itripvacations[®]

iTrip Vacations® Guide for Short-term Rental Property Owners:

HOW TO INCREASE YOUR VACATION RENTAL INCOME BY 25%



iTrip Vacations®: Redefine Your Vacation Rental Management

The year 2021 was one of our most successful years to date. Despite travel restrictions and a global pandemic, we're proud to share that we experienced growth and created new processes that benefited our homeowner clients, guests and industry partners.

Since inception in 2008, iTrip Vacations has been a leader in full-service short-term rental property management. Our goal is to provide the best experience possible for both our homeowners and visiting guests. We are well positioned to lead our property owners into the future and look forward to operating business better than ever.

The number of properties iTrip Vacations manages has grown 58%, with revenue up 76% since the end of 2020. According to a distribution channel partner, our net booking value on average performs 130% better than our competition and more than 60% of iTrip's property managers average 4.5 stars or higher in reviews. We were also named among the best short-term rental property management companies in the world by Rentals United. All of this translates into more visibility for our properties and more revenue!

In addition, iTrip Vacations currently has locally-owned short-term rental property management companies in more than 85 destinations in North America. For the fourth consecutive year, we were named a Vrbo Elite Partner in 2021 — the highest designation available for software companies that integrate with Vrbo. To create your own success and learn from the experts, this document discusses:





According to <u>Skift Research</u>, short-term rental bookings will grow by 8% in 2022, reaching approximately \$150 billion, and short-term rentals performed better in 2020 versus traditional hotels. According to <u>iProperty Management</u>, 2021 revenue from national travel and tourism is projected to be \$83.3 billion. While many factors impacted these trends, vacation rentals continue to offer guests more safety, help social distancing efforts and enable guests to manage their own food.

In addition, <u>Expedia Group</u> reports that travelers want to visit places within an easy driving distance, and they are willing to drive up to six hours. Other important factors include longer stay options, flexible cancellation policies, detailed photos and accurate descriptions, and access to outdoor activities.





The COVID-era has forced many people to work and learn from home. Once the adjustment period passed, people began booking short-term rentals, so they could learn and work from their personal paradise. In order to reach these types of guests, there are some ways to prepare. Providing a designated office or workspace; fast, free and reliable WiFi; a stocked kitchen; and an outdoor area gives travelers the space they need to work and play in their favorite place.

In addition to work-cation trends, we also see more guests want flexibility in both booking options and cancellation policies. This shows short-term rental property owners must lessen stay requirements and encourage guests to plan extended trips. Just don't forget to promote these options and ensure there are no calendar conflicts, so the rental's income is safeguarded.

To reach the last-minute market, consider having a no-minimum stay and/or last-minute deals to increase interest. Having flexible options caters to guests and business travelers who plan shorter trips. Minimizing stay restrictions will also maximize customer interest. On the other hand, guests also want flexibility when it comes to cancelation policies. Hosts who offer low-fee or no-fee cancellations allow guests to book worry-free in case something comes up such as travel restrictions.

PET-FRIENDLY RENTALS AND DEMAND



According to Vrbo, more than 70% of 2021 survey respondents were pet owners!

Pet-friendly rentals have increased in popularity as more travelers want the ability to bring their pet on vacation. According to <u>Vrbo</u>, more than 70% of 2021 survey respondents were pet owners, 68% of whom have traveled, plan to travel, or would like to travel with their pets. Vrbo has experienced a 40% increase in year-over-year demand for pet-friendly vacation homes, and <u>Airbnb</u> saw pet-friendly searches top the list above pool and free WiFi. Rentals that welcome pets have a clear 'appeal advantage' over those that do not.





Pricing is another important factor when attracting potential guests. In fact, online users will check multiple websites before booking to get the best rate. In order to accurately price your rental to remain competitive in its respective market, consider these factors and how potential customers look for the best deal.

SOME FACTORS INCLUDE:

PRICING RENTALS OBJECTIVELY BASED ON DATA AND LOCAL MARKET VALUES	RANKING IN SEARCH ALGORITHMS, AS PRICING IS A RANK FACTOR
STAYING COMPETITIVE IN THE MARKETPLACE	MEETING INVESTMENT GOALS BY PRICING TO INCREASE BOOKED NIGHTS
-	·

REACHING CUSTOMERS AS COMPETITION INCREASES EACH YEAR

STAYING CONSISTENT ACROSS ALL CHANNELS AND ONLINE TRAVEL AGENCY SITES

Competitive pricing now ranks as a must if you list on sites such as Airbnb, Google and Vrbo. These sites adopted an algorithm similar to search engines, and competitive pricing ranks among the top criteria to ensure online users receive information best suited for them.



