



10 easy ways to delight travelers

SOURCE: Homeaway.com

1

Great, accurate photos

"Great photos! Take photos of your house when it is nice and bright and not dull. Be sure your house is clean and there is no clutter. Put the toilet seats down when you are taking photos of bathrooms."

"This is without a doubt the single most important aspect of your listing. Nothing attracts more attention to your listing than a good photo. Conversely, prospective renters will not bother to read any of your listing's text, rates or specials if your photos look like garbage. Under-exposed interiors that make the living room look like a dungeon, overexposed shots of the backyard, blurry images, pictures with dirty dishes in the sink, or simply failing to provide photos of certain areas will cause renters to pass you by. Nothing raises more red flags than when a home has photos of the yard but none of the interior, or vice versa. Hire a professional photographer and write it off as a business expense. There is nothing more important than your property photos."

"Pictures..please have updated pictures! And if you offer 4 bedrooms..we would like to see them!"

"Lots of good, well-lit photos with an accurate, honest and complete description of the home/location."

2

Honest descriptions

"Please make sure that the renters get the home they thought they were renting! (This happened to us, we rented a home and upon arrival got a complete different house than the one we thought we were renting. It was OK at the end but far from what we expected and a bit unfair!)"

"This is your space to sell your home! Include information about the town. Highlight any unique features of the home (has a hot-tub, has weekly cleaning, has bikes, has a hdtv, has a dvd) anything that makes your home more special."

"Do not use caps anywhere in your listing. It comes off as if you are yelling, which is a bad idea. Use friendly language, not passive aggressive language. (You do not want to say things like: "Deposit 1000 dollars, we expect YOU to take care of our house like you would your own!")"

"Description is important! Make it complete and understandable! It's so much easier for a renter to make a choice! It only takes you a few minutes more."

3

Quick and kind responses to inquiries

"Fast, friendly email correspondence. Cheerful willingness to discuss things by telephone."

"Use kind communication."

"Please reply to your customers in acceptable time. A week later is to late."

"Respond to every inquiry, in a nice and polite way, even if the person clearly did not read your entire listing. Respond with in a day, the faster you respond the faster someone will book. Remember most people are asking 10-20 different homeowners about their house. So responding in a fast and kind way is very important. Be sure to include any important things like dates things are due. At the end ask if the person has any questions at all, and tell them you are happy to answer anything!"

4

Updated calendar

"It is a waste of everyone's time to be either waiting for e-mail responses or e-mailing back & forth about homes that are booked but don't show as such on the website. If a renter contacts you because your home shows as available, but you respond days later that it is booked, it takes a toll not only on you but on every vacation rental owner out there. This process frustrates renters so badly that many of them wind up getting hotels when they don't want to, just because it takes too much effort for them to book a vacation rental while also avoiding the scams & pitfalls."

"Please update your availability calendars. It is so disappointing going through houses and houses and sending inquiries only to learn the house is not available anymore. It would avoid both of us time and work. Even worse please don't advertise with special deals and last minute prices in such cases. Not updating a calendar for many months is a bit sad. At the same time please update your complete website on a regular basis!"

5

Easy method of payment

"Easy payments online credit card or paypal type - I don't want to go to a post office to pay money order, or send you a check. Be clear and specific how quickly you want me to pay once I accept your terms and conditions - I don't want to hear that someone else already booked your place if I had still time to pay you for it according to your conditions."

6

Cleanliness is next to godliness

"Please don't try to save on cleaning fees before I come to your place - I've read many complaints about how dirty a place was even though most owners seem to be charging us cleaning fees."

"Be sure the house is clean! This is so important. Hire a cleaning service, do not attempt to clean the home on your own."

"Please make sure the house is clean! It's so frustrating when you arrive at a vacation home and it's filthy and in a terrible condition! And yes that also happened to us before."

