

The Airbnb Host Guidebook

HOSTING LIKE AN EXPERT FROM THE GET-GO



ABOUT THE AUTHOR



STEFAN
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Stefan Nikolic started using Airbnb when he and his brother couldn't find a tenant for their recently purchased apartment in Auckland. Their mum came up with the idea to list the apartment on Airbnb to help cover the constant expenses, and Stefan soon realised that they could get far greater returns with Airbnb than with a regular tenancy. They never looked back!

Stefan went on to create his Airbnb management company, Zodiak Management, who now manage many apartments on Airbnb and other short-term rental platforms for their clients. Zodiak focuses on delivering a quality service to both property owners and their guests above all else, and have built up a great portfolio of high-end apartments throughout the city centre of Auckland.

To learn more about Stefan and Zodiak Management, check out their website [here](#).

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BEFORE YOU BEGIN

As you start your Airbnb hosting journey, it's necessary to consider some key factors to secure your best chance at success.



YOUR LOCATION

Wherever you are in the world as you begin your Airbnb journey, you'll find that not all areas of a city or region are the same when it comes to accommodation demand. In the same light, not all types of accommodation will perform the same in every unique area. Every place has its own drawcard, the experience that's offered and aspects that appeal most to guests. In your early stages of planning your hosting, you should assess how your location fits in with Airbnb trends and use this to plan how you approach hosting on the platform.

YOUR PROPERTY

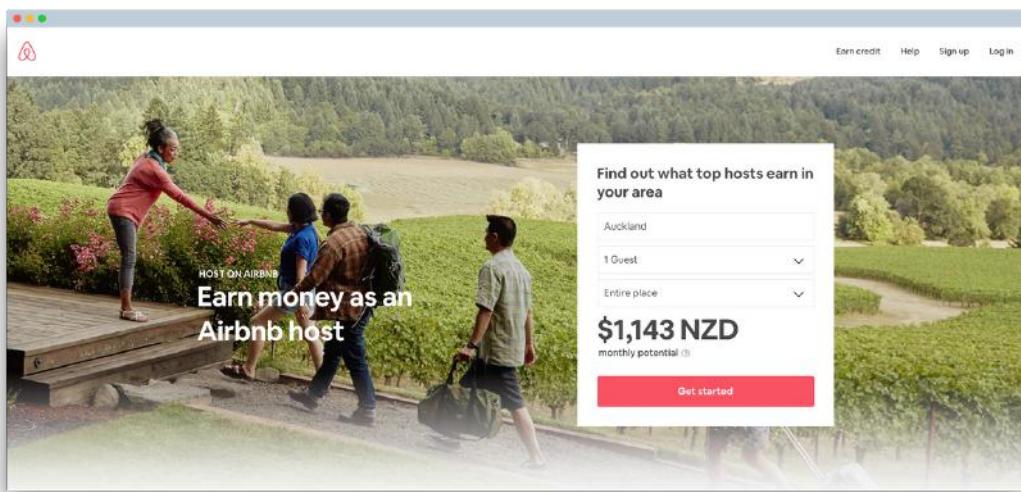
After you've assessed your location and its appeal, you can consider what type of property you have to offer. Are you promoting an entire lodging? How many bedrooms do you have? What amenities are on offer? How do you compare with other listings in your area? These considerations will allow you to work out what kind of guests will be attracted to your listing.



YOUR OBLIGATIONS

One of the biggest mistakes a prospective Airbnb host can make is forgetting or neglecting their legal obligations. You need to know whether you're allowed to host guests (landlords, council rules, neighbours or law), your insurance and whether you're required to pay any additional tax on any income made. Making the mistake of skipping this process is the fastest way to stop your Airbnb success before it has even begun.

TAKING THE FIRST STEPS



Joining the fast-growing community of Airbnb hosts can be an extremely rewarding experience; for your finances, for the travellers you host, and for your own personal life. But, it can also be tough to get started.

Some hosts join Airbnb without clear goals in mind. They host half-heartedly and don't put in the necessary time and effort to see a substantial return. This often happens through a lack of planning and guidance in the initial set-up process.

Rising rates of Airbnb usage across the globe, changing tax requirements and increased guest expectations mean that finding success on the platform requires a strong strategy. As you begin hosting, you'll find that you're competing with other hosts in your vicinity and you're doing so with appealing listings, 5-star reviews and attention-grabbing details wherever possible.

To realistically do well as an Airbnb host, you should consider a multitude of factors in your early stages. Take the time to think about what kind of host you'd like to be, the type of people you'd like as guests and how you can best entice this demographic.

For the most part, these factors will depend on the type of property you have available for hosting in. But, it also includes things like your time input, your investment in your property, the extent to which you optimise your listing and profile, and how you compete with other listings out there.

