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OVERBOOKED

Branding Guide

**Help for vacation rental hosts with branding,
listing photos, and text descriptions.**

This guide will help with the written portions of your listing. It's all about words, phrases, categories, etc. And we are happy to have you use it in that way.

But beyond that, **becoming precise about your vacation rental helps your photography as well.** Knowing your “brand”, the story you want to tell about your place, and your target market, all combine to influence not only what you take pictures of, but stylistic choices as well.

Let the groups of words below get you started in thinking about how you want to portray your vacation rental to the world at large. Focus on your strengths (like environment vs. interiors). **Don't try to be all things to all people.** Pick a niche and embody it!

This guide is designed to assist you with Assignment 1 in Pre-Production of our photo course and it goes together with Assignment 2 to really find the identity and brand of your rental. You may already have a pretty clear idea of both, as well as your target market, and that's great. You can still use these lists to make sure you haven't missed an opportunity to photograph and promote something that makes you unique and appealing to potential guests.

Vacation Themes

The type of guest you attract (or want to attract) should tell you the type of rental you have. You can be more than one thing, but don't try to appeal to everyone.

Adventure Seekers / Adrenaline junkies

Beach / Lake / Pool

Business

Celebration (weddings, birthdays, anniversaries)

Culture (museum, galleries)

Event accommodation (concert, trade show, spring break)

Family (children, pets)

Foodie

Get-Togethers (family reunions, college buddies, organizations)

Health (yoga, massage, healthy eating, beauty treatments, pampering)

History buff (museums, landmarks, historic locations)

Hobby (an all-consuming special interest, like wineries, golf, skiing)

Local Culture / Live like a local

Modern

Nature lover

Photography (for nature photographers, from gallery artists to Instagram phenomenons)

Remote / get-away

Romantic

Self-Contained (a "gadget factory". Never need to leave the house)

Shopping

Writer's retreat (quiet, beauty, inspiration)

Amenities

Items worth photographing to accentuate your “story”. This is not an all-inclusive list but something to get you started.

Air conditioning / Fans

Antiques / Other historic significance

BBQ

Designer decor

Fireplace

Garden / Large yard

Gym (other health-related equipment)

Hardwood

High chair / Crib (and other necessities for families with small children)

In-home theatre (or other entertainment)

Jacuzzi

Library

Local look (specific decor with a local flare)

Marble

Office supplies

Outdoor extensions (balcony, deck, gazebo, patio, porch, veranda)

Pier / Dock

Pool

Private lake access

Sauna

Stainless steel appliances

View

Vintage decor

Wifi (high speed, take a screenshot of a speed test!)

Wood fire stove

Stuff

Things you might want to offer your guests and display when “staging” your photos. These don’t necessarily need to be photographed on their own but you can make them a part of a scene.

Art work

Beach supplies

Bikes

Blu Ray player

Books (an overview of your library, not every single book)

Complimentary items (wine, breakfast, sweets, etc)

Electric chargers

Fountains

Games / Puzzles (soccer ball/football, croquet set, Uno, Twister, think about language barriers)

Kitchen gadgets (juicer, slow cooker, rice cooker, coffee machine)

Lounging aides (hammock, bean bag chairs, sun chairs, swings)

Light fixtures (if unusual and relevant to your “story”)

Maps / Brochures / Guidebooks

Outdoor extensions (balcony, deck, gazebo, patio, porch, veranda)

Ping Pong table

Pool table

Recliner

Sound system (stereo, record player, any cool music gadget old and new)

Surfboards / Paddle boards / Boogie boards

TV’s

Video games

Waffle maker

Welcome book/basket

Activities

Things to do and see.

Aquariums

Beach

Beauty treatments and pampering

Bike trails

Breweries

Bungee jump

Classes (yoga, dance, language, art, paint night, cooking)

Concerts

Day trips

Escape rooms

Farmer's markets

Fine dining (local gems and/or internationally recognized)

Fishing

Flea markets and thrift stores

Galleries

Golf / Mini golf

Hiking

Horseback riding

Mountain climbing

Movies

Museums

Nightclubs

Opera / Ballet

Photography

Public events

River rafting

Shopping (bargain and high end)

Skiing

Spas and massages / Saunas

Specialty tours (chocolate, brewery, haunted)

Sports events

Surfing and other water sports

Swimming

Tennis

Theater

Tour of the local "claim to fame"

Walks

Wine tasting

Yoga / Pilates

Zip-lining

Places

Sometimes just a simple path to the beach or a cobblestone back street to the theater can really capture your “story”.

