

Criteria for allergy-friendly accommodations (hotels, guesthouses, holiday homes, holiday flats)

BACKGROUND

Travelling can be challenging in many ways for people with allergies in terms of health. For example, people with respiratory allergies may experience symptoms when exposed to animals or their hair. This can happen unintentionally and unawares if, for example, they spend the night in a hotel room where a dog or cat has previously stayed. Likewise, people with food allergies need special menu options in order to prevent allergy symptoms when eating.

The ECARF Seal of Quality is granted to accommodations that fulfil the following criteria.

1. CRITERIA

1.1. Interiors

Public areas

- No allergenic plants that release pollen. In general, no blooming grasses, hazel or birch branches, or olive plants. Self-pollinating plants in particular release pollen, which then spreads throughout interiors (e.g. tulips).
- No allergenic plants unsuitable for people with latex allergies (e.g. Ficus benjamina, oleander, poinsettia).
- Ventilation of rooms through open windows or air conditioners and ventilators externally monitored according to manufacturer guidelines, including regular filter changes.
- Non-smoking and pet-free environment. Pets, if any, are permitted access via separate entrances and may only stay in public areas for very brief periods or in a separate room.

Rooms

Rooms must be available with the following features:

- Non-smoking and pet free
- No allergenic houseplants that release pollen. In general, no blooming grasses, hazel or birch branches or olive plants. Self-pollinating plants in particular release pollen, which then spreads throughout interiors (e.g. tulips)
- No allergenic houseplants unsuitable for people with latex allergies (e.g. Ficus benjamina, oleander, poinsettia)
- Potted plants only in soilless systems (hydroculture) to reduce mould contamination
- Uncarpeted floors or short-pile synthetic carpeting

- Short-pile synthetic carpeting may only be used for a maximum period of five years and must be regularly deep-cleaned depending on the level of dirt accumulation (wet cleaning with carpet cleaning foam).
- Short-pile synthetic carpets must be cleaned daily using a vacuum cleaner with a class A rating for dust re-emission (according to the EU efficiency label) or a vacuum cleaner with a HEPA filter. If daily room service is not provided (holiday homes, holiday flats), these carpets must be thoroughly cleaned with the above-mentioned vacuum cleaner before arrival/after departure.
- For carpet-free floors: The floors are wet-mopped every two days. If daily room service is not provided (holiday homes, holiday flats), floors must be thoroughly cleaned before arrival/after departure.
- Ventilation of rooms through open windows or air conditioners and ventilators externally monitored according to manufacturer guidelines, including regular filter changes.
- Allergen-proof encasings for mattresses, blankets and pillows are available on request in order to reduce mites. These measures are not necessary for accommodations situated 1,500 m above sea level and higher, since there are no mites at that altitude.
- Personal care products for sensitive skin (perfume-free or hypoallergenic soap, shampoo, lotion) are available on request.

Recommendation

- Rooms should be cleaned using cleaning products that are well tolerated by the skin and airways.
- Laundry should be done using detergents that are well tolerated by the skin and airways.

Pets

- Only permitted with registration (generally not permitted in guesthouses, holiday flats, holiday homes).
- Permitted on floors or in buildings away from allergy friendly rooms and at an adequate distance to prevent pet hair from being transferred across the floor.

1.2. Restaurant

If catering services are available to guests, the following criteria apply.

The food and beverages must be adapted to the needs of people with allergies. Furthermore, effective allergen management must be practised and an adequate selection of menu alternatives must be provided.

Allergen management

Food purchasing and preparation

Allergens can end up unintentionally in food – for example, if the raw ingredients contain unlabelled allergens or the same transport containers are used for allergen-free and allergen-containing raw ingredients. Allergen contamination can also occur when the same machines or utensils (e.g. knives, cutting boards) have been used to prepare allergen-free and allergen-containing meals.

Proper allergen management effectively prevents contamination by allergens. It includes:

- Monitoring of raw ingredients
- Monitoring of the food preparation process
- Organised staff training

The kitchen staff should therefore ensure through allergen management that ...

- Products are always individually packaged and delivered in separate transport containers; this should be specified when ordering the products.
- Food items are individually packaged, covered and stored.
- Meals containing allergens are prepared in a separate working area.
- The kitchen staff changes latex-free gloves or washes hands before entering the separate working area.
- In order to prevent cross contamination, kitchen utensils never come into contact with other food items or dishes before or during meal preparation.
- Prepared food is portioned out using separate kitchen utensils for each individual meal component.
- The kitchen staff is regularly trained in the storage, preparation and distribution of meals and in responding to queries from guests.
- A list of all allergenic ingredients is accessible to the staff and guests at all times so that they can always be informed about the composition of all dishes.

Mandatory labelling of allergenic meals

Meals must be provided in compliance with the legally required declaration of allergens according to Regulation (EU) 1169/2011. A list of the allergenic ingredients in the meals must be accessible at all times.

Alternative foods must be available at all times

Meals can be pre-ordered to exclude specific allergenic ingredients OR individualised meals can be composed by combining a selection of various meal components and foods from the menu or buffet.

At least three alternative foods must always be available in the kitchen, for example:

- Eggless durum wheat spaghetti or pasta, semolina, rice, potatoes
- Soya milk or lactose-free milk
- Dairy-free, eggless and nut-free desserts
- Gluten-free bread
- Nut-free, peanut-free and almond-free muesli and bread
- Celery-free soup base

Notice for guests

The following notice should be displayed in the menu and at the buffets in German and English:

“Fürs Sie unter Allergien leiden, hilft Ihnen unser Personal gern weiter.“

“If you have allergies, please let our staff know. We would be happy to help.“

The ECARF Seal of Quality should appear next to this notice.

1.3. Training

As part of the certification, employees receive training on how to deal with guests who have allergies.

1.4. Validity

ECARF certification is valid for two years. Access must be granted for the ECARF audit, which may be conducted without prior notice at any time within the validity period. The inspection is carried out by in-house ECARF auditors and authorised ECARF partners.

1.5. External Presentation of the ECARF Seal of Quality

- Notices can be created according to the restaurant’s corporate design, but must include the ECARF Seal of Quality logo.
- Notices should be made visible to guests in the countries language and English in the form of a display board or stand as well as on the restaurant’s website.

2. QUALITY CONTROL AND COMPLAINT MANAGEMENT

The business has established a functional system of quality control that responds effectively to consumer complaints.

The system ensures the following:

- The business contact details, such as the address, telephone number and/or email address, are clearly visible on the product packaging;
- Consumer complaints are handled and followed up in an appropriate manner by qualified and experienced personnel of the business;
- The assessment of consumer complaints and, if applicable, any inferred areas of improvement are reapplied to product quality and safety. The business agrees to make this data available to ECARF on an ongoing basis.