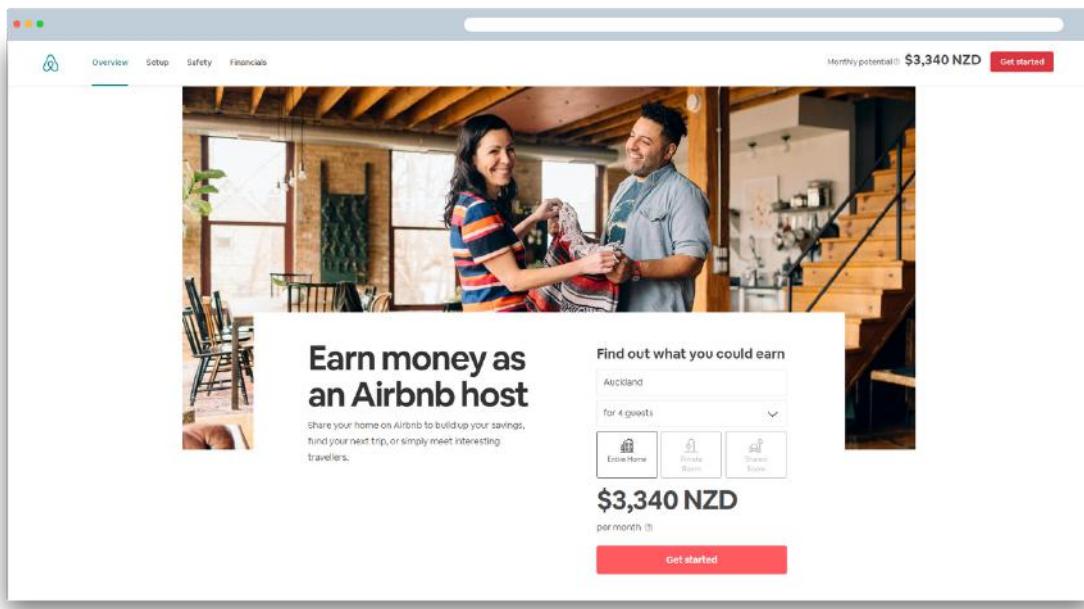


Strategising from the start can help you avoid the mistakes frequently plaguing beginner hosts. It will put you in the best placing for continued success and allow you to build your reputation quickly. With an informed approach to Airbnb hosting, you'll be able to generate an income, get positive reviews, avoid potentially bad guests and see a worthwhile return on your time, energy and money.

Starting out as an Airbnb host can be complicated. It's a big commitment to make and it takes a lot of work to execute properly and get the great results everyone hopes for. However, it is worth it. Countless hosts have found huge success through this platform and with more people travelling and the popularity of Airbnb rising, it's only expected to improve.

To find out more about starting out on Airbnb, check out the Beginners Guide [here](#).

BUILDING YOUR PROFILE



Once you've considered how your property can be placed in the market, it's time to start building out your profile and telling the Airbnb community a bit about yourself. This is your chance to get your personality out there, to establish your reputation and paint yourself in the light you'd like guests to see you in.

Your Airbnb host profile is one of the most important aspects of your journey. Airbnb was built on a community of connection, so it's something that you should send a bit of time on and craft well to get yourself across as best you can.

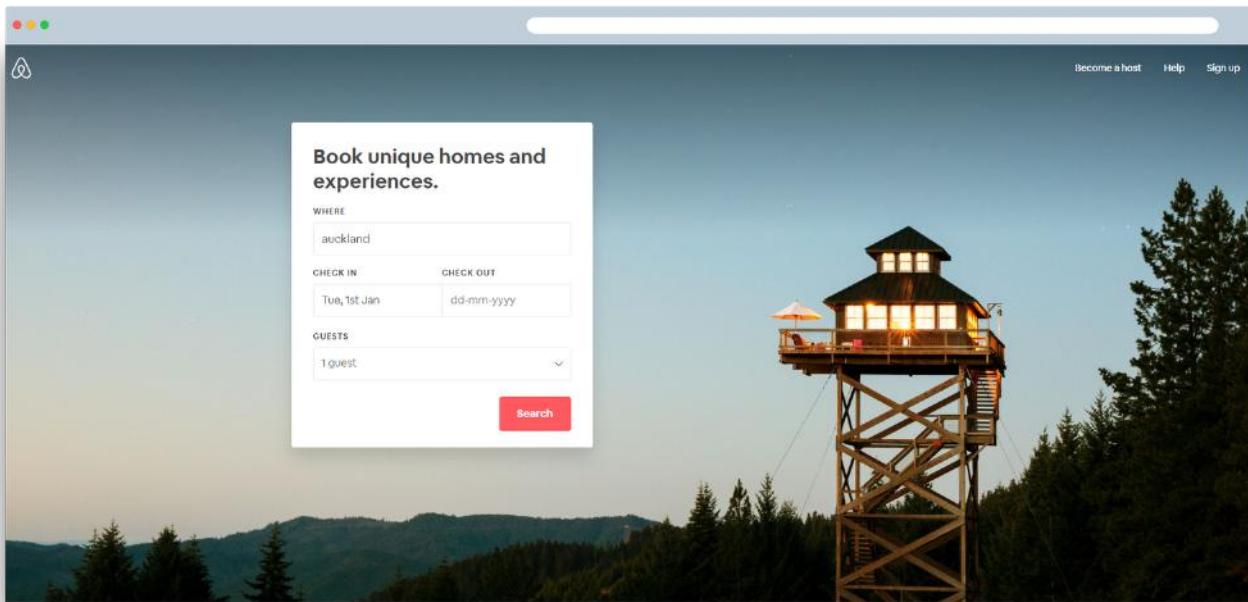
During this time, you should think about the type of host you'd like to be. Consider whether you're going to be the type of host that accepts guests periodically (whether this is when you're travelling or available during your personal commitments), whether you're looking to host full-time regardless of the time of the year or whether you're looking to get serious and establish a powerful presence on the Airbnb platform.



The host profile is one of the first things people check out when considering whether to stay with you. Choose welcoming pictures of yourself, tell people the type of person you are and give them a reason to want to stay with you. There are a lot of hosts and listings out there, what makes you special?

As with the nature of the internet, your guests need to trust you before they make a booking. There are a lot of horror stories out there about both guests and hosts being scammed by fake profiles. For this reason, one of the best things you can do is provide as much verification to Airbnb as possible. Verifying your identity through the platform will let everyone know that you're a real person and they can rely on their planned accommodation with you.

TAKING PHOTOS



Photos are another key element of the entire Airbnb hosting experience. This part of the set-up process can make or break your listing, so it's important to be thorough and get the most professional and enticing shots as you can.