"Charge a reasonable, flat-rate cleaning fee. Renters really do not care how much or how little you have to pay to clean a property before we arrive or after we leave. If we had our way, you would eat the cost every time. Just because your overpriced cleaning service is ripping you off, it doesn't mean that renters will suddenly be willing to volunteer that money freely. If you are getting a decent deal for cleaning services, pass that rate along to your renters instead of looking at it as an opportunity for padding in additional profit. How many eBay auctions have you passed on because you knew the seller was overcharging for shipping and making a profit of that while dodging auction fees? No, I'm not going to suggest charging cheap rental rates and high cleaning fees to avoid the tax rate. That would be unethical and probably illegal. Just charge a fair, reasonable rate for cleaning and make sure we get our money's worth when we arrive."

7

A well stocked home

"Have a well stocked house. Be sure to have cleaning supplies, toilet paper, paper towels, napkins on hand. It's also nice to have some small toiletries for your guests, so when they first arrive they can relax and not run to the store."

"A good-quality outdoor barbeque that works. (This is a neglected item for many rentals, for some odd reason.) Beautiful house, with a 10-year-old, barely functioning BBQ. Knives in the kitchen that have been sharpened in recent memory."

"If you rent a house for 6-8 people please make sure you have enough kitchen equipment! A tiny little pot or pan is definitely not enough. I don't need a great kitchen if I am not able to cook in it because I would first need to buy the equipment. Also please check the stuff. Cracked glasses and plates are dangerous! Than rather provide a few nice reusable plastic cups..."

8

Special rules and instructions

"Please leave special notes and instructions about things and whatever you wish me to be careful about - I understand and appreciate that you're sharing your own home with me."

"Have enough instructions in the house, but not too many. Have instructions on how to use things like the tv, dvd player, internet. But generally people know how to work a microwave, stove, and shower."

"Make the rules friendly. We have stayed in houses that we are afraid to touch anything. If you don't want people staying in your house, you probably don't want to be renting it. The deposits are for things that might break. But having a huge rule book that seems over-bearing, like your mother wrote it, doesn't send the best impression. Have a budget for regular wear and tear and the occasional broken dish. Most of the time, your renter will take great care of your home."

"Eleven different signs posted all over the house leave a terrible impression. If your home has a few tricky things, like a complicated dishwasher, send me clear, polite instructions before I arrive, and have a "manual" that, very nicely, explains what I need to know, or need to avoid."

9

Easy access to your home away from home

"Make access to your place easy and trouble free."

"Have an easy check-in procedure. Your renters might be coming in at late hours, or might have kids with them; they don't want to hassle with complicated check-ins. The easiest check-ins we have found are simply houses with a combination lock right on the door, no need for keys!"

"Easy access (with a lockbox is fabulous)."

10

Wi-Fi is a must

"Wi-fi Internet is a must-have. We won't rent a home without it."

"Yes, you have to offer broadband Wi-Fi. The working vacation is here to stay and renters need to be able to stay connected to their business or they will be forced to stay elsewhere whether they want to or not. This is really non-negotiable, and there shouldn't be any further argument."

Bonus points

"One thing I really appreciate is when they offer me a list of things to do or places to eat within walking distance or driving. It's like a personalized travel guide. I'm a planner by nature and have my own agenda... but at the same time I always end up taking the house's recommendations and it's always very much appreciated."

"Have a nice welcome note or basket. We have stayed in places in which this makes such a nice impression. A little note to say welcome, a bottle of wine, a basket of fruit. You want to make a nice first impression!"

"Miscellaneous added touches that leave a nice impression: a computer printer, an electric kettle (tea-drinking Brits!), lots of toilet paper, fresh (in the wrapper) soaps in the bathrooms. Overall cleanliness, of course."

About Blaine

Blaine Wiggins is a former Fortune 500 company Vice President turned full-time REALTOR® and Vacation Cabin Expert, specializing in both West Valley Real Estate and second homes (cabins) in the White Mountain towns of Heber-Overgaard, Show Low, Pinetop-Lakeside, and their surrounding areas. He is active in his church and community of NW Glendale, AZ, has been married to his wife Teesha for 15 years, and is the father of five children ages 12 to 6 months. You can find him on Facebook and Twitter @ListWithBlaine or via his website, www.ListWithBlaine.com.

