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Will this summer's vacation or travel plans include staying with family or friends? If there is no money left in your budget for a hotel room, this can be a great option.
Most likely you will be able to kill two birds with one stone; you get a free place to stay and you get the opportunity to reconnect with loved ones.

Sounds great, right? Not so fast! While I don't want to put a damper on your budget-friendly get-a-way (because you know I am a lover of all things thrifty), please allow me to give you a word (okay maybe several words) of caution before you roll up into Aunt Bertha's home.
Please remember to mind your manners as a guest, and be considerate.
Oh I hear you talking back at me right now.
You are saying, "Auntie Bertha and Cousin Rochelle are cool and they always tell me that I am welcome any time!"
Well, if you go to Aunt Bertha's house and act like you have no home-training, before the visit is over, she will be rolling her eyes at you.
I want you to consider the immortal words of Benjamin Franklin, "Guests, like fish, begin to smell after three days."
So in order to keep the stench at bay, let's visit the three basic rules of "good houseguest etiquette."

Don't Wear Out Your Welcome

Generally speaking, if you're planning to stay at the home of a friend or loved one, limit your visit to around three days (like Ben said earlier). Although your visit is welcomed, it is likely that Auntie has rearranged her normal schedule (and maybe the household sleeping arrangements) to accommodate you comfortably, so please be considerate of that.
In addition, if you are travelling with little ones, make sure that
daily
they have an opportunity to burn off some energy outdoors; in the yard, at a park, or while sightseeing.
This way little Johnny won't work Auntie's nerves too much. Also before using the phone for a
local
call (or the computer), please ask and then keep it brief.
If your plans require you to be in the area longer than three days, consider getting a hotel for the remaining time.
You will still save big money, and you'll be sure to get another invitation.

Bring a Hostess Gift/ Treat the Family to Dinner

As a gesture of appreciation, it is always nice to arrive bearing gifts. They do not have to be elaborate gifts. For instance when we lived in Alabama, I would always take my mother-in-law, a Michigan resident, a watermelon.
Other ideas are a music CD of her favorite artist, a bouquet of mixed flowers, or even a book that you think the family might enjoy --I recently bought a cool book called *The Jesus Storybook Bible* for our family, and we all enjoyed it so much that I bought three more copies as gifts for other families.
In addition, consider taking the host family out to dinner one night during your stay, or better yet, go to the market and make dinner.
None of these gestures will cost you more than one night's stay at a hotel, so everybody is a winner.

Do Keep it Clean

I have a (another) confession. When I wake up in the morning the first thing I do is make my bed and I require that my children make their beds, too. When I am a houseguest, the same rules apply.
Pick up after yourself and the children if they are with you.
If your hostess cooks a meal, offer to do the dishes-and make your daughter take out the trash, and your son sweep the floor.
Finally, prior to leaving, spruce up the bathroom, ask your host how you should leave the bed (stripped or unstripped), and leave a hand-written message expressing your gratitude.

Summer is America's favorite time to hit the road. If your plans include summer travel on a budget, consider lodging with your loved ones, but be considerate and do a few things to "earn your keep." Then you will be the type of guest that will be invited to come again soon (just not too soon).

That's what my family will be doing this summer.
We are travelling South to see my new niece, my 93-year-old grandma, and many other relatives and friends.
Throughout our adventure, we will be welcomed into many homes-staying only three days or less- and we will
ENJOY
the pleasures of free lodging, southern cooking, and good fellowship!

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