



The Holiday Countdown

By Kat, Ciao Bella Travel's Home Correspondent

June 08

The countdown is on. A week until Mark and I go on holidays. Agreement was finally struck at 5 weeks - Berlin, Norway, London, New York, Philadelphia.

I've been idly wondering what needs to be done before we fly, so this week I faced up to my responsibilities and wrote a To Do list. Driven by the To Do list since I was a teenager working at McDonalds, it didn't take long to get into the groove. Within minutes it was 20 jobs long.

So I wondered: how long is Mark's To Do list? Of course, it's ZERO, he hasn't written one. So it begs the question, do I have a 20-job To Do list just because I've written one? What would happen if I didn't write the list? I have this sneaking suspicion that the only consequence would be that I wouldn't have any jobs to do before I go.

One of the jobs Mark took on was finding accommodation in Berlin. He did heaps of research, asking friends, internet searches. I can only guess how many hours it took him to narrow the field to two choices.

The first was a fully self-contained apartment, leased directly from the owner, in central Berlin's Mitte district. Internet photos show a funky little pad with cool furniture, stylish kitchen tiling and a lucky bamboo plant in the bathroom. I'm such a sucker for small touches.

The second was a room in a 3 star, 105-room hotel in the same district.

What the apartment had going for it was that we could do normal things like buy groceries and cook dinner, so we could pretend that we're living in Berlin, even if just for a week.

What the hotel room had going for it is what all hotel rooms have going for them. Those wonderful sheets and beds, a constant temperature, no sound, thick carpet, blackout curtains for a completely uninterrupted sleeping experience.

But while I love a minibar and room service, there's no disguising the lack of personality in most hotel rooms, hotel bars and lobbies. Well at least at the ones we can afford!



Essentially, the choices catered for people seeking two different things from their holiday experience.

So to be sure - we sat down to search together. We went crazy – consulting online reviews, comparing prices, researching different districts. I thanked god that we both have a propensity for exhaustive research in common, because any normal person would have pushed one of us out the window.

Apart from the occasional disagreement as to whose turn it was to operate the mouse and keyboard (uncharted territory – it's a different medium to the television controls, which most couples have come to an agreement about) it was largely without incident.

Four hours later, we'd narrowed it down to two options.

The studio apartment mentioned above.

And the hotel mentioned above.

Mentally tossing a coin, I threw my lot in with the apartment. Mark almost swayed me with some words about jetlag, sleeping well and someone to clean our room, but I kept my vote with the apartment. So Mark agreed and off he went to do the washing up, while I made the online booking. Task complete. Tick! Let's hope the other 19 jobs don't take four hours each, otherwise we'll never make it to the airport.

So until we go, I'll keep trying to reassure myself that the world will keep turning even if I ignore the To Do list. And if successful, when I get home, I'll be looking at other areas of my life that I can see a list of redundant tasks so I can ignore those too.

Ciao bella!

Kat Cutler