For some rental property owners, it's tempting to price your vacation rental based upon emotion or owner preference. To ensure you appeal to customers and turn a profit, remain neutral and acknowledge different factors during the pricing process. The market value for vacation rentals is always fluctuating, so pricing is best determined by timely data and market research.



Effective Pricing Strategies Continued: Stay Competitive to Reach Customers





This inclusive approach to supply versus demand provides an effective way to ensure the value you perceive your rental aligns with current market trends. It's not an easy task to access extensive local market data, invest the time necessary to pull information, and compile a report of financials and predictions. Not only that, you may have a hard time staying objective during this process. For these reasons, this process is best done by an unbiased third party property manager with efficient resources and industry knowledge.





Accepting credit cards online is essential. However, the task of payment processing is one reason many rental owners opt not to provide online payment. Not to mention the high fees some companies set upon independent owners.

If you currently don't have online accounting through an automated system, now is the time to start the process. This removes the need to collect checks, as well as organize statements and help protect sensitive information, such as credit card numbers and personal data.

With the increase of identity theft, customers prefer a secure online transaction system to over-the-phone transactions. Put in place an official and safe payment-processing tool to ease your customers' minds and instill a sense of trust.

Security also applies to the home itself. As investors and second homeowners, we want to know our rental is protected and safe from parties and irresponsible guests. This is another reason to join a professional rental property management company. Their unobtrusive client-screening process is a great tool for the owner and visiting guest, ensuring everyone is comfortable with the rental arrangements. A professional property management company can also oversee limited damage waiver agreements, noise-monitoring software, maintenance issues and inspections after check-out.

If there are certain things a vacation rental guest needs to be aware of – such as a pet policy or quiet hours – outsourcing to a third party lowers the risk of strained customer relations. iTrip's services, for example, ensure potential guests are informed and aware of set limitations before they sign a rental agreement.

Digital Marketing Strategies: SEO, Data and Artificial Intelligence



Now that you have an effective pricing strategy and payment options, it's time to market your rental. Today's digital world makes it essential for listings to appear on search engines (Google, Bing, Yahoo), as well as adapt to potential customers on the devices they use. Once you have those processes in place, you can then decide how to market your property and how much money to spend on marketing each month.

Search Engine Optimization (SEO)

This term applies to search engine sites such as Google, Bing and Yahoo, but social media sites also rank as search engines to collect relevant search results. All of these sites then look at website content, including photos, listing descriptions, videos, photo captions, headlines, blog posts and other site content to ensure websites follow best practices.

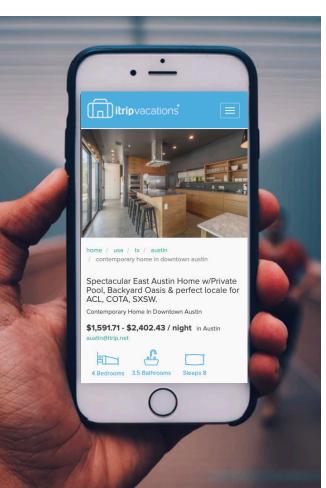
Next, search engines check if a website works on mobile devices such as smartphones and tablets. The rate of speed these mobile sites operate also ranks as an SEO factor. Today's technology analyzes the entire site — from the home page and loading time to photos, videos, listing copy and user engagement.

In the Travel and Tourism Market,

Google

STREES CONTRACTOR

of total revenue will be generated through online sales by 2026. (Statista)



Mobile Changes the Way People Book Travel

As of April 2021, there were more than 4.72 billion internet users and 5.27 billion unique mobile users around the world, which means that more than two-thirds of the world's population now have a mobile phone (We Are Social, 2021). As these trends shape the way people use their devices, the need to cater to mobile travelers has never been more important.

