

What to expect of us.

Why we are a cut above.

Promotion of the Area as a Vacation Destination:

The success of your vacation rental home depends in large part on how well the general public perceives our area as a vacation destination. Toward this goal:

- We actively participate in regional tourism promotion groups (LHMA- Lake Hartwell Marketing Alliance, NEGMATA - North East Georgia Mountains Travel Association, DUCA- Discover Carolina's Upcountry Association, and the Oconee County Tourism Commission).
- We co-sponsor tourism guide publications to the lakes, waterfalls, and the area in general. We have also created and made available in print and on the web several of our own specialized guides to our area (Waterfalls, Golf Courses, and Scenic Drives).
- We participate in Boat and Travel Shows either alone or along with area organizations.
- We own and maintain www.Lake-Hartwell.com to provide general area tourism information.

Experience from Thousands of Rentals:

As our client, feel free to draw on our experience at any time. We will be happy to visit and evaluate the rental potential of your home (or pending purchase). We will give you a realistic estimate of what to expect then periodically re-evaluate your home to provide you with suggestions to improve your results and prevent problems. We can help find local contractors and/or suppliers.

Extensive Print Advertising Program:

- We have listings in all the official State and Regional travel guides for our area. We are listed in most guides published by local tourism organizations and Chambers of Commerce.
- Additionally, we may advertise in: "Southern Living", "Vacations", "Atlanta Journal", "Real Estate Register", "Tampa Tribune", "NYC Catholic", "Greenville News", and other print media.
- Our professionally designed flyer is distributed by State and Regional Welcome Centers, Local Chambers of Commerce, Local stores, businesses, and Realtors, and in regional travel packages.

A Web Site at the TOP of Search Engines:

Our WEB site is routinely at or near the top of the major search engines. To keep it there requires constant re-evaluation and optimization. To help accomplish this we regularly re-optimize our site with the latest tools and procedures. Also we own 5 domains pointing to our site and we purchase significant search terms. There are now over 200 websites that link to ours.

Professionalism:

Vacation Rentals is not a hobby for us, it is our full time business. We use professional industry standard software to track reservations, maintain the accounting, and provide on-line reservation services. We keep informed of the latest industry standards through our membership in the VRMA (Vacation Rental Managers Association), by monitoring relevant Vacation Rental web discussion groups, and by participating in industry meetings and seminars. All our advertising, procedures, and forms are designed in compliance with Federal and State tax codes and Anti-Discrimination laws.

We create and host a Web page specifically for your home:

At no charge we will take the necessary photos, write a description (Or modify your description to be in a format consistent with others on our site), create a page for your home then maintain and host that page on our web site. As you make changes to your home we will update your web page, again at no charge.

Real-Time Availability Calendar:

We maintain a "Real Time" reservation calendar for your house on our WEB site. At any time day or night you or a potential guest can check the availability of your house. You may also block days for your use via the Internet at any time. Or you may do the same by calling the office during normal working hours.

Un-Biased Selection Process:

If a guest is unhappy with your house, for whatever reason, it benefits no one for him to stay there. The key to satisfaction is for the guest to know what to expect. We work hard to present each property in a fair manner.

- Our web site provides descriptions and several photos and as well as sorting by amenity or price.
- On request we will make arrangements to "show" houses to prospective guests.
- We have a uniform fee structure and will never favor one house over another for our benefit.
- When ask for recommendations we match the guest to the house we feel is best for the guest.
- Satisfaction is guaranteed. If a guest is not satisfied with the house we will move them to another available unit with no penalty charges.

Easy Reservation Process:

We are easy to contact. Our office is staffed 5 days a week during normal business hours. (We close Wednesday and Sunday.) We can answer questions and make reservations via Toll Free 800#, E-Mail, or Fax. We even provide a "Real Time" on-line reservation service so that reservations can be taken 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

To make a reservation we require payment of 1/2 in advance (When the rental commences within a month we require full payment in advance). We accept major credit cards thus eliminating payment delays. Once a reservation is made and the initial payment cleared we mail the guest a professional looking confirmation/invoice and confirm the rental via e-mail.

Maintain Escrow Account:

Deposits, rental payments, and pre-payments are deposited into a holding account in accordance with State Laws. No one may withdraw any portion of these funds until after the rental is completed. This provides protection for everyone should something go wrong and a partial or full refund is required. At the end of each month we "close the books" on rentals completed in that month. We will then mail you a check on or about the 15th of the following month. We then post your monthly statement on our secure web site accessible only with your password.

Controlling Who Rents Your House:

We do not rent to students (or any person under the age of 25) and we limit the number of people in each house. We have strict pet policies for those houses that accept pets. House rules must be signed and a credit card or other form of ID must be presented. Street and E-Mail addresses must be correct. Our staff is trained to look for signs of potential trouble. A person's address, voice, or demeanor over the phone may trigger Red Flags. We require that all guests check in at our office so that we have an opportunity to meet them. During the rental we may randomly "Cruise By" to look for signs of abuse.

Pre-Rental Check:

Our staff routinely checks homes within 48 hours of a guest's arrival to insure that there are no surprises. We check for cleanliness and perform any needed last minute touch-up such as removing cobwebs and dead bugs. We verify that appliances, TV, and phones work. We verify that HVAC is set correctly and that water and water heaters are on.