Beach / Lakeside

Best kept secret of your town

Bridges

City or town center

Famous locations

Harbor

Historic site

Islands

Landmarks

Local hangout

Markets (not the supermarket but historic or novelty)

Parks and wilderness preserves

Paths (unique, decorated, or otherwise inviting pathways, think “leading lines”, up to the house, through the garden, to the beach, house to sauna or pier, and so on)

River

Viewpoints and lookouts

Walk to beach

Walk to movies / theater

Walk to galleries / museums

Walkways

Your personal favorite spots

Adjectives

Add a little spice and variety to your photo descriptions and property details.

Active

Authentic

Bona fide

Bubbling

Busy

Calm

Central

Character-filled

Charismatic

Charming

Chic

Contemporary

Cool

Eccentric

Elegant

Enchanting

Exclusive

Extraordinary

Harmonious

Historic

Homey

Impressive

Laid-back

Lavish

Low-key

Magical

Marvelous

Modern

Natural

Notable

Off the beaten path

Original

Outstanding

Peaceful

Picturesque

Pin-drop quiet

Private

Quaint

Quirky

Refined

Relaxed

Remote

Removed

Ritzy

Rural

Rustic

Secluded

Serene

Slick

Smooth

Soothing

Sophisticated

Spellbinding

State-of-the-art

Stylish

Suburban

Traditional

Tranquil

Trendy

Unaffected

Unique

Urban

Vintage

Wonderful

Verbs

Verb + adjective + your rental = *magic*

Activate

Amaze

Break away

Capture

Cherish

Chill out

Cool off

Cuddle

Delight in

Discover

Electrify

Energize

Enjoy

Escape

Excite

Expand

Experience

Explore

Feel at home

Galvanize

Impress

Indulge

Hang loose

Inspire

Luxuriate

Pamper

Put your feet up

Recharge

Rejuvenate

Relax

Repose

Reset

Rest

Restore

Satisfy

Sit back

Snooze

Spoil

Stimulate

Take a break

Tease

Unwind

Waken

Warm up



Extras

You don't have to photograph every utility room or cram every amenity into photos. And not every amenity fits into your brand or story. Maybe you just mention them in the description or photo descriptions. Pick what works for you or what your guests request.

Here's a bonus list of goodies you might consider as a host that can take you to the next level, photographed or not. Some are obvious, like toiletries, while others are more or less novelty items.

Alarm clock

Baby wipes

Baking sheets / Aluminum foil / Plastic wrap / Sandwich bags

Batteries

Blender / Juicer

Blow dryer

Board games / Cards / Puzzle books

Condiments and spices

Cooking supplies (one of the biggest perks of homes vs. hotels is the access to kitchens)

Coupons and discounts (that you can cut from a newspaper or a deal you've made with a local business owner. Think the obvious like cafes, restaurants, and popular sights, but also the unusual, like a walking chocolate tour, a paint night (like Paint Nite), a language or a cooking class.)

Cutlery (proper knives are important! Think of bread and steak. Remember the basic silverware, chopsticks, plates, and so on.)

Drying for clothes (whether dryer, rack, or a line. Supply clothes pins for line for drying.)

Earplugs

...Extras continued

Electric chargers (mentioned once but mentioning again. Also consider converters and adapters.)

Electronic door lock

Eye mask

Feminine hygiene products

Flashlight (say, for stumbling in the dark looking for a fuse box, see "Instructions" on the right)

Food and drinks (people love complimentary stuff. This is your chance to promote a local brewery, bakery, or chocolatier. Yes there will be Irish who go to an Irish pub in Hawaii or Americans who go to a diner in Paris, but I always recommend giving guests a taste of something local. Even if it's as simple as Pineapple Lumps from the store across the street for guests in New Zealand.)

Guest book

Hangers in closets

Ice cube trays

Insect repellent / Bug screens

Instructions (for how everything works and where everything is. Classic example: we blew a fuse in Italy in an apartment that had 3 fuse boxes! 1 inside (not the right one), 1 downstairs in the hallway (not the right one) and 1 hidden behind a notice board (the right one!). After a phone call to the owner he had a neighbor come by who simply opened the door and flicked the switch. Needless to say we felt both silly and irritated. Instructions are ideally in your amazing Welcome Package.)

Iron and ironing board

Language (a book to learn the language or just a few simple phrases)

Lights (night light (families will appreciate!), little reading light, mood light. Don't just rely on big, bright ceiling lights.)

Light bulbs (just a couple extra)

Liquids (soap, dishwashing liquid, laundry detergent, coffee pods, tea - if you provide the machine, provide the liquid.)

...Extras continued

Local literature (bird watching book, local parks and rivers, a novel set in your town. It's amazing how travel can turn a person into a David Attenborough.)

Magazines

Massage chair or table (an investment, yes, but think of the reviews!)

