

How to detect hidden cameras in a hotel or Airbnb

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Ever get the feeling you're being watched? You're not alone. Nearly 75% of travelers now check for cameras when entering a hotel room or Airbnb. In recent years, alarming tales of hidden cameras discovered during vacations have sparked news coverage and lawsuits. While hidden cameras inside dwellings remain rare, knowing how to detect hidden cameras is one of the best ways to protect your privacy. Whether you're staying somewhere new or want to ensure your roommate isn't spying on you, this article has you covered.

Can hotels have hidden cameras in rooms? Can Airbnbs?

They shouldn't, but it's possible.

While it's not illegal throughout the United States to have undisclosed cameras in vacation rentals or hotel rooms, it's against the policy of every major hotel and timeshare company to have cameras (hidden or visible) in private areas like bedrooms and bathrooms.

In March 2024, Airbnb updated its policy on this, banning security cameras inside listings, regardless of location, purpose, or whether they were disclosed before booking. Previously, cameras were allowed in common areas like hallways and living rooms if disclosed before booking. Cameras are still permitted in shared outdoor spaces, but all surveillance, including audio and video, must be disclosed in the listing. Undisclosed devices are prohibited. This policy went into effect on April 30, 2024.

Even with these regulations in place, staying in a place where many others have stayed previously—whether it's through Airbnb, a timeshare, or a traditional hotel—can leave you feeling uneasy, wondering if someone might be watching. In fact, a survey of 2,000 Airbnb users revealed that 58% of vacationers worry about hidden cameras during their stay. Their concerns are not unfounded: nearly 1 in 4 have reported finding a camera at a vacation rental. A 2024 ConsumerAffairs survey of 250 rental owners found that nearly 1 in 12 admitted to secretly installing cameras despite the rules. And while hotel policies may be clear, there are still occasional reports of rogue employees placing cameras in private spaces.

While vacation companies, including Airbnb, have made strides to address concerns about hidden cameras, protecting your personal privacy still requires extra vigilance. So, let's explore where you should check for hidden cameras in a hotel room or Airbnb to ensure your peace of mind.

Where to check for hidden cameras in a hotel room or Airbnb:

While it's unlikely that you'll find hidden cameras in obvious places, there are certain areas in hotel rooms and Airbnbs where cameras might be discreetly placed. To protect your privacy, it's important to check common hiding spots. Here are some places to inspect:

- Alarm clocks & clock radios
- Lamps and other lights
- Thermostats
- Smoke detectors & CO2 detectors
- Vents
- Outlets
- Picture frames
- Media consoles
- Behind mirrors

Now that you know where to look, you can use these next few tips to detect hidden cameras in your hotel or Airbnb and ensure your privacy is protected during your stay.

If you're concerned about hidden cameras in your hotel room or Airbnb, a few simple steps can help ease your worries. While most properties follow strict guidelines, it's always wise to double-check. Here are three straightforward steps to detect hidden cameras and ensure your privacy.

1. Lights, (phone) camera, *detection*

Many hidden cameras rely on infrared technology. This is invisible to the human eye. However, most modern smartphone cameras can detect the infrared lights emitted by cameras. The method to find a hidden camera with an iPhone or Android is simple but differs slightly between device types.

How to detect hidden cameras with your iPhone

1. Turn off all the lights in the room.
2. Open the selfie camera on your iPhone.
3. Keep your eye on the screen as you turn the camera slowly around the room.
4. Look for a light that is only visible to you through the camera lens.
5. Turn on the lights and inspect the area for signs of hidden cameras.

How to detect hidden cameras with your Android phone

1. Turn off all the lights in the room.
2. Open the back-facing camera on your Android.
3. Keep your eye on the screen as you turn the camera slowly around the room.
4. Look for a light that is only visible to you through the camera lens.
5. Turn on the lights and inspect the area for signs of hidden cameras.

2. Check the connected devices on the Wi-Fi network

Many hidden cameras might connect straight to the home's Wi-Fi network. That means you have a few options for identifying those cameras through the router.

If you are an Airbnb homeowner who controls the Wi-Fi, then this task is very simple. Open the Wi-Fi router app on the phone and browse the connected devices. If you find cameras connected to the Wi-Fi (that aren't accounted for in public areas), then there may be a chance that you've found evidence of a hidden camera.

But what if you're renting your Airbnb and can't control the Wi-Fi?

Well, as the saying goes, there's an app for that. You can use apps like [Fing](#) to scan the local Wi-Fi network. Download the Fing app, sign into the local Wi-Fi, and then scan the network within the Fing app. This will tell you the other devices—including possible cameras—using the network.

Of course, this tactic only works if the camera is connected to the local network. It eliminates old cameras and ones that have not been connected to Wi-Fi.

So, here's one more tactic you can use to detect hidden cameras.

3. Use a flashlight

No detective is complete without a flashlight, right?

This method is perhaps the simplest of them all. Here's how it works:

Many modern cameras have a lens that will reflect bright light. So, turn off the lights in the room and then turn on your flashlight. Move the flashlight slowly around the room, focusing specifically on areas where you suspect a camera may likely be hidden. If you catch a glimpse of something reflecting the light back towards you from an irregular space or object, then you may have just found a hidden camera.

According to one [Redditor](#), the best way to achieve this camera-detection method is to hold the flashlight close to your face.

What to do if I detect a hidden camera while on vacation

We hope you never run into a situation where you find a hidden camera in your vacation rental or hotel. But if you do detect hidden cameras in your dwelling, it's helpful to remember these steps:

1. Document the hidden camera: Take pictures or video recordings of the hidden camera. This will serve as evidence during any investigation.
2. Cover the camera, but do not disconnect it: Don't tamper with the connection or the wiring, but cover it the best you can. Use a towel or blanket, tape, a bag, or anything that will cover the lens.
3. Avoid speaking around the camera: It's easy to determine whether you've successfully blocked the camera's view, but you cannot determine whether it has an internal microphone or the quality of that microphone. For that reason, it's imperative that you avoid speaking too much around the camera, especially not having any private conversations or speaking financial details aloud.
4. Call the police: If you find a hidden camera, you want to report it for multiple reasons. First, this is illegal, and reporting the issue may ensure other people do not become victims of privacy invasion. Second, it's impossible to know if the person who set up the camera knows that you found them. By calling the police, you can protect yourself from whoever set up the camera.
5. Report the incident to the vacation company: Tell Airbnb, VRBO, or the hotel management about the hidden camera.

The fortunate reality is that hidden cameras are quite rare because the practice is illegal and violates the agreements of most vacation rental platforms. However, [25% of travelers finding](#) hidden cameras in their Airbnbs is far too much of a privacy invasion. So, use these tips to detect hidden cameras and ensure your stay is safe.

While we're on the topic of privacy, you may also want to consider using a [virtual private network](#) (VPN) to protect your internet connection while you travel.

Although even the [best VPN for travel](#) won't help you detect hidden cameras in your room, it's an essential tool for protecting your privacy while traveling. Hidden cameras are rare, but falling victim to hackers is a real concern, especially when using Airbnb or [hotel Wi-Fi](#). That's where IPVanish comes in. It encrypts your online traffic, ensuring your data remains secure no matter where you are. Plus, it blocks trackers and malicious content, giving you the peace of mind that your privacy is protected while you browse, shop, or stream—no matter where your travels take you.