

A photograph of a man with a beard jumping into a lake from a wooden dock. In the background, two women are sitting on the dock, and a small wooden cabin is visible. The scene is set in a lush, green environment with trees and reeds. The text 'Built to Stay Report' is overlaid in large white letters.

Built to Stay Report

The keys to winning traveller trust in holiday rentals

What's inside:

This report moves past general travel trends to focus exclusively on the holiday rental space. Dive in to learn what matters most in today's market, including:

- **The definition of quality:** why travellers prioritise reliable basics and consistent service over luxurious extras
- **The trust equation:** how verified reviews and accurate photos act as the primary currency for conversion
- **Friction-free booking:** identifying the specific non-negotiable that causes travellers to walk away at the finishing line
- **The promotion payoff:** how to use strategic offers to attract guests and win the tie-breaker against similar listings

Contents

Quality: the new standard for success	04
Methodology	05
Why travellers choose holiday rentals – and why they hesitate	06
Defining quality when travellers expect more	09
The baseline for confidence	09
How guests judge quality	11
Bringing quality to the next level	13
Trust is the new currency	14
What makes or breaks a booking	16
How guest expectations change by destination	18
Translating insights into success on Vrbo	19

Quality:



the new standard for success

Holiday rentals are now a mainstream travel choice, giving travellers access to the locations they want and the space, privacy and home amenities that make trips convenient. For many travellers, that combination is exactly what sets holiday rentals apart when comparing lodging options.

But as the holiday rental market matured, it experienced growing pains fuelled partly by the pandemic's impact on supply growth. With more supply on the market, differentiation is more important than ever. Travellers have more options, more ways to compare them and less tolerance for friction. They still come to holiday rentals for what makes them different, but they increasingly expect a quality experience that is consistent every time they book.

Because of this, trust has become the new currency. Travellers are looking for proof that a property will deliver what it promises – key trust signals like accurate listing content, clearer pricing, strong reviews and reliable support before and during the stay, for example.

This research was designed to reveal what travellers see as the quality standard for holiday rentals, how they judge whether a property feels trustworthy and what ultimately makes them decide to book. In other words, it accurately illustrates exactly where the holiday rental category stands today in terms of traveller expectations.



Tim Rosolio, Vice
President of Holiday
Rental Partnerships at
Expedia Group



Methodology

We surveyed 1,758 travellers across seven global markets to decode the specific signals they use to judge your property, your management and your value.¹