In order to stay competitive and reach more online users, you should have an SEO-friendly, mobile-responsive website and offer secure online booking options. Visuals -- such as photos and videos -- initially draw customers, but also include what sets your rental apart from others. Then describe the local neighborhood and nearby attractions and how to get to them. In addition, provide flexible dates, transparent policies, discounts to cater to last-minute bookings to create a well-rounded mobile booking experience for guests. Digital Marketing Strategies Continued: SEO, Data and Artificial Intelligence





Another way to boost listings is with <u>Matterport</u>, an iTrip Vacations partner. When used together, they help showcase rental properties in a new way, providing guests a real-world **3D** feel as they 'walk' through each rental using virtual reality.

In order for a website to rank well on search enginges, you need:



Fast-loading, secure mobile website with high-quality content

Optimized website copy that includes relevant information



Mobile-responsive design that displays well on all devices

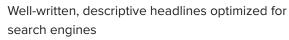
Secure online booking options that protect user information and offer the ability to pay via credit card, PayPal, Venmo, etc. To develop a listing with online visibility, ensure the listing contains:

- 30-plus professional photos
- videos
- effective headlines
- accurate calendars
- bulleted information tailored to search engines and to improve readability on mobile devices

To increase online exposure, rental property listings should include the following:



High-quality photos and videos that display well on mobile devices





Bulleted amenity lists that are easy to read and accurate

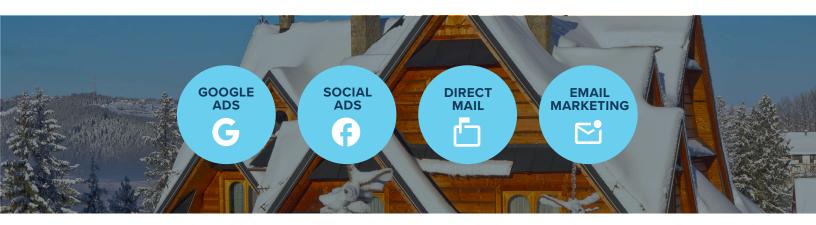


Transparent and updated pricing, including dates, fees, deposits and calendar



Once your website and listings have been updated, it's time to promote. The next step is to decide where to advertise and how much to spend each month. For some owners, Google ads work well, while others see costs add up because no one books the property.

Other advertising and marketing options include: social media, direct mail, local magazines, real estate publications and email newsletters. Regardless of how you decide to market your property, if not managed correctly, it can cost thousands of dollars per month to do so. Additionally, if you do not receive a return on your investment, the cost and stress outweigh the reward.



Market Your Rentals With Real-time Data

The last few years have seen new players enter the technology sector of private accommodations. Some of these companies use real-time data to help property managers better reach guests and increase the likelihood they will book a rental home. For example, NextPax connects properties to millions of travelers worldwide. The site enables property managers to integrate with giants such as Google, Airbnb and Vrbo, as well as niche sites such as HomeToGo.

To take it to the next level, Bluetent allows property managers to expand their reach through full digital marketing programs. Bluetent also integrates with channel partners and works to increase direct bookings.

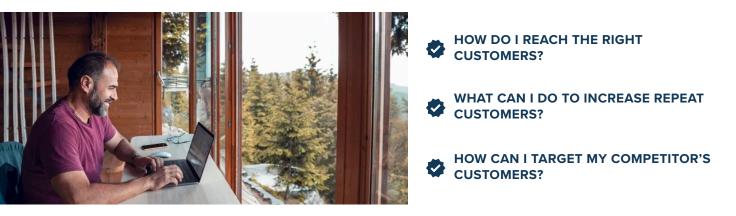
However, using these tools and features require tech know-how, keeping up with changes, and design and programming experience. When you list with a professional third-party management company, such as iTrip Vacations, you receive an optimized web page that's mobile-responsive as well as support from all of our vacation rental partners such as Next Pax and Bluetent that help increase listing exposure. Additional industry partners include Vrbo, Rental Guardian, RevMax, Marriott International, Party Squasher and Noise Aware.