Guest Friendly Check-In:

Our office is very easy to find. We are directly on Highway 11, (the first expressway exit in South Carolina) and marked by a sign that has become a local landmark (a large "?"). The existence of a "brick and mortar" office helps provide the out of state guest with a sense of security.

At Check-In guests makes any final payment, sign any final paperwork, are given any final instructions, and receive keys and a map to the house. We also provide a packet of local information and our local staff can provide local information. We will make provisions for after hour check-ins if the guest is paid in full.

Guest Services:

To help enhance the vacation experience:

- We provide a free business center with computer, printer, fax, and high-speed Internet access.
- We can be a delivery point for UPS, FedEx, or other delivery service.
- We offer free overflow or trailer parking and a picnic or game area.
- We offer free use of: Games, DVDs, Videos, Books, and reference materials.
- We can provide help with local services: Rafting, Fishing Guides, Auto or Boat Mechanics, etc.
- Boats, Canoes, Kayaks, Tubes, and Skis are available for guests to rent.

Emergencies:

Like it or not, emergencies do happen. We live here at the lake (as does our staff) and are prepared to deal with any emergency involving your guest or your house.

- We employ a live answering service 24/7.
- We keep our service truck equipped with tools and supplies to handle the most common problems (Toilet Plungers, Filters, Light Bulbs, etc).
- We keep an inventory of common appliances (Microwave, TV, VCR, DVD, Iron, Grills, Pots).
- For larger problems that might occur we deal with reliable local contractors. These contractors give us a higher priority since we deal with so many houses.

If a significant problem cannot be resolved in a timely manner we have the option of moving the guest to an alternate house.

Checkout and Cleaning:

Most local trash collection sites are closed on Sundays, which happens to be the most common checkout day. To help alleviate this problem we have a dumpster at our office for guest use when the county sites are closed.

Departing guests are asked to fill out a "Comment Card". This allows us to know about and fix problems that would only be noticed by someone staying in the house.

Houses are cleaned soon after the guests' departure, usually that day. When possible we keep the same maids assigned to a house allowing them to more easily spot problems.

Post-Cleaning Check:

After the maid reports the house cleaned we send out an inspector to check the cleaning, verify utility settings, and again check for obvious problems. Utilities are reset and appliances are checked to verify that they are off.

Tax Obligations:

When renting your home as a vacation rental, you, the owner, are required by law to collect and pay up to three separate sales or accommodations taxes. State tax agencies routinely search the Internet for rental listings then compare these listings to the tax rolls. Failure to file the proper reports and pay the taxes due may result in significant penalties or worse. As part of our service we handle this tax collection, reporting, and payment process for you.

Any time you, as an individual, employ someone to perform a service for you (Such as cleaning your house) you are required to withhold payroll taxes and to report and pay these taxes to the IRS and to the State. The only exception is if that person is working as a bona fide contractor in which case you are generally required to file a 1099 at the end of the year to report their income. Since we provide these services we are the employer and thus handle these tax withholding, reporting and payment obligations.

We also provide the IRS with a 1099 at the end of the year stating the income that was received into your escrow account. We also provide you with a statement of expenses. We do not provide any person or agency with information on the dates or number of days the house was used or by whom the house was used unless you specifically request we do so. Should the IRS ever question whether your house was actually intended to produce income, a listing with our agency will go a long way toward demonstrating that intent.

Owner Services:

In conjunction with rentals we prepare a monthly statement for your house. This statement is posted on a secure web site accessible only with your password. We also maintain a "Real Time" calendar of rentals on this site for you to review at any time.

Additionally we will check your house upon request and provide you with photographs (After a storm, hard freeze, high utility bill, etc). We will provide you with contact information for local contractors to do routine maintenance, repairs, or improvements. Upon your request we will provide contractors or family members access to your house.

Should you donate a stay to a legitimate charity, notify us and we will at no charge: pre-check the house, provide them keys, act as a local contact, and provide a post-cleaning check. It will however be your responsibility to arrange and pay for any necessary cleaning.

At your request we will provide a rental history to a realtor, prospective buyer or an appraiser.

Renting your home yourself:

Our rental contract allows you to rent your home without going through us as long as you use no other agent. When doing so you are expected to provide all the necessary services including check in, checkout, and cleaning. You are expected to handle any problems that arise without involving us. You would block the house off as if you were going to use it yourself and we would not be involved in any way.

Some owners find it advantageous to provide additional advertising by posting flyers at work, advertising in their Church bulletin, local newspaper, on the Internet, etc. They then have us handle the rental process, as we would normally do. If you intend to do supplementary advertising, we can set up our on-line calendar without referring to our web page. Or, we can provide a code to be the guest would use to identify such inquiries and rentals. Or, you can take the reservation yourself, then call or e-mail the information in to us or you can use the on-line reservation procedure by entering the information yourself.

Summary: We cannot guarantee rentals for your house or that you will make money or that there will be no problems. What we do guarantee is that we will do our best to make renting your home a pleasurable and profitable experience.