These photos will be used when displaying your listing in local results pages, so they need to capture the essence of your property and really draw users in. Airbnb hosting best practices are to get the highest quality images possible (this means using a good camera), have great lighting while you're shooting and to focus shots on a property's unique features.

There are so many listings out there, how will your property stand out amongst the rest? Consider how you can make your property appeal to the type of travellers you are trying to attract. For example, if your home is family-friendly, make sure you make it known with pictures of amenities and spatial considerations. If you are looking to draw in those business travellers, highlight your office space. Adjusting your position to your guest's needs can do wonders for your booking rates.



Remember to clean-up, use flattering angles and get each one in focus. Putting your best foot forward with Airbnb listing photos makes a massive difference to the enquiry rate.

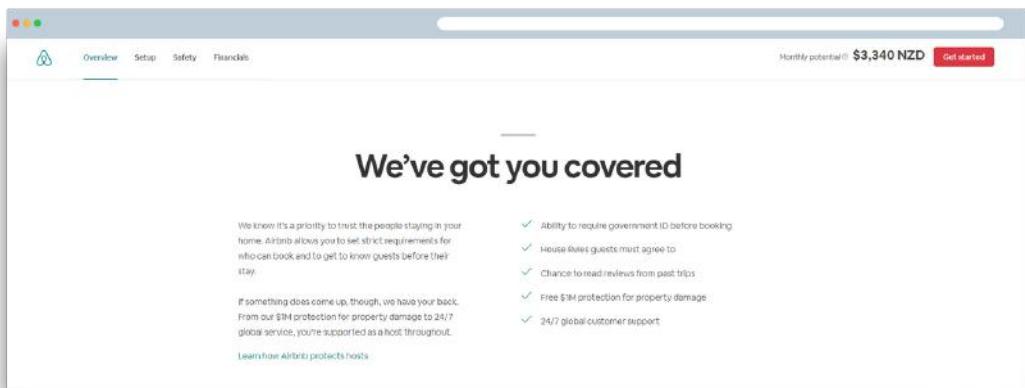
A priority thought with your Airbnb listing photos should be whether or not they truly capture the essence of your property. From your listing, you want guests to know the type of accommodation they're booking and if it's the best option for them.

Once you've got your photos taken, you want to present them strategically. On your listing, rank your photos in order of appeal. This means that you'll be placing the most attractive or unique photos first in your gallery. You'll be using these ones to spark the initial interest of the Airbnb community. These are the images that will be seen in search results pages and when people first check out your property.

Whenever anyone buys anything online, they're always going to look at the pictures first. Airbnb is no different. People want to see where they're going to be staying, they want to see sleeping arrangements, facilities and to grasp an overall vibe of the place. Keeping this in mind while taking your shots will help you to get the right kind of Airbnb listing photos.

Learn more about taking fantastic Airbnb listing photos [here](#).

ATTRACTING THE RIGHT GUESTS



As you start out on Airbnb, you are going to have a type of guest in mind that you want to have staying at your property. Depending on your location, your amenities and your attitude, this guest type will be unique to your situation. To make sure you're comfortable with your hosting experiences and that you get the most out of your efforts, you should invest time and energy in securing these bookings.

Appealing to a certain type of person when crafting your listing is the perfect way to attract the right guests. Through your advertising, you should paint your property in a light that you believe your ideal guest will be searching for on their hunt for accommodation. As with your photos, your description of your property should be tailored towards your favoured demographic. Talk about features your property has that others may not; family-friendly environments, spaces perfect for couples and business traveller amenities are all fantastic selling-points for Airbnbs all-over.



Attracting your ideal Airbnb guests should be an important component of your strategy as you start planning your first steps on the platform. When you are letting someone stay at your home you want to know that you can trust their intentions, you want to have a seamless experience and you want to have a robust backup plan in place for the worst-case scenario, all key aspects of successful Airbnb hosting.

Enticing the right guests to your Airbnb platform also includes avoiding the ones you don't want to have staying with you. With all holiday rentals, there's the risk that guests can potentially disrespect your property and cause damage or excessive mess. These situations can be extremely upsetting for owners of these houses and can even put people off from investing in the market altogether. With negative Airbnb hosting experiences rife in the media, it's a justifiable concern of all prospective Airbnb hosts.

Having the right guests to stay at your property is only possible with adequate screening of everyone that sends you a booking request. It's important to ensure you have a vetting process to allow you to assess whether a guest is a good fit for you, do not just accept everyone. Take your time once you have received an enquiry to check out their profile and read their references, this will give you a good insight into their behaviour on Airbnb in the past.

There are a number of boxes your potential guests should tick before you can confidently accept them. These include:

- A complete profile with information about themselves and identity verifications
- Reviews from past stays on Airbnb
- A reasonably aged profile (profiles made the same day as the request should be considered tentatively)
- Photos of themselves
- Readiness to meet for an in-person check-in
- Compliance with Airbnb's rules (paying and communicating through the platform only)