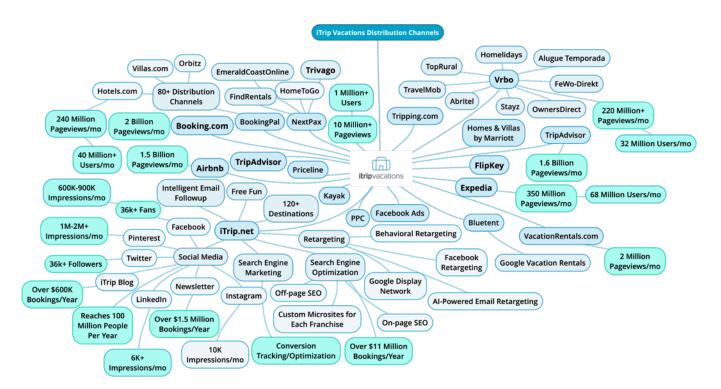


Artificial Intelligence & Machine Learning

Many rental owners find it difficult to compete with both locally owned property management companies and large corporations. A few questions we receive are:



These questions can be addressed by sophisticated digital marketing strategies using machine learning and artificial intelligence (AI). First, create a large database that includes important data points you can use for marketing and remarketing.



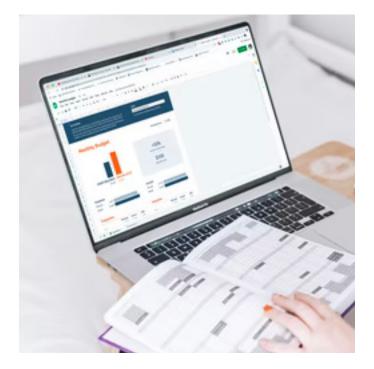
Database optimization features customer catalog creation and organizes information, so when remarketing to past clientele, you have a streamlined approach. If you don't market to previous customers, you could miss out on a fortune. Plus, these follow-up campaigns target visitors who are already looking to stay in your destination. Digital Marketing Strategies Continued: SEO, Data and Artificial Intelligence





According to a leading distribution partner, our net booking value performs 130% BETTER THAN OUR COMPETITION

> (Net booking value equals total value of all bookings, minus platform fees, divided by number of units.)



For an added boost, consider combining machine learning and AI to power digital marketing campaigns. This allows you to make hundreds of adjustments to marketing campaigns every day. These small adjustments may only increase rental bookings by small percentages, but added up over weeks and months, this marketing process generates major results.

A concise approach to database optimization requires intricate software and isn't the easiest thing to do for individual owners. In addition, the investment in AI and machine learning should be managed by a digital marketing professional who knows how to use these practices to generate real results. Outsourcing to a third-party to handle database and digital marketing proves the best option for both time and money.

How to Satisfy Guests: Cleaning, Amenities and the Review Process



In 2021 and compared to pre-pandemic on a global scale, the vacation rental marketplace has recorded a global 54% increase in average booking value for vacation rental spending and longer trips worldwide with a 9% increase in the average length of stay (HomeToGo, November 2021).



Vacations are no longer about visiting a new destination or limited to certain times of year. Today's travelers want an overall experience for themselves and their loved ones. They want a safe home they can share and plan fun things to do. We know your vacation rental is spacious, well decorated and equipped with everything guests need. We also know you are competing with other rentals that may offer the same amenities and features.

Private accommodations recovered faster than other hospitality sectors because vacation rentals are considered safer, easier to practice social distancing, and guests can control their food and cooking environment. In addition, short-term rental properties offer more space, privacy and value for the cost.



Updated Cleaning Regulations & CDC Guidelines

The events that occurred from the COVID-19 pandemic have required new cleaning guidelines released by the Centers for Disease Control, professional property management companies, rental managers and third-party online listing sites.

For example, <u>iTrip Vacations' housekeeping processes</u> include a six-step guide paired with room-specific checklists, which include dusting, cleaning and disinfecting. In addition, cleaning companies and property managers focus on key touch-point objects, including light switches, remote controls, phones, tables, HVAC controls, handles and other areas. To ensure the guest has everything they need prior to booking, include cleaning and disinfection protocols in the listing and keep educational signs in the home.



OUR LOCAL CLEANING EXPERTS PERFORM DETAILED AND THOROUGH CLEANINGS AFTER EACH STAY.

And our detailed inspection process ensures all cleaning tasks are fulfilled, each and every time.

Common Cleaning Terms & What They Mean

CLEANING

Removal of visible soil from objects and surfaces. Cleaning is essential before high-level disinfection can occur.

DISINFECTION

Uses chemicals to kill germs on surfaces. Kills germs remaining on the surface after cleaning to reduce the risk of spreading infection.

