DTV classification for holiday homes/apartments and private rooms

The German Tourism Association (DTV) classifies holiday homes/apartments and private rooms with up to nine beds across Germany. This classification was introduced in 1994 and has been implemented with the help of a licensing system since 2004. There are currently around 53,000 lodgings with DTV classification and awarded with eight-pointed stars. Similar to the hotel classification method used by the German Hotel and Restaurant Association (DEHOGA), lodgings are awarded with up to five stars. The star ratings used by the DTV have the following provisions:

- ★ Simple and functional accommodation
- ★★★ Fair accommodation
- ★★★★ Good accommodation
- ★★★★★ Excellent accommodation
- ★★★★★★ Exclusive accommodation

This classification gives providers the opportunity to have the quality of their accommodation objectively reviewed using a set of criteria used uniformly across the country. Separate from the star rating, inspectors also advise providers on useful ways to improve their accommodation. The stars represent a competitive edge over other providers and provide an effective advertising tool.

The following can apply for the DTV classification:

- Providers of holiday apartments and houses
- Providers of private rooms (with up to nine beds)

The following definitions apply to this:

**Holiday apartment/holiday house**
A holiday apartment is a self-contained lodging with its own sanitary area and self-catering equipment where guests can be temporarily accommodated.

**Private accommodation/private room**
A private room is a lodging in a private house that does not require a licence and can be furnished with up to a maximum of nine beds.

Participating in the DTV classification is voluntary. The classification result is valid for three years.
The DTV classification serves as an indication as to what guests can expect from the accommodation. If the guest's expectations of quality are met by the provider's accommodation then the guest will be satisfied, which is the prerequisite for repeat visits and positive reviews.

To ensure the classification is transparent, the same set of criteria is used nationally. These criteria are developed by a panel of experts and are reviewed, updated, and refined every three years. On the one hand, components of the classification criteria include the minimum criteria that need to be fulfilled in order to participate in the classification. On the other hand, there are criteria used to assess the accommodation's amenities as well as the range of services offered by the provider. The number of points achieved dictates the star ranking, providing the minimum criteria have been met.

**Licensing system**

Implementing the DTV classification is down to the local or regional tourism organisations. This requires concluding a licensing contract between DTV Service GmbH and the tourism organisation, whereby they are responsible for implementing the classification in a designated area. The licensing contract stipulates adherence to rights and obligations which ensure that the DTV classification is applied and implemented to a uniform standard across the country. The contract is valid for three years and can be subsequently renewed.

To ensure the criteria are applied uniformly, the licensee must have at least one of their employees to be responsible for the classification trained by the DTV. All inspectors must participate in training every three years. Furthermore, the DTV offers a piece of evaluation software that provides support for all questions surrounding the classification and complaints.

**Implementing the classification**

After an area has decided to implement the DTV classification and concluded the licensing contract, providers in the licence area designated in the contract can be classified. This is done by the employees trained by the DTV or by an independent, certified DTV inspector.

If a provider decides to participate in the DTV classification then they are to sign an agreement with the licensee that regulates the rights and obligations of both parties.

Holiday properties are assessed by the inspectors or inspecting committee at an agreed appointment at the property. After checking the minimum criteria for implementing the classification, the property is thoroughly assessed according to the 186 different classification criteria.

After classification at the property, the licensee enters the data into the DTV evaluation software. This creates a central database where the data can be accessed to be reviewed, managed, and processed for statistics.
If there are complaints about a classified property, the licensee is to inspect these shortcomings at the property. Where necessary, the provider will then be prompted to resolve such shortcomings to re-establish the standards of the classification result. As possible sanctions, the licensee or the DTV can downgrade the property, revoke the classification or charge the provider with a penalty. The person who made the complaint will then always receive feedback about the result of the inspection afterwards. Where necessary, compensation will be offered by the provider or the licensee.

**Distinctive features**

The DTV classification is signified by an eight-pointed star. The provider can advertise the stars for three years after the classification. They can do so online across various portals and on their home page or offline in print media, accommodation provider directories, and with a sign. All participating providers are listed with an entry at [www.sterneferien.de](http://www.sterneferien.de). The following brand labels represent the DTV classification: