

7 Things I Hate When Renting Other People's Homes on Airbnb

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I can't remember the last time I booked a hotel for a vacation. Instead, I head straight to short-term rental sites such as Airbnb. I get lower rates and more room to spread out, and the homeowner gets a nice infusion of cash.

This win-win scenario has many homeowners eager to rent out their digs. But beware—it's not as easy as posting a few pics. For long-term success, you'll have to rack up the rave reviews, and those can be tough to come by if you don't cater to your customers' needs.

As a seasoned short-term renter, I've come across my share of annoyances that bother not only me, but many of my friends who depend on short-term rental sites, too. So if you're tempted to turn your home into a cash cow, make sure to avoid these classic mistakes.

1. Skimping on supplies

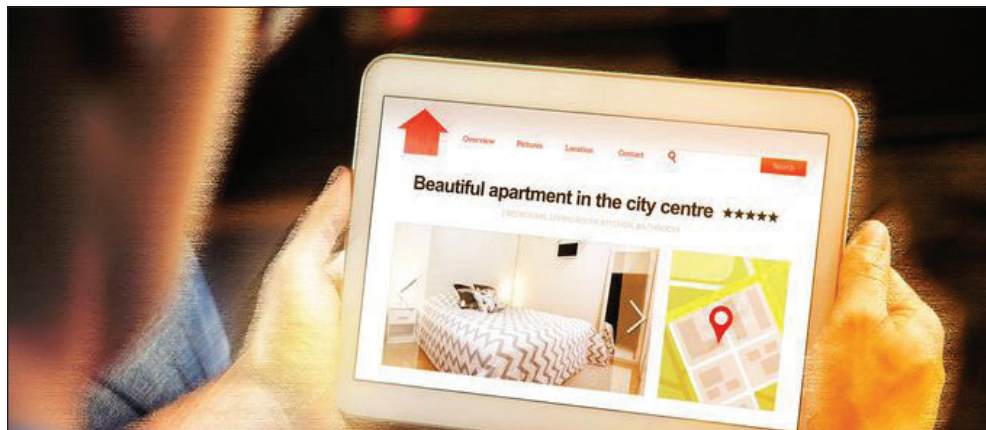
Leaving one roll of paper towels, two trash bags, and three dishwasher detergent capsules is going to earn my wrath. I'm either going to be annoyed that I have to buy new supplies, or going to leave the dishwasher full because I was out of detergent, as I did during a long weekend in Sunriver, OR. Yes, I get that there are rude guests who overuse supplies, but at least furnish enough for normal use.

Another essential frequently lacking is an adequate supply of bath towels. And it's so easy to fix: Just go to a big-box store when they are on sale and stock up. And if one of the amenities you're touting is a pool or beach access, for the love of heaven, furnish beach towels! I can guarantee your guests assume they are there and didn't bring any of their own.

2. Exaggerating your location

"Near the beach." When my friend rented an Airbnb in Los Angeles with this description, she was envisioning a short walk before she felt the sand between her toes. Instead, "near" amounted to a 20-minute drive (without traffic) and a battle to find a place to park.

And I've fallen for this gambit, too, when I considered renting a place "in wine country." It turns out it did have one vineyard nearby, but was otherwise far on the fringes of prime



Tero Vesalainen/iStock

grape territory.

Of course you want to put your place in the best light, but there's a fine line between aggrandizing your location and misleading people. And trust us, we will be miffed.

3. Furnishing the rental with castoffs

When I'm on vacation, I don't want to be surrounded by garage sale furniture, nubby sheets, mismatched plates, warped pans, and random kitchen gadgets. All of this I found in a mountain cabin rental in Northern California, which took "rustic" in the wrong direction.

Yes, equipping the home is an investment, but to give your rental the aura of a chic hotel or sumptuous guest home, spend a few extra bucks for elegant furniture and amenities.

4. Making renters wonder how to use the coffee maker

Or the other appliances, but especially the coffee maker. First, get one that's relatively intuitive and then put the manual right next to it—with the coffee filters located in a logical location nearby.

At one Airbnb in Boston, I noticed a lack of filters so I bought new ones, only to find three boxes in an upper cupboard the next day. It seems everyone had thought they were missing and bought them. I helpfully stored my contribution in the drawer under the maker, where a practical person would expect to find them. You're welcome.

5. Hiding the Wi-Fi code

Like, seriously, don't make this hard.

6. Not updating your bookings calendar

It's infuriating to relish in the good fortune of nabbing lodging on a prime weekend in a fantastic location only to find out later that it's already been booked. If you're renting out

your home, keep that calendar of available dates current and check your messages regularly to ensure that you are getting back to potential renters ASAP. Often they are coordinating with multiple families, juggling dates and airfare, and attending to a wide variety of details that go into planning a vacation, which can be majorly affected by availability.

7. Making guests feel unwelcome

Yes, it's a business transaction. However, you're opening up your home, and some visitors want it to feel that way. The most wonderful Airbnb I ever stayed in was in Alabama, and what folks say about Southern hospitality is 100% true. We were there for a football game day weekend, and the host had assembled a beautiful basket overflowing with "tailgate" essentials, from chips and salsa to red cups and pompoms.

I would estimate it probably cost \$10 to create this welcome basket, but the glow was worth far more than that. She also had left new toothbrushes and travel-size paste in the bathroom. Necessary? Of course not, but much appreciated.

So, consider adding your own welcome basket of a few snacks, some brochures for nearby tourist attractions, and other small but meaningful amenities that will wow your guests.



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