

Book stays like a local with Wimdu

 By Brian Berkman: contributing editor, travel ^{17 Oct 2011}

Wimdu, a new online marketplace, allows you to book stays like a local, in private accommodation. Providing accommodation the world over, Wimdu's listings are user-rated so immediately users can see which listings are most viewed, booked or rated.



According to Sonja Ballenden, co-founder of Wimdu South Africa, Wimdu pairs adventurous globetrotters with unique properties and interesting hosts to create exciting travel experiences. "The open platform allow hosts to list their space for free, be it a room, an apartment or a house and invite anyone from around the world to stay with them," she explains.

Launched in South Africa in June 2011, it has over 300 South Africa properties registered while Wimdu's global footprint is across all seven continents and registered more than 25 000 unique apartments in over 100 countries.

Wimdu's platform offers users not only the opportunity to list and search for accommodation but also an array of travel-related information like city guides and tips for trips. Users can exchange information and develop contacts through video channels, Facebook, Twitter and blogs. Guests and hosts alike can evaluate their travel experience through Wimdu's reference and rating system and a 24-hour international hotline is available for hosts and guests, if there is trouble during their stay.



Sonja Ballenden, co-founder of Wimdu South Africa

Live like a local

The key appeal is the ability to have an authentic experience and live like a local - something many travellers even those in the luxury category, want to do. "A typical hotel holiday offers very little appreciation of a place's local charm. Staying and interacting with the locals offers a completely new and refreshing experience. Travellers can pick up useful information and local tips from their hosts and the interactive Wimdu online community allows for feedback and recommendations," Ballenden says.

While sites such as www.TripAdvisor.com provide real-time accommodation reviews at its core,

www.wimdu.com and predecessor sites like www.airbnb.com provide the platform for every aspect of offering, purchasing and reviewing accommodation in a community-driven marketplace for private accommodation.

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