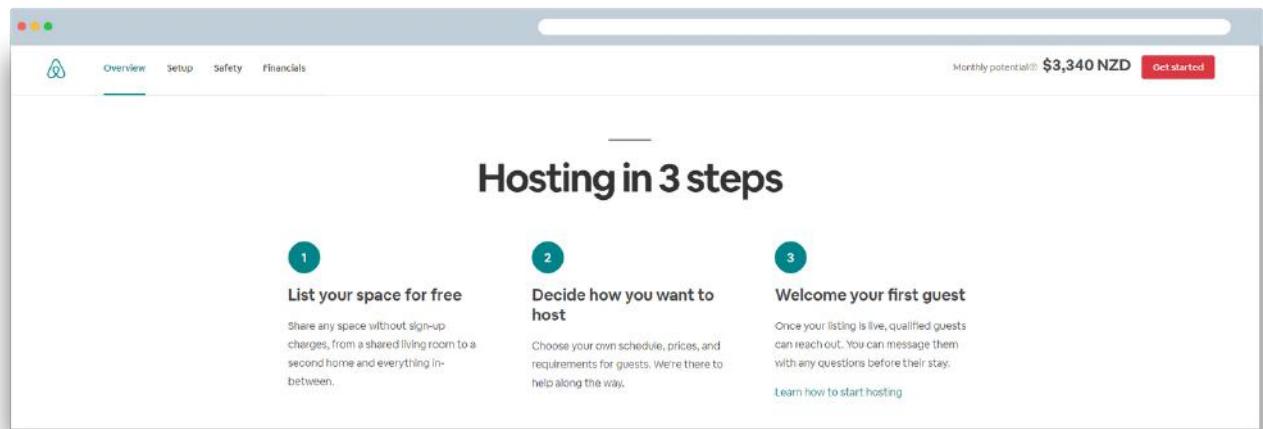
Airbnb Host Protection Insurance

Airbnb offers liability and protection insurance to all hosts "in the event of third-party claims of bodily injury or property damage". This coverage reaches up to \$1 million USD and aims to protect hosts in the worst-case scenario, wherever you are in the world.

The insurance coverage should provide you with some peace of mind about hosting on Airbnb, however, as with all insurance, there are certain terms and conditions hosts must meet to be eligible. For the most part, following Airbnb's policies and using your own judgement will allow for a smooth experience throughout your hosting journey.

You can find out more about Airbnb's Host Guarantee Programme [here](#).

THE HOSTING PROCESS



Once you have set up your profile, created your listing and added all of your best shots, it's time to start hosting. Getting your first booking will be the biggest step you take on Airbnb and it will likely be your most difficult. This is because as a new host, you won't yet have any reviews or ratings, making some seasoned guests wary. By ensuring you have all the necessary information on your profile; verification, availability and good communication, you can make this stepping stone as smooth as possible.

The hosting process is a long journey. It takes a lot of time, energy and practice to master Airbnb skills. From the initial point of enquiry, through your correspondence, to the check-in, throughout the stay, and the check-out, you need to make sure you're on your game the entire time. Keeping your eye on the prize (that five-star rating) should be your primary focus. Get to know your guest, show them a bit of your personality and do what you can to make sure they have the best stay possible, and you will have it on lock.



As mentioned, the hosting process starts with a message or request to book your listing. It's here that you make your first impression so be sure to stay polite, clear and upbeat. Thank people for enquiring, respond quickly and get back to everyone - even if you are rejecting their request. Communication through the platform is a really important part of hosting on Airbnb and playing a role in the community.

Before you accept your first guest, you need to make sure you have all the necessary amenities and supplies that people expect from their holiday rental. While your property does not have to include all of these items, going the extra mile and thinking outside of the box is one of the best ways of securing those outstanding references and establishing your reputation. Common amenities hosts provide for their guests include:

- Toilet paper
- Towels
- Toiletries
- Clean, fresh linen
- Free WiFi
- Netflix or other streaming services
- A first aid kit
- A dryer
- Washing detergent
- Cutlery
- Crockery
- Ample plates and glasses (consider an array of beverages)
- Ironing appliances
- A television
- Phone chargers
- Good quality pillows
- Mattress protectors
- Neighbourhood guides
- Flowers
- Office supplies (pens, notebooks, etc.)
- Clothes Rack

These amenities will help you delight guests upon their arrival. When they know you've thought of their needs, they will appreciate it. If you want to go the extra mile and really wow them, consider leaving a thoughtful, inexpensive gift to welcome them to your home. Something as small as a bottle of wine can put your hosting repertoire above others.

Cleaning Your Property

During the initial stages of setting up your Airbnb rental and throughout your hosting experiences, you should do a top to bottom clean of the entire place. As with all short-term accommodation, a clean and tidy place to stay is at the top of everybody's list. Pay special attention to commonly-neglected areas, bathrooms, kitchens, linen and surfaces. Messiness is something that cannot be forgiven on Airbnb.

Check-Ins

The check-in process is a really important part of the entire stay. It's your chance to meet your guests (when possible) and to welcome them to your property. If you're in a position where you're unable to greet your guests in person, make sure you have clear and concise instructions on how they're able to gain access to keys. The check-in is something that all guests will worry about, particularly if they're arriving from overseas at odd times. Simplifying this process will really make a difference, an accessible lockbox can be one of the easiest ways to keep things stress-free.

Host Etiquette During the Stay

Provide your guests with your emergency contact details - both in your messages and in writing at your property. Ensure you've provided all the necessary instructions to any amenities (including WiFi) and let them know that you're available for any questions they may have.

Try not to bother your guests too much during this time, let them enjoy themselves! Nobody likes to be watched like a hawk while they're paying for accommodation. However, it's a great idea to outline your house rules even if you have already on your profile. Almost all guests will be happy to comply with special requests you may have if it's in the best interests of your property. Keep things pleasant and polite, stay in touch and this time will flow by without a hitch.

Reviews

As an Airbnb host, your reviews are going to be one of your most valuable assets. In the beginning, generating as many positive references as possible will be your primary goal. Reviews are often the deciding factor between whether somebody books with you or not. They're kind of like a measure of host success and are the driving force of the entire Airbnb machine, working both ways with guests reviewing hosts and vice versa.