DWELL TIME

The amount of time a surface must remain wet and undisturbed to clean and disinfect.

TREATMENT OF CONTACT SURFACES

Surfaces frequently touched by guests that need additional cleaning treatments. Common surfaces include: TV screens, remote controls, door knobs, cabinet handles, coffee tables, light switches, end tables, counter tops, refrigerator doors, etc.

DEEP CLEANS

More extensive processes that include viral contamination cleaning and pests.

iTrip Vacations also partners with other industry leaders such as Airbnb and Vrbo to adhere to their guidelines and listing requirements.

Those who have not created a new cleaning protocol should do so in order to comply with worldwide efforts and create a safe environment for guests. For a full detailed description of iTrip Vacations new cleaning procedures, contact a professional short-term property manager.

How to Satisfy Guests Continued: Cleaning, Amenities and the Review Process



iTrip Vacations and Xplorie

During 2021, Xplorie reported that leisure travel was the first travel segment to recover with local and domestic destinations topping the trend as <u>Americans chose to</u> <u>travel</u> within their home states. When considering that travel is still on the rise in 2022, it's more important than ever to ensure guests have a five-star experience. Not only will they keep coming back, but they will tell their friends and family. Word-of-mouth is a powerful marketing tool.





For example, <u>iTrip Vacations partners with Xplorie</u> to bring the iTrip Vacations Free Fun Program to select destinations across North America. Many guests who book directly with iTrip Vacations receive daily free admission to popular attractions, as well as equipment rentals, water cruises, snorkeling, ice skating, rafting, escape room game admission, a round of golf, dinner shows and more things to do. Each free activity renews each day, ensuring guests have a chance to experience it all at an affordable price. In some destinations, guests save as much as \$400 per day on activities. That's per day, not per trip.

As of 2022, many iTrip rental property managers also use the <u>Xplorie Enabled Voice Assistant</u> Powered by Amazon Alexa. This feature can be programmed to provide rental guests with important information, including WiFi passwords, closest restaurants, and check-in/check-out.



Enhance Design and Offer More Amenities

Design and amenities rank among the top reasons a customer selects one rental over another. That's why it's important to stay current in both design and the amenities guests want and need. Consider these upgrades and conveniences to make your rental stand out:

FAST, FREE, RELIABLE WI-FI

Guests expect free high-speed, wireless internet access. With today's connected consumers and the need to work or learn from anywhere, people want their devices to work just as they do at home. This amenity also allows guests to stream media and gives them an easy way to share their experience on social media.

BACK-UP PHONES & CHARGERS

Remember: people forget things. Consider equipping your rental with working and current technology, including a landline phone, universal chargers and adapters. Some chargers integrate into the design of the home and double as lamps, clocks, and reading lights.

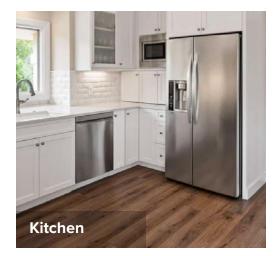
OTHER IMPORTANT AMENITIES

In addition, surveyed guests have stated they would be willing to pay more for heated swimming pools, hot tubs, a private balcony or patio, and free onsite parking. Other amenities to consider include pet-friendly options, kid-friendly areas, fireplaces, air conditioning, heating, fans, a washer and dryer, streaming services, USB ports and a fully stocked kitchen.



Speaking of the Kitchen ...

Here are examples of how to upgrade your rental to attract vacationers, so you can improve their stay and better market your rental property to potential guests. Keep in mind what a vacationing family needs and make that available.



REFRIGERATOR WITH AN ICE MAKER

- DISHWASHER AND CLEANING SUPPLIES
- STANDARD-SIZE MICROWAVE
- COOKWARE, DISHES, UTENSILS, CAN/BOTTLE OPENER
- APPLIANCES SHOULD NOT BE OVER 10 YEARS OLD
- STAINLESS STEEL LOOKS BEST IN PHOTOS
- SAR AREA/PENINSULA: MINIMUM OF 3 BAR STOOLS
- UPDATED WINDOW TREATMENTS (MORE THAN BLINDS)
- UPDATED/RECESSED LIGHTS
- 📀 DINING ROOM TABLE W/ MODERN LIGHTING/PLACE SETTINGS