1,758

respondent survey
powered by The Harris Poll

All respondents had stayed
in a holiday rental in the past
12 months

Fielded from 22–24 April 2026

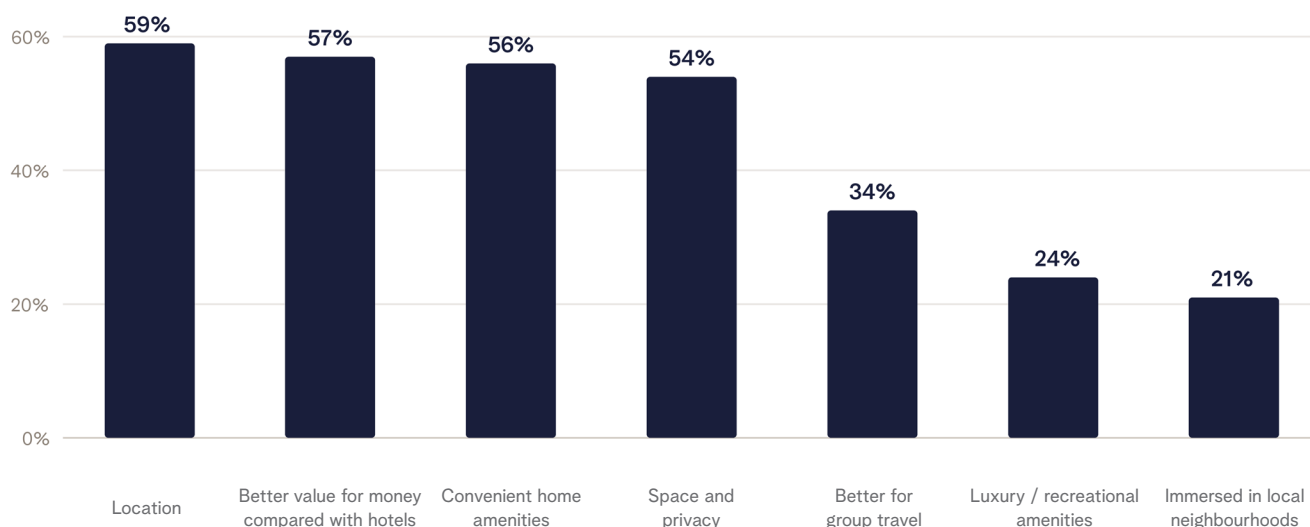
7 markets

United States
Canada
Mexico
United Kingdom
France
Germany
Australia

Why travellers choose holiday rentals – and why they hesitate

Holiday rentals continue to win on the things that have always made the category compelling: location, value, convenient home amenities, flexible space and privacy.

Top reasons for choosing holiday rentals



Question 10: When you think about why you choose holiday rentals for travel, which of the following are your top reasons?

Those strengths remain powerful because they meet real trip needs, especially for longer stays, family travel and group trips. The appeal is practical, not aspirational. Travellers are looking for a stay that works for the way they travel, not just the idea of living like a local.

However, these benefits come with anxieties and a sense of uncertainty for many travellers. Before the stay even begins, travellers worry about hidden or extra fees that change the value equation at the last minute, host cancellations, and slow or missing communication when they need reassurance the most. Those concerns can make the path to booking feel less straightforward and make travellers question the holiday rental travel experience altogether.



Pre-stay anxieties

42%

Hidden or extra fees

36%

Host cancelling last minute

33%

Non-responsive host after booking is made



On-property anxieties

41%

Broken or unreliable amenities

41%

Cleanliness issues

39%

Property not matching the photos/descriptions

Question 11: When booking a holiday rental, what are your biggest anxieties before your stay occurs?
Question 12: Upon arrival at your holiday rental and during your stay, what are your biggest anxieties?

That anxiety doesn't disappear once the trip begins. Upon arrival, travellers worry about broken amenities, cleanliness issues and properties that don't match the listing. In practical terms, that can mean arriving excited to cook and finding dirty kitchen utensils, discovering the hot tub they were counting on is out of order or realising the bunk beds their kids were looking forward to sleeping in have been replaced by a single twin.

Travellers are drawn to holiday rentals because of what they make possible, but they also see more room for things to go wrong. That push and pull is central to the category. The result is a higher bar for confidence.



It isn't enough for a property to look appealing. Travellers need to believe the experience will be dependable from booking through check-out.

Partner takeaway

Remove the biggest sources of doubt from the equation.



Show all fees upfront and don't tack on surprise charges after booking, e.g. fees for amenity usage.



Avoid cancellations whenever possible – they break trust and can lead to penalties on Vrbo.



If communication is a weak spot, put stronger systems in place so guests get timely updates and answers.



Provide the consistent level of cleanliness travellers expect every time. 'Clean enough' is no longer enough.



Defining quality when travellers expect more

As the holiday rental industry increasingly focuses on quality over quantity of properties, it's critical to understand how quality is perceived by travellers. **Research shows that the power is in the practical, not necessarily the luxury.** A property that gets it right excels on what travellers consider as non-negotiables: cleanliness, reliability, safety, responsiveness and transparency.

The baseline for confidence

These non-negotiables point to a clear theme: travellers are focused on the fundamentals that make a stay feel safe, clean, reliable and easy to trust before they book. These are no longer nice-to-haves or differentiators for a small subset of travellers. They are simply essential.