The benefits of having an outstanding Airbnb rating include:

- An increased appeal to potential guests
- A higher chance of appearing first in search results
- Increased bookings
- The chance to earn Superhost status

Host reviews are permanent and will stick with your profile for the duration of your hosting life. They make a big difference to the amount and the quality of booking requests you receive. Working to generate reviews from your ideal guests will do a lot for your efforts in enticing the type of people you want staying with you. For example, if you're able to get positive references from families about how great your place is for children, you're likely to continue getting enquiries from more families.

With this in mind, you're going to be attempting to get 5-star reviews for each and every guest you host. This is only possible through a concentrated effort to provide a fantastic service. While a great review is never guaranteed, by putting your best hosting foot forward on every occasion, you'll be in a great position to receive them.

Here are some ways successful Airbnb hosts secure top reviews from their guests:

- Keeping images and descriptions realistic (don't exaggerate)
- Exceeding expectations with amenities and welcome gifts
- Providing neighbourhood guides to popular spots for eating, drinking, cultural experiences, nights-out and recreational activities
- Having open lines of communication at all times
- Quickly resolving any issues brought up during a stay
- Touching base to make sure guests are enjoying themselves
- Contacting guests to thank them for staying with you after they've checked out. Let them know that you appreciate them and encourage them to stay with you again. Reminding people to leave a review never hurts!

Negative Reviews

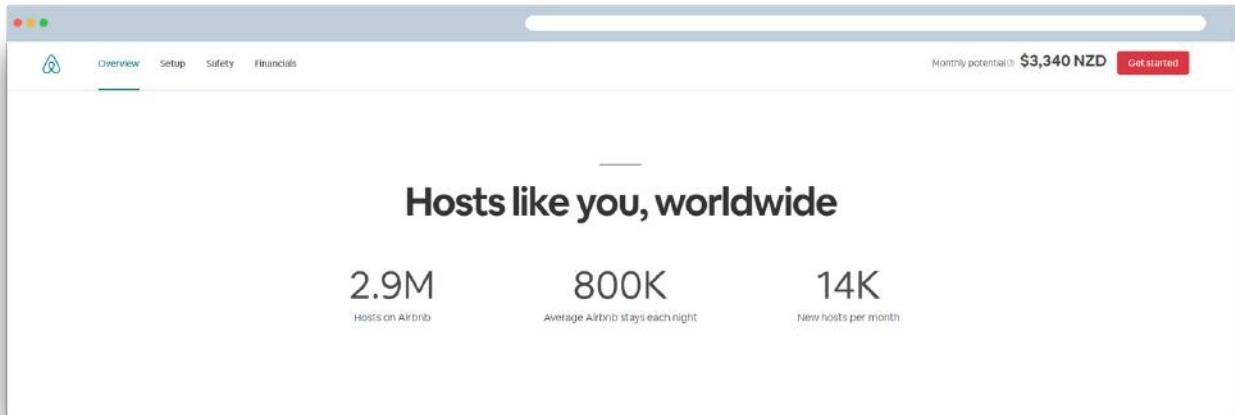
We're all human. Negative reviews can and do happen. In the unfortunate situation of this occurring, there are steps you can take to minimise the damage. In all situations, you want to keep everything professional and above board. Avoid getting personal at all times and attempt to rectify any misunderstandings. The best way forward is to promptly tackle problems head-on and fix things where you can.

Airbnb hosts should take these experiences as a learning curve and work to improve their listings based on the feedback. Nobody is perfect, so if you've received a suggestion or criticism, use it to make your property or hosting stronger. Be sure to respond to each review and acknowledge their feelings, let people know what you've done to improve your listing based on what they've said and move on with your hosting efforts.

If you believe that a guest has breached Airbnb policies with their review, you can contact the customer service team to get it removed. The platform has strict rules around erasing feedback (given their emphasis on the value of reviews) however, there are some situations where they will make allowances. This is usually in instances where guests have attempted to extort refunds or discounts with a bad review. If this happens to you, feel free to get in touch with Airbnb as soon as possible.

Learn how to respond to a bad Airbnb host review [here](#).

OPTIMISING YOUR LISTING



Every time a user searches Airbnb for accommodation the platform uses an algorithm to determine which listings will be the most relevant to their needs. A number of different factors come into play each time someone makes a search and this decides whether your listing will be shown in the top spots or not. Naturally, the most popular listings are the ones that get the most visibility and therefore, the most bookings. This is where you want your property to be and optimising your listing can help you get there.

Listings are ranked by the number of clicks they receive (their popularity), the quality of reviews a host has, the nightly rate, host verification and responsiveness. If you want to get as many bookings as possible, these should be your major points of focus during your hosting experience. Working to improve your listing rankings can have a huge impact on your earnings.



For the most part, optimising your listing is all about drawing potential guests to click on your property. The best way to do this is to use an eye-grabbing picture as your primary image, this is what people will first see on their search and what will determine whether they visit your profile or not. You should also craft a friendly, intriguing headline that sums up what your property is all about. Remember your ideal guest and secure their attention with your unique selling point.

Another important part of optimisation is your pricing. The nightly rate you set requires research of market rates and what other listings similar to yours are charging. Listing prices are never static, they change throughout the year and are subject to major events, seasons and demand. It's a good idea to keep an eye on things and adjust your pricing accordingly, continuous listing updates are also good for your rankings as they let Airbnb know that you're active on the platform and a conscientious host.

Discover how you can optimise your listing and get top ranking positions with this guide.

Completing Your Profile with Accurate Information

Once you've drawn in guests to view your listing, you want to make sure you have all the necessary information they need to make a decision. Airbnb will also use the details you provide on your listing for their ranking determination, so it's key that you include all your best points. Let people know what amenities you have available (particularly WiFi), how many guests you allow, how many rooms you have, how close you are to popular attractions and anything else you think will help guests choose your place.

