

# Tourism's Coastal Crush

Oregon Coast communities are torn between the tourism dollars vacation rentals bring in and the quality of life and housing stock they take with them

BY EMILY GREEN  
SENIOR STAFF REPORTER

The Deep End Café in Newport was packed full of customers two summers ago when its owner, Charlotte Boxer, got a call from her neighbor. The neighbor wanted to let Boxer know that a stranger had climbed onto the roof of her house.

She left the busy restaurant to make the short drive to her home, near the entrance to Yaquina Bay State Park. She soon discovered a man was still high up on her roof, while a woman in a long skirt was attempting to scale her stone chimney.

As it turns out, the man and woman were the temporary occupants of two different vacation rentals near her house. They had ignored her “no trespassing” signs in order to retrieve a kite.

This is just one of many incidents, Boxer said, that has eroded the quality of her home life since her coastal neighborhood – and her property – have become overrun with vacation-rental inhabitants.

“They block the driveway, they block the street, they have parties until late in the night,” she said. “It is hell living next to them.”

She has since installed a “Fort Knox”-style fence around her property, she said.

It wasn't always like this. Boxer, who splits her time between Newport and Portland, said that when she purchased her oceanfront second home 13 years ago, there were no short-term rentals in its immediate vicinity. Today, three of the four houses adjacent to her property serve as revolving doors for tourists.

And it's not as if Boxer is adverse to tourism – her livelihood depends on it. At 67, she has much of her life savings invested in her seafood restaurant that relies, in part, on traveling diners.

But vacation rentals, she said, are causing more harm than good due to their increasing numbers. She is constantly losing employees because they cannot find anywhere to live. One of her cooks is living in a small pull-trailer in an RV park



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## Housing Rural Oregon

because she cannot find housing.

The continuous employee turnover and stress of running a restaurant that's always short-staffed have Boxer wondering whether she wants to continue doing business at the beach.

She is not alone in her frustrations. Communities up and down the coast have been grappling with how to regulate vacation rentals and mitigate the effects of ever-increasing number of visitors. It's a double-edged sword: While Oregon's coastal economy relies largely on tourism dollars, the spread of short-term rentals has created livability issues for many residents and made it nearly impossible for locals – many of whom work in the establishments tourists patronize – to find housing.

### The surge

Oregon's coastal towns have long played host to swaths of vacation rentals and second homes, but over the past decade, short-term rentals have begun overtaking most new construction and affordable homes that year-round residents once occupied.

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PHOTO BY EMILY GREEN

Charlotte Boxer at her restaurant, The Deep End Cafe, in Newport. Boxer's seafood restaurant relies, in part, on traveling diners. But vacation rentals, she said, are causing more harm than good due to their increasing numbers.