The top non-negotiables when booking a holiday rental



Safe and secure property



High rating and positive reviews for cleanliness



Fast and reliable WiFi



Host who is responsive



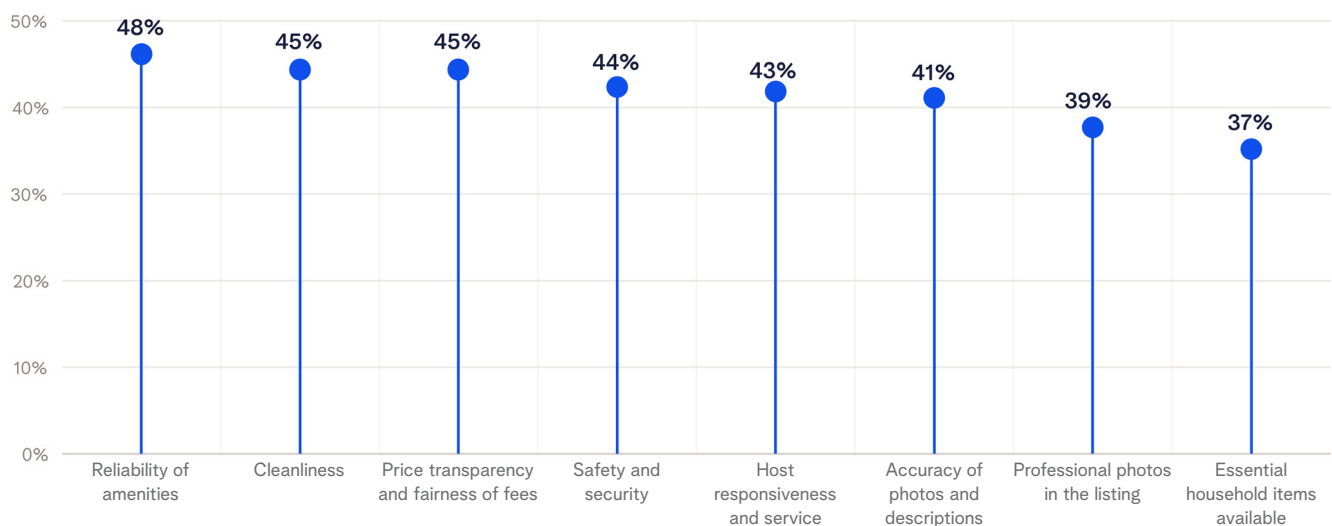
Accurate listing photos

The top non-negotiables travellers have when booking a holiday rental are safety and cleanliness. Other non-negotiables that rose to the top include fast and reliable WiFi, responsive hosts and accurate listing photos.

And travellers aren't just holding properties to that baseline – they are raising it.



Where expectations have increased over the past 2–3 years



Question 13: Compared with 2 to 3 years ago, how have your expectations for holiday rentals changed in each of the following areas?
Note: Results are net of 'somewhat higher' and 'much higher'.

With the holiday rental category entering a more mature phase, traveller expectations have risen most in the areas that matter most for a smooth stay: reliable amenities, cleanliness, fair and transparent pricing, host responsiveness and service, and accurate, professional listing photos.

Partner takeaway

Make the basics operational, not optional. Make security visible with features like smart locks that generate a new code for every booking. Deliver hotel-like cleanliness every stay, make sure WiFi is fast and reliable, respond quickly before and during the stay and keep photos updated, high quality and accurate so guests know exactly what to expect.

How guests judge quality

Quality matters because it affects both perception and performance. Most travellers say they would pay more for a higher-quality holiday rental, showing that quality isn't just an experience issue. It's a commercial one also.