More Examples of Amenity Upgrades



- **GRANITE COUNTERTOPS AND TASTEFUL OVERSIZED MIRRORS**
- UPDATED BRIGHT LIGHTS
- VPDATED PAINT; REMOVE OUTDATED WALLPAPER
- 📀 A SHOWER CURTAIN FOR ALL SHOWERS (IF APPLICABLE)
- TILE THE BATHROOM FLOOR IF THERE IS VINYL
- **REMOVE PLASTIC AROUND THE TUB AND REPLACE WITH TILE**
- SFRESH WHITE TOWELS, WASHCLOTHS, NEW TOILETRIES
- HOOKS ON DOORS/WALLS FOR HANGING CLOTHES, TOWELS



- 1-BEDROOM: KING-SIZE BED IN THE MASTER
- 2-BEDROOM: KING IN MASTER/QUEEN IN OTHER BEDROOM
- 3-BEDROOM: KING IN MASTER/QUEENS IN OTHER BEDROOMS
- 4-BEDROOM: KING/QUEEN/QUEEN AND BUNK OR TWIN BEDS IN THE FOURTH BEDROOM
- CURRENT AND IN-THEME CEILING FANS
- EASY TO FIND USB PORTS
- MOOD LIGHTING THAT MATCH THE OVERALL THEME AND DECOR





- CABLE, SATELLITE AND/OR STREAMING SERVICES
- STEREO OR SMARTPHONE DOCK WITH SPEAKERS
- LANDLINE PHONE
- MATCHING COUCH WITH PULL-OUT SLEEPER
- **COFFEE TABLE**
- 📀 NEW BOARD GAMES AND PUZZLES
- EASY TO FIND USB PORTS



- 🖉 UPDATED PATIO FURNITURE, ALL IN WORKING ORDER
- SRILL
- SICYCLES
- UMBRELLA
- 🕑 τογς
- 🥑 FENCE (IF APPLICABLE)



Ways to Improve Your Review Process (Includes Social Media Stats)

Now that you know how to improve the guest experience, let's discuss reviews and social media. With a focus on increasing positive experiences, five-star reviews and social media are important to rental owners. They are especially important to increase occupancy rates, repeat guests and overall profit. In addition, you should consider social media accounts, direct messages and comments, which have become the norm in today's connected world.



However, generating customer feedback is something that requires persistence and patience. Most people don't have time or just forget to leave reviews – no matter how great the experience. The good news is experts in this field have mastered the art of organizing, compiling and keeping track of who has posted reviews and who still needs to be contacted. We suggest self-managers outsource this responsibility, so reviews are gathered in a timely manner to benefit from a five-star reviewed rental experience.

Social Media Stats: Reach Guests Where They Are

Social media plays a huge factor in word of mouth. In fact, 35% percent of respondents stated that their purchasing decisions were influenced by social media ads (Statista). Therefore, it's crucial to reach travelers on their favorite websites and make sure your rental property creates happy customers who rave about their experience on social media. 90.2%

of internet users aged 16 to 64 have actively engaged in social media in the past month. Internet users spend about 2.25 hours per day on social media (We Are Social, April 2021).

Social Media: Active Users Jan 2021 Active Users Per Month (trending), according to HootSuite:

FACEBOOK - 2.1 BILLION YOUTUBE - 2 BILLION INSTAGRAM - 1.2 BILLION PINTEREST - 200 MILLION TWITTER - 353 MILLION LINKEDIN - 727 MILLION As you can see, if you don't have a social media presence you are missing out on a large customer base and potential revenue. Managing social media accounts takes time, commitment, content creation and customer service skills. There are also rules and best practices, and the process can become time-consuming or hurt your business if not managed properly.

A third-party short-term rental property management company, such as iTrip Vacations, has these sites and online reputation established. We also employ trained professionals who ensure the reputation stays intact while managing daily tasks and promoting short-term rentals to millions of users worldwide.



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State-of-the-Art Property Management Software

As industry leaders, we know managing vacation rentals requires a lot of work – especially if those rentals maximize their potential to earn the most revenue possible. Property managers and homeowners using paper processes are behind the industry and remain unable to compete. Then there are some rental managers who manually update listings on different websites.