Location is one of the most important points here so it's crucial to make this very apparent. Include information about public transport and accessibility, but be careful not to exaggerate. If you stretch the truth, guests will always know and it will result in a bad review. Be honest about what your property offers and you'll receive the genuine requests you need to succeed on Airbnb.

Encourage Bookings

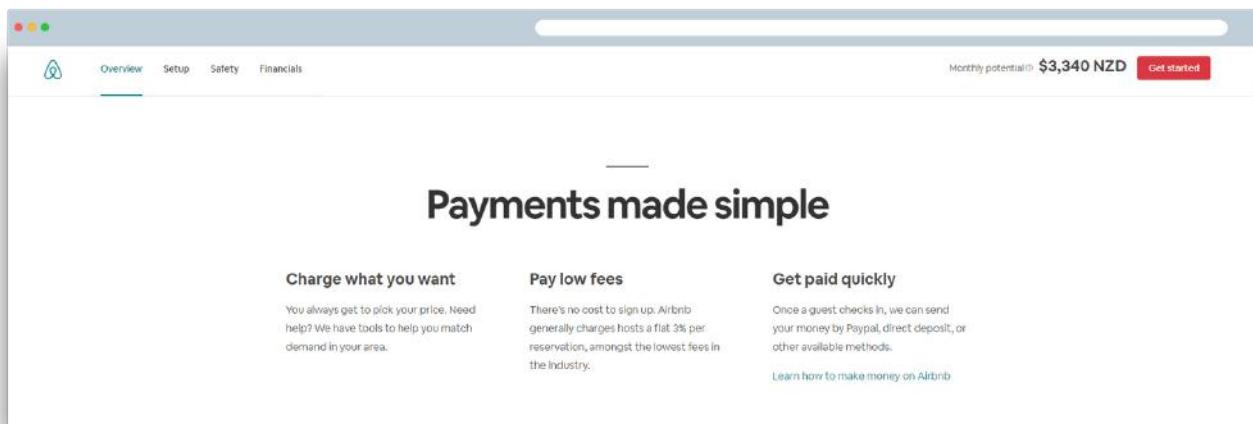
Just filling out the required information isn't all you can do to drive those booking numbers up, you can also tell the community why your property can offer a fantastic experience. Let people know what makes staying with you special and what you will do to ensure they have a great time. You can also show this through well-taken photos that paint a picture of the experience your property offers.

Once a guest has messaged you, ensure you reply as soon as you can. Responsiveness is something Airbnb takes into consideration when ranking your profile, whether you are accepting a booking or not. During your correspondence with guests, be friendly and welcoming. This will give them confidence that your place is somewhere they want to stay.

To recap, these are the factors that Airbnb takes into account when determining where listings are placed in search results:

- Location
- Listing clicks
- Reviews
- Response times
- Nightly rates
- Instant book

MONEY MATTERS



When you first begin your Airbnb hosting efforts, money will be a big concern. There's a lot to think about before you accept your first booking to guarantee a profitable venture and it's not always easy to know everything from the get-go. However, it's important to grasp a clear picture of your overheads, your liabilities and your market rates for the best possible experience. With careful planning, there's no need to lose out on any of your valuable investment.

Insurance

While Airbnb does provide their own insurance to all hosts, it's important to know you're covered across all possible scenarios. Simply talking to your insurance company can provide you with clarity around this situation and remove any ambiguity. Being backed in the worst-case situation is something all hosts should plan for.



Taxes

Depending on where you live, you may be required to pay tax on your Airbnb earnings. Usually, tax rates are determined by the number of nights per year you are hosting, so if you're planning to host full-time, your rates will generally be higher. Taxes are something that you definitely want to consider in the very beginning as being slapped with a huge bill at year-end can really put a pin in your experience. Consider consulting a professional or veteran local host if you're unsure about your liabilities.

Overheads

Your overhead costs consist of all the expenses you'll incur over your efforts. These include; cleaning, purchasing amenities and any repairs needed for general wear and tear. Over time these expenses will begin to stack up so it's important to think ahead and include the costs in your nightly rate.

Remember that Airbnb does charge hosts a 3% fee on earnings to cover their own expenses.

How Much Should Your Nightly-Rate Be?

Once you have your expenses noted, it's time to start thinking about choosing your nightly rate. This is the amount you charge per night to stay at your property and it should be a number you're comfortable with that makes sense for your property. The best way to get an estimate on what you should be asking is to have a look at listings like yours in your area. From here, you can assess the competition and have a better understanding of your potential earnings.

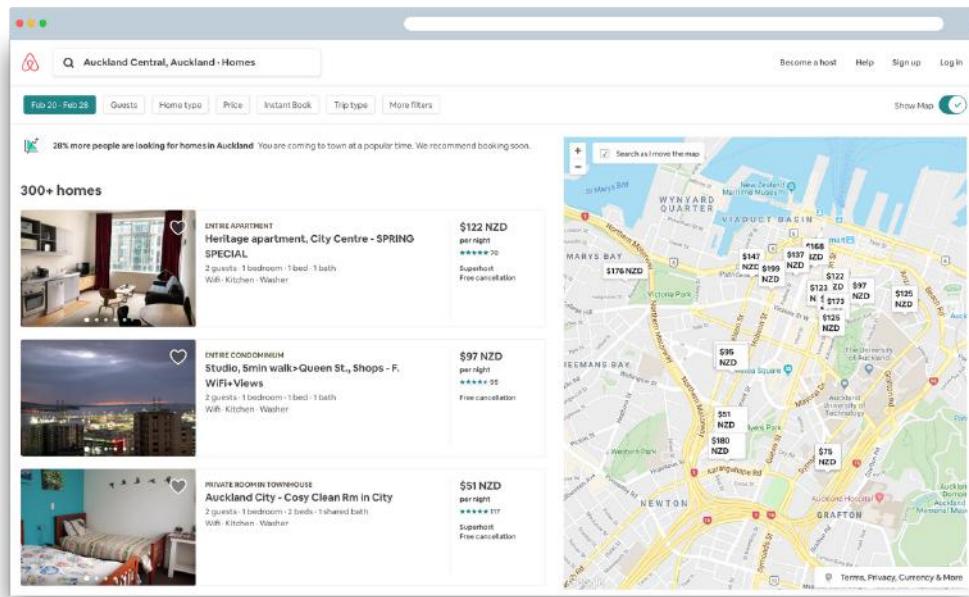
Your Airbnb pricing strategy should be unique to you and your situation. While making your listing, you'll find that Airbnb recommends a price for you to start with (this is based on your property specifics and your market). You can choose to go with this or set your own, it's all up to you.