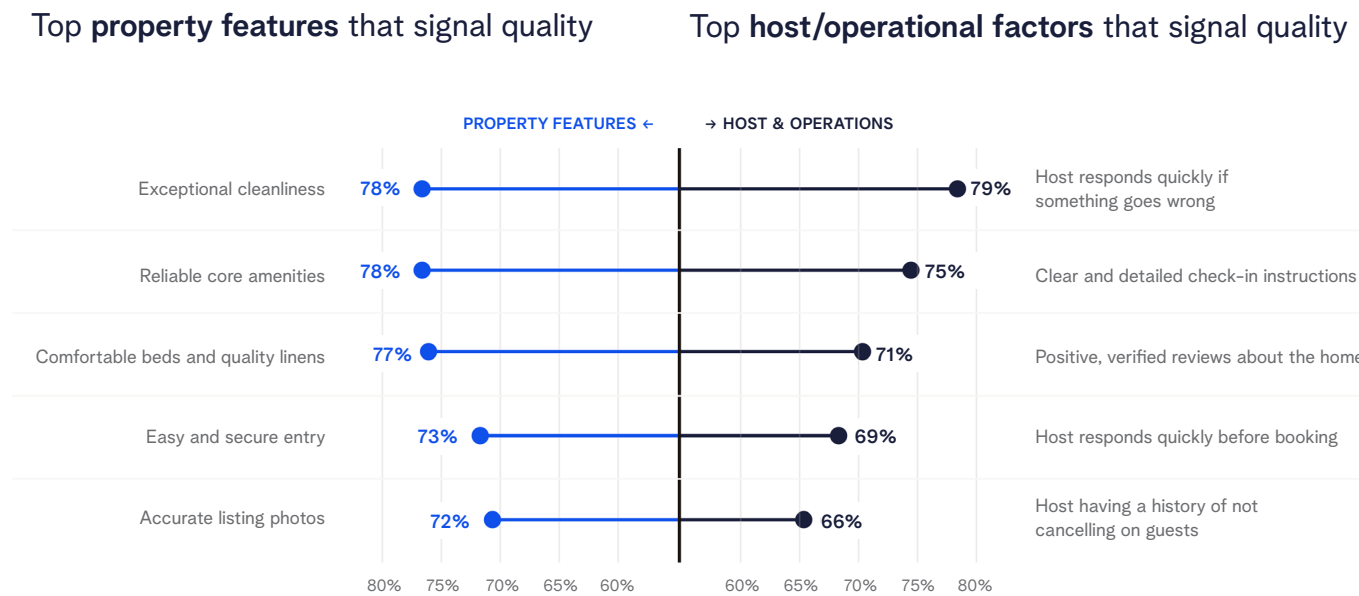


86% would pay more for a holiday rental with a higher-quality listing.

And that number rises to 91% among Gen Z.

That willingness to pay is even stronger among Vrbo travellers: 26% say they would pay 11% or more for a higher-quality property, compared with 17% on average.

But how exactly are travellers judging and defining quality? What specifically signals quality in the property itself and in the host experience? We asked. And the answer is clear: quality isn't just about beautiful design or premium amenities. It is about reducing doubt and increasing trust.



Question 16: How important are each of the following property features in signalling that a holiday rental is high quality?
Question 17: How important are each of the following host and operational factors to you in signalling that a holiday rental is high quality?
Note: Results are net of 'very important' and 'extremely important'.

Travellers define quality through a mix of signals tied to the property itself and to how the stay is managed overall. The strongest signals of property quality are exceptional cleanliness and reliable amenities, followed by comfortable beds and quality linens, easy and secure entry and accurate listing photos.

Because cleanliness is such a foundational part of the holiday rental experience, we wanted to understand what 'clean' actually means to travellers. Their answers point to a set of specific, visible signals of care.

Seventy-four percent cite fresh, clean sheets and towels; 67% no unpleasant odours or smells and 66% both spotless bathroom surfaces and rubbish removed, with bins clean and empty on arrival.

Travellers are judging not only the property itself but also how confidently the stay appears to be managed. Quality hosts are responsive, offer detailed check-in instructions and have positive reviews. Speed matters here. More than half of travellers expect a response within an hour or less if something goes wrong and many expect help even faster.

Partner takeaway

Turn quality into a repeatable part of your operation. A strong cleaner is one of the most important parts of the guest experience because consistent, high-quality cleaning is one of the clearest signals of quality travellers notice. And when something goes wrong, hosts need reliable systems in place so guests can get help quickly. For practical steps on building a stronger operation, start with [How to list your property on Vrbo](#).

