fiji’s Coral Coast for only \$22 a night.

For those of us who want to make sure that shared room or penthouse is a nice as the photos makes it seem, one of the most important aspects of Airbnb, according to McDonnell, is the review system. Both hosts and guests can leave reviews of each other, highlighting good experiences and taking note of bad ones. With enough reviews, potential guests get a sense of what it’s like to stay at a listed location.

“It’s a whole range of places,” says Deborah Basler, an Airbnb host in Eugene. “You can go from palatial places to sleeping on someone’s couch.” Basler says her guests stay at her cottage because it’s close to the UO and it offers a more personal experience than a hotel.

Airbnb host McDonnell, who has also stayed in Airbnb rentals in Brooklyn and Oakland as a guest, says that hosts with many positive reviews are usually a good choice. From experience, she says she now prefers to go with listings that offer to rent out an entire apartment rather than a single room, for the sake of privacy.

“It’s an up-and-coming business and well-run,” McDonnell says. “I think that the hotel industry should start paying closer attention to it.” ■



MARGOT MCDONNELL'S EUGENE STUDIO FOR RENT THROUGH AIRBNB

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