Profitable Airbnb hosts are always on the pulse of the latest market standings. Paying close attention to things like seasonal change, large-scale events and the weekday/weekend difference can help you earn more over time.

In the beginning and as you attempt to build up your reputation as an Airbnb host, you may want to consider a discounted price. This will allow you to attract more bookings than you would otherwise and get your hosting off to a powerful start.

Some hosts do implore the assistance of pricing software to help them with their rate strategy. These mediums provide people with an automated way of asking for the right price at the right time. Considering implementing this into your strategy could help you see a higher return.

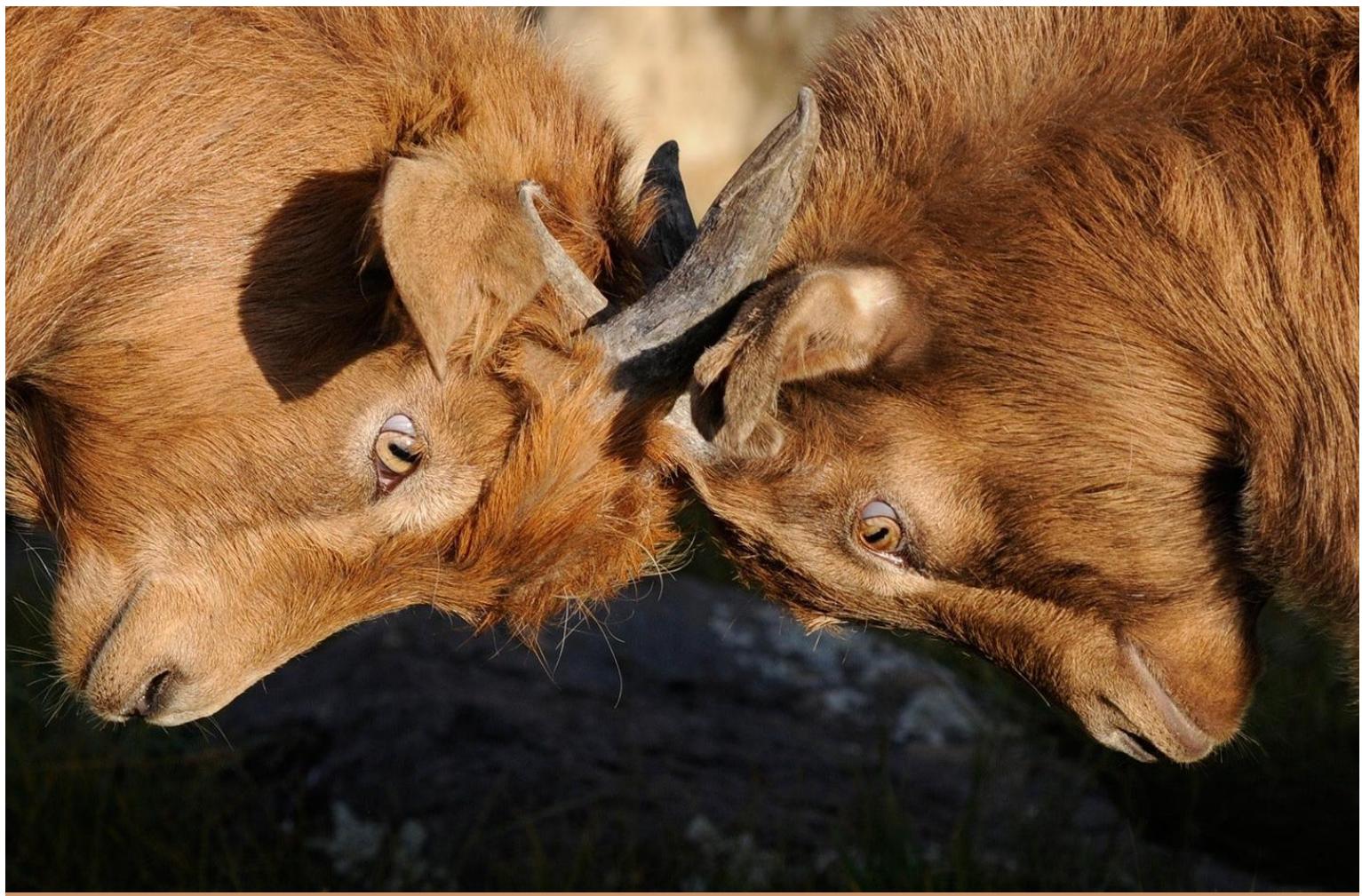
THE COMPETITION



In recent years and as Airbnb becomes more popular, host competition is increasingly fierce on the platform. During the beginning of your venture, you'll feel the heat from other listings more than ever, so it's important to understand who you're being compared to. Through knowing who you're up against, you'll be able to craft a strategy for success and enjoy a profitable experience as an Airbnb host.