Menus from local restaurants

Music

Nightstands next to beds (for water, lamps, phone, earplugs, and so on)

Parking permit

Picnic basket

Polaroid camera

Projector and screen

Safety equipment (smoke detector, carbon monoxide detector, fire extinguisher)

Scissors

Shampoo and conditioner

Shuttle service

Streaming service like Netflix

Sweetener / Creamer (on top of just sugar)

Sunscreen

Thermos (for people like Kati who wake up too late and choose to (have to) take their coffee on the go)

Throws / Sheets

Toaster / Toaster oven

Toothpaste

Trash bags

Trash bin in the bathroom

Vacuum

Water (just a bottle or two, especially important if tap water is not drinkable)

Wifi

Yes. A whole page just for Wifi.

Obvious, but oh so important and often shockingly bad. No matter what your personal stance is on people glued to their phones and other devices, don't be anti-wifi. And, if possible, don't just have crawling 1995 Internet; make sure the speed is decent (can it stream video?) To really stand out, take a screenshot of your speed from a site like <http://www.speedtest.net/>.

We've met many hosts who don't quite seem to appreciate the importance of good internet access. Your experience and life as a local with routines, friends, family, and knowledge of the surroundings is very different from your guests'. **Most guests depend on the Internet while traveling, by necessity.** Many service providers, like car rental agencies and restaurants, rely heavily on your guests' ability to access the internet to check-in, make, confirm, and cancel reservations.

While kayaking tours and museums can be great, **we can't predict the future.** Your guests could get sick and be bedridden (not uncommon when the body knows there's a vacation and fun to be had), weather might get tricky, or their tours might get canceled (sometimes sharks just don't show up for cage-diving.....) If they're not locals, they likely don't have SIM-cards and have to rely on Wifi to make calls. Wifi is used for more than just ignoring the world and binge-watching series. It's for checking where to return the rental car or making sure the kids are ok back home. It's for turning a canceled city tour into a last-minute dinner reservation and theater tickets.

Example uses for this guide

My vacation themes:

- **Nature lover, a get-away, writer's retreat**

Amenities that support the themes:

- **Large yard, fireplace, wood fire stove, wifi, sauna**

Stuff that supports the themes:

- **Hammock, recliner, books, cast-iron skillets, snowshoes**

Begin putting things together with adjectives and verbs. Think about your title, main description and photo descriptions:

- **A picturesque get-away for the nature lover!**
- **Rustic charm indoors, tranquil wilderness outdoors**
- **Put the authentic wood fire stove and cast iron skillets to use after shopping at the farmer's market.**
- **Get your creative juices flowing by walking in the wilderness or relaxing in the recliner by the fire.**
- **The sauna is the perfect way to relax after a day exploring the wild**

Activities:

- **Fishing, hiking, mountain climbing, photography, skiing, walks, swimming**

Places:

- **Wilderness, lake, farmer's market, river, trails**

Example 2

My vacation themes:

- **Business, foodie, modern, shopping**

Amenities that support the themes:

- **High speed internet, full kitchen, stainless steel, surround sound, Netflix**

Stuff that supports the themes:

- **Art work, chargers, office supplies, stereo, big TV, kitchen gadgets**

Put it all together!

- **Discover the city from this state-of-the-art townhouse**
- **Modern elegance in the heart of the city**
- **Easy access to the city center, including museums and galleries**
- **Pamper yourself at the spa after a day of shopping**
- **Unwind with dinner and a movie in an impressive home theater**

Activities:

- **Shopping, galleries, museums, restaurants, spa**

Places:

- **City center, gallery, museums, food tours, dessert walking tours, shopping center**

Extra credit

Can your guests make easy use of everything in you're offering? Can they find it? Can they get to it? Can they figure out how it works? Can they turn it on and off? Do they know how to use it safely?

- You offer sleeping for 6-8 people - do they know where everyone sleeps? Do you have a secret pull-out sofa? Are there enough sheets and pillows? Is there enough seating for the whole group?
- Your guests have access to a kitchen - but is your kitchen well-equipped?
- Your place is child and pet friendly, but is there anything for them to do?
- Do your guests know how to use the locks and gates?
- Does public transportation take exact change, cash, or cards?
- If you expect guests to do certain things, like clean or take out the trash, do you provide supplies? Do they know what to recycle and where to take the trash?

What if potential guests are choosing between a couple of great places based on amenities? They ask if you have a NutriBullet, a duvet, or beach chairs. Think about how much those would cost to get, even if you had to run to the store right now. How much would those guests spend on that stay? \$30 for 2 beach chairs vs. \$120/night for 4 nights = \$480! That's pretty good ROI. Plus, **whatever you acquire will add permanent value to your rental.**

We hope you've gotten some great ideas for your story, photos, and descriptions.

- Brian & Kati

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