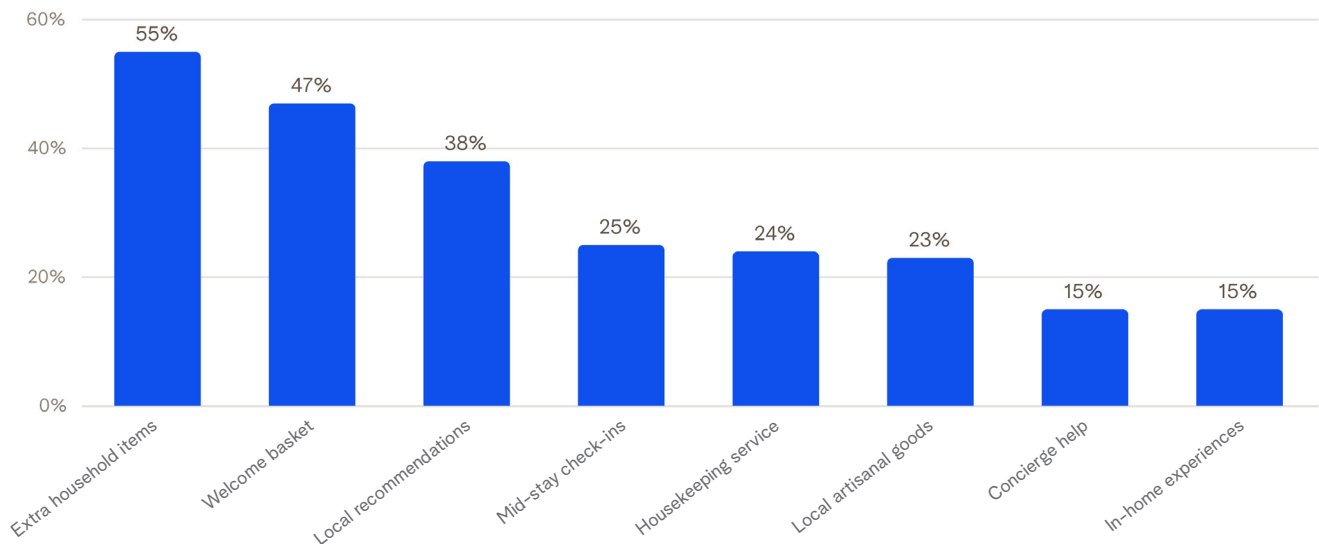


56% of travellers expect hosts to respond in an hour or less if something goes wrong.

Bringing quality to the next level

Once the fundamentals are in place, travellers value extras that make the stay easier, smoother or more comfortable. The most appreciated touches are often practical: extra household essentials or thoughtful local recommendations.

The most appreciated thoughtful extras



Question 19: Which of the following thoughtful extras or added services would you appreciate most from a holiday rental?
(Select up to 3)

Ultimately, travellers want the household basics that make a stay feel easy from the moment they arrive. They don't want to run to the shop for more toilet paper, paper towels or dishwasher pods. Simple touches like welcome snacks or a small basket of essentials can help guests settle in right away – especially after a long travel day.

In most cases, travellers aren't looking for luxury add-ons like in-home experiences or concierge-style services. They're looking for the practical comforts that make the stay feel easy, well-run and stress-free.

Partner takeaway

Prioritise the extras travellers value most: household essentials (paper towels, toilet paper, etc.) and thoughtful local recommendations. Highlight these touches in your property listing so guests can see the extra attention and care before they book. These practical details do more to reduce stress and improve the stay than more elaborate add-ons.



Trust is the new currency

Quality attracts travellers, but proof is what converts them. Trust signals make travellers more likely to book – and more willing to pay more once they believe the property will deliver.

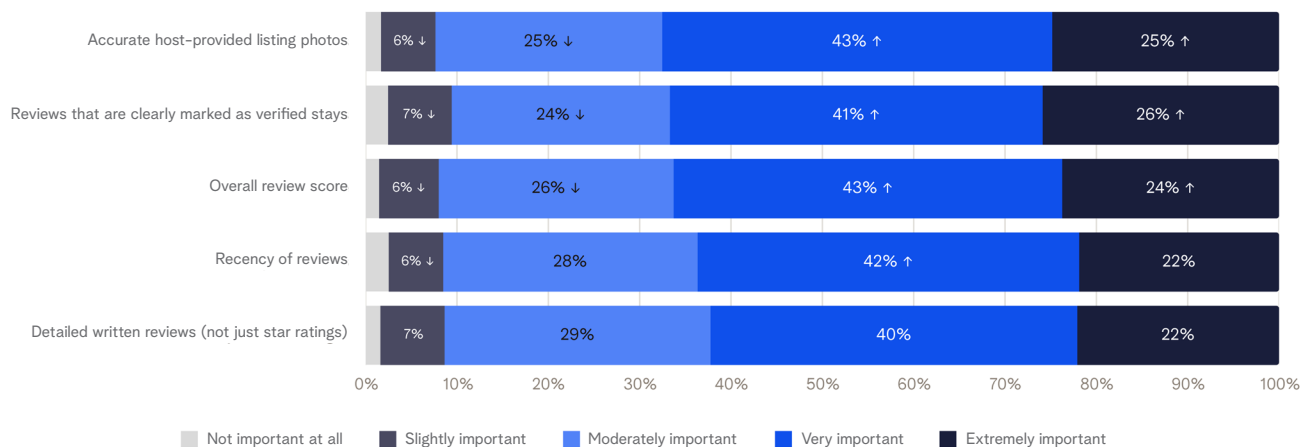
81% would pay more for a holiday rental with stronger trust signals.