Analysis of your specific Airbnb market starts with a thorough look at listings in your vicinity. You'll want to assess pricing, availability, room types, location, amenities and property types. You can do this through narrowing down search parameters in the Airbnb guest interface. Have a look at how many properties like yours there are out there and how they've positioned themselves through their listings.

Availability should be one of your biggest focuses when assessing your competition. It's through these search criteria that you'll be able to gauge what type of hosts are present in your region. Whether your listing's area is packed with full-time hosts all year round or slow during the year and heavy in peak-season will help you not only judge your competition, but understand your market better too.

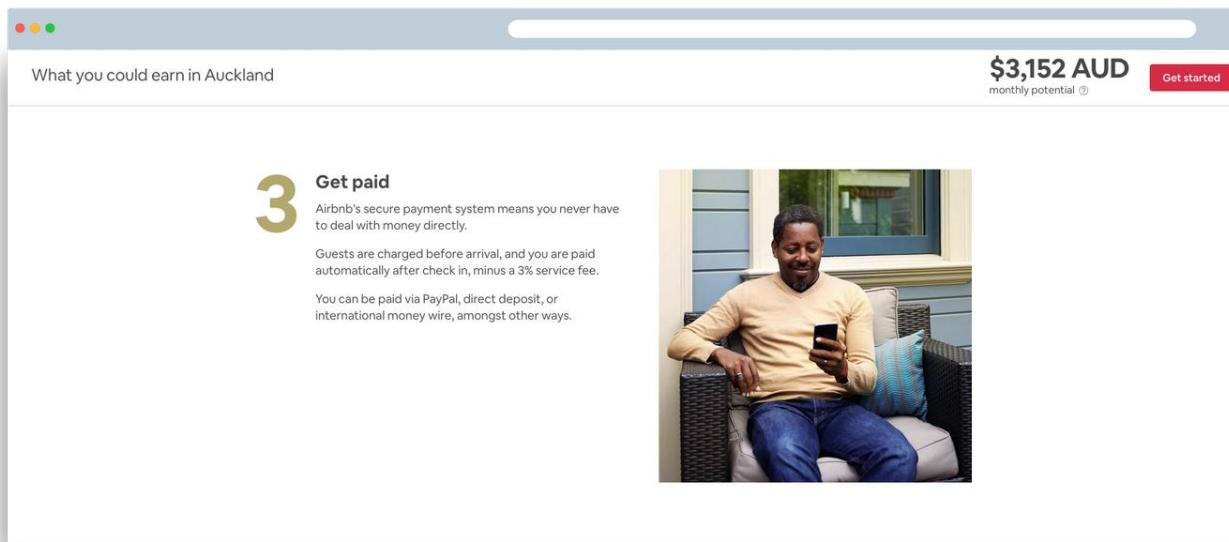


Once you've identified your competition, you should check out the hosts of these listings. Take a look at their profiles and note their descriptions, their photos, their ratings, their status in the community and how they articulate themselves. Pay special attention to the words used in descriptions and bios. These are often key words and are unique to your area or niche. Discovering these terms and implementing them into your profile or listing can help you get more bookings in time.

The easiest way to outperform competitors is to understand what they're doing with their efforts and mimic them with your own take on things. Your competition's profiles should influence how you craft your own presence on the platform, but remember to stay unique!

Competitor analysis is all about profitability. It's through these insights that you can gain an understanding of pricing and expectations of guests coming to your area. Superhosts that you're competing with will display what it takes to be successful on Airbnb in your niche. Take note of successful hosts and mirror your efforts, this will help you on your way to establishing yourself.

MAKING PROFIT



Regardless of your strategy, your approach, your property type and your location, profitability is a universal priority for all on Airbnb. For all the effort you put into the platform, you need to know that it is materialising as income - otherwise, what's the point right?

Making a profit on Airbnb comes through taking the steps required in the set-up, starting off strong by following best practices and learning, improving and optimising based on your experiences as a host. As a niche short-term accommodation platform, it's necessary to understand the culture, cultivate the appeal and play to your strengths in order to have the best return on your investment. This isn't always easy, however by planning ahead and staying on top of commitments and your host responsibility, you'll be able to secure your desired results.

It's important to think about your profit before you begin on Airbnb but this is something that will follow you throughout each experience. It's a continual process that requires forward-thinking and price adjustments. You'll need to pay attention to the market, stay on top of current events in your area and understand your obligations.



Factors that may affect your Airbnb host earnings include:

- Your location
- Your property type
- Seasons
- Whether you are a full or part-time host
- Overheads, the amenities you offer your guests
- Your nightly-rate and whether you adjust it during optimum times
- Your host reputation
- Your optimisation efforts
- Local obligations around taxes
- How you manage your listing

Management will be key to your earning potential and will take a significant amount of time, depending on your hosting commitment. Luckily, this gets easier the longer you do it and if you think you don't have it in you to do it all yourself, you can also employ the assistance of an Airbnb management company, for a price. These businesses have arisen due to the popularity of the platform and make your property a hands-free investment. While they do take a cut of your earnings, they're generally experts in their fields and know their way around optimising, hosting, pricing strategies and listing positioning.

Read about what all profitable Airbnb hosts have in common [here](#).

Investing in Airbnb is a business venture that comes with its own unique challenges. While it's different from other property investment methods, there's still a number of hoops you'll have to jump through on your journey. The most successful Airbnb hosts are the most organised. It takes an entrepreneurial spirit, an understanding of your market and the patience to work through the required initial steps to start out strong.

By following the steps outlined in this book and continuing to improve your efforts on Airbnb, you can expect a positive return from your investment. With hosts all over the world finding profitability through this fresh method, there's every reason to be optimistic about your chances.

Hosting like an expert from the get-go will place you in the best position for success and with your eye on the prize and the bottom-line, you'll see the results you've hoped for in no time.