

# Making Family Life More Fun

## Five Essential Vacation Rental Planning Tips

(NAPSA)—There are two good reasons why now is the ideal time to start planning your family vacation. One is to avoid being among the 40 percent of Americans the U.S. Travel Industry estimates do not use all their earned vacation days. The other is because research indicates the simple act of planning a vacation results in a large boost in happiness that can last for up to eight weeks.

Here's another tip: If you are traveling as a family or group, this year consider staying in a vacation rental. Not only does renting a whole house offer twice the space at half the cost of a hotel room, they also come with a host of budget-friendly amenities.

Kitchens make it easy to prepare food using local ingredients rather than eating out at pricey restaurants every meal, while access to washing machines allow travelers to pack less and avoid paying hefty bag-check fees. Many feature added perks, including private pools, hot tubs and game rooms for everyone to join together and create special memories throughout their stay. That's likely why 85 percent of those who stay in a vacation rental plan to do it again on their next family trip or group getaway.

"Vacation rentals give travelers a respite from their hectic lives so they can focus on spending time with their loved ones, all gathered together under the same roof," said Rene Syler, who regularly helps travelers find the perfect getaway as host of "Sweet Re-



**Plan and book your vacation now so your family can look forward to it in the weeks ahead.**

treats" on the FYI television network. "Booking a vacation rental is easier than it seems. You just need to know where to start and the right questions to ask before sealing the deal."

Ready to book your own vacation rental? Follow Rene's five essential tips and get ready to pack your bags:

**1. Use Sites with the Most Inventory.** The more homes to choose from the better your chances will be of finding a property that meets your specific budget and needs, including size, proximity to an attraction, or pet-friendly requirements. Travelers should check out HomeAway.com as it is the world's leading vacation rental marketplace with listings in 190 countries.

**2. Read Reviews and Talk with Homeowners.** Reviews are a great way to get a better idea of the property and can offer additional insights from other travelers. Once you have selected a home, pick up the phone and call

the homeowner or property manager to ask about anything important to you, like if there is a child-proof gate around the pool or if it is wheelchair accessible.

**3. Secure a Rental Agreement.** Ask for all the details in advance via a rental agreement, such as check-in/check-out times and house rules, to avoid any last-minute surprises. Since rentals are generally reserved further in advance than a hotel room, be sure to note important items such as the refund date.

**4. Secure Your Trip.** Vacation rentals are a high-ticket item, so it is important to take steps to safeguard your transaction. Always call ahead to confirm the details of your reservation before making a purchase, and only pay via secure services like PayPal or a credit card. Additional insurance can be purchased to protect travelers from a variety of situations, ranging from property damage to cancellation protection.

**5. Go Mobile.** From purchasing event tickets to hiring babysitters and personal chefs, use apps to turn your smartphone into a digital concierge. On HomeAway's app, travelers can request car rides from Uber, order groceries through Instacart for delivery to their rental, and access Gogobot to help plan local activities and find recommended restaurants.

For more information or to view available rentals, visit [www.homeaway.com](http://www.homeaway.com). To check out more of Rene's tips, go to her website [www.goodenoughmother.com](http://www.goodenoughmother.com).