Those who invest in property management software can manage their entire rental process, including website, bookings, reviews, pricing and revenue, as well as generate reports, see calendars in real-time and update listings. Furthermore, the most effective vacation rental software integrates into other online travel agency websites and distribution channels to maximize exposure and ensure calendars stay up-to-date.

When selecting rental management software, it's important to have all these features. However not all software programs are priced the same.

We suggest you extensively research each one to pick the best fit, or find a professional short-term rental property management company that already has state-of-the-art software in place. This will ease the stress and time it takes to manage tasks associated with rental property management. Plus, a strategic software helps get your free time back, so you can focus on other important things.

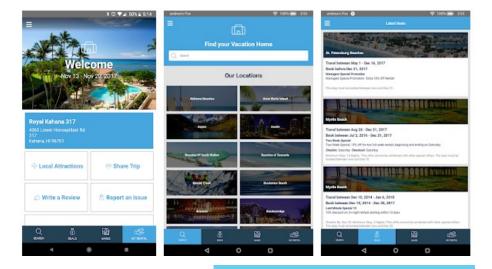
Some management companies, including Elite Software Partner iTrip Vacations, work with Vrbo to help property owners and managers choose the best solution for their business.

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Vrbo has developed a partnership program that recognizes the best rental property management software solutions in each market that integrate with their site. Vrbo Elite

Apps Enhance Experience For Everyone

With an effective software platform comes the ability to provide apps to both travelers, rental property managers and rental owners. The best travel apps enhance the experience for guests while giving them special access and discounts to attractions, dining, rentals and other perks. For example, iTrip's travel app allows guests to check-in/check-out, find things to do, see the best restaurants, connect with their manager and leave reviews. Mobile apps can also help property owners monitor daily operations remotely.

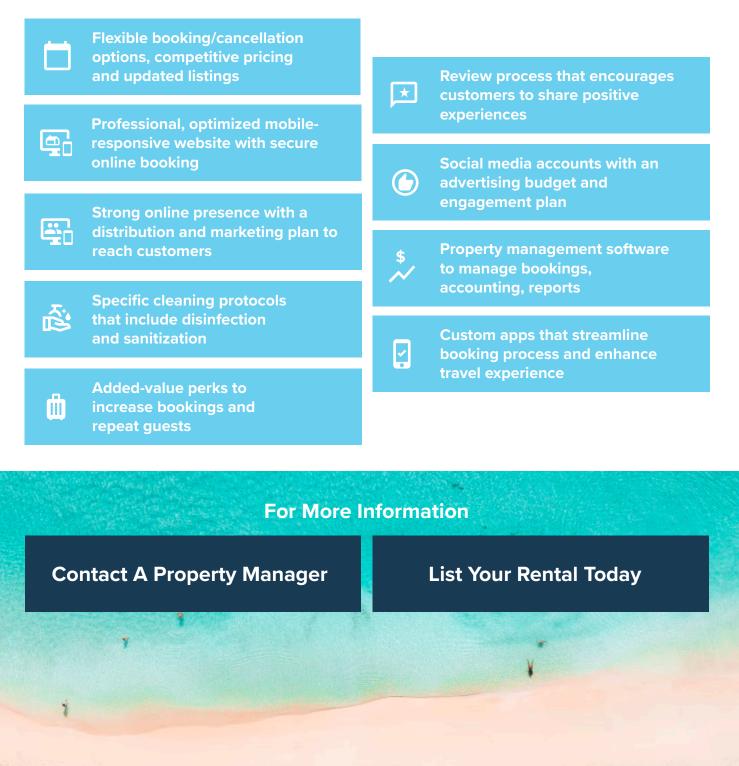


The FlipStream app, for example, allows iTrip Vacations property managers the ability to manage the entire turn-over process from their smartphone. From the app, iTrip rental property managers see in real-time maintenance and cleaning schedules, priorities, calendars, and inspections. They can also report damage, take photos and rate vendor companies, as well as prioritize tasks based on GPS location.

Some companies reported an ✓● increase from 41% to 60% of total bookings coming from mobile after the introduction of an app. (Strato Jets)



Whether you're a new rental owner or find yourself frustrated with losing money every month, you know effectively managing a vacation rental and maximizing its investment takes a lot of time, energy and work. In order to increase your rental income 25% this year, we recommend you implement the following:



itrip.net