And that number rises to **88% among Gen Z.**

On Vrbo, trust signals are peppered throughout the search experience from Premier Host and Loved by Guest badges to ratings on cleanliness, acceptance rate and communication. But one signal sits at the centre of the traveller's trust equation: reviews.



The most important trust signals when choosing a holiday rental



Question 22: When choosing a holiday rental, how important are each of the following trust signals?

Travellers place high importance on strong review scores and reviews that are verified, recent and detailed. Vrbo travellers are especially attuned to these signals.

Looking specifically at the data for Vrbo travellers: 73% say recency of reviews is a very or extremely important trust signal compared

with 64% on average, and 54% of Vrbo travellers say the same of property badges versus 46% on average.

Travellers don't just want proof that a property was good once. They want evidence that it is delivering a reliable experience now.

54% say real traveller photos from people who have stayed at the property are important trust signals.

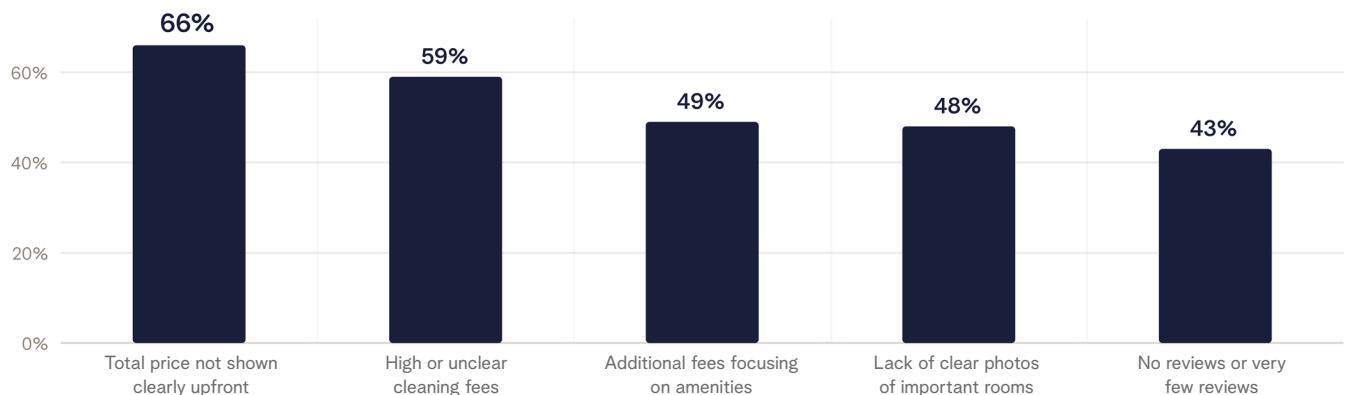
Partner takeaway

Make detailed reviews a habit, not a nice-to-have. Vrbo will automatically ask guests to leave a review after their stay, but a personal message from you a few days after check-out can go a long way in prompting action. Encourage guests to leave recent, specific feedback about cleanliness, amenities and the overall experience – and to share real photos – so future travellers have the proof they are looking for. See [how to drive positive Vrbo guest reviews](#) for practical tips.

What makes or breaks a booking

Once travellers narrow their options, the decision becomes less emotional and more practical. At that point, properties win or lose based on whether they remove friction and make the choice feel straightforward. The findings provide a clear lesson on what **not** to do as a host.

The biggest deal-breakers when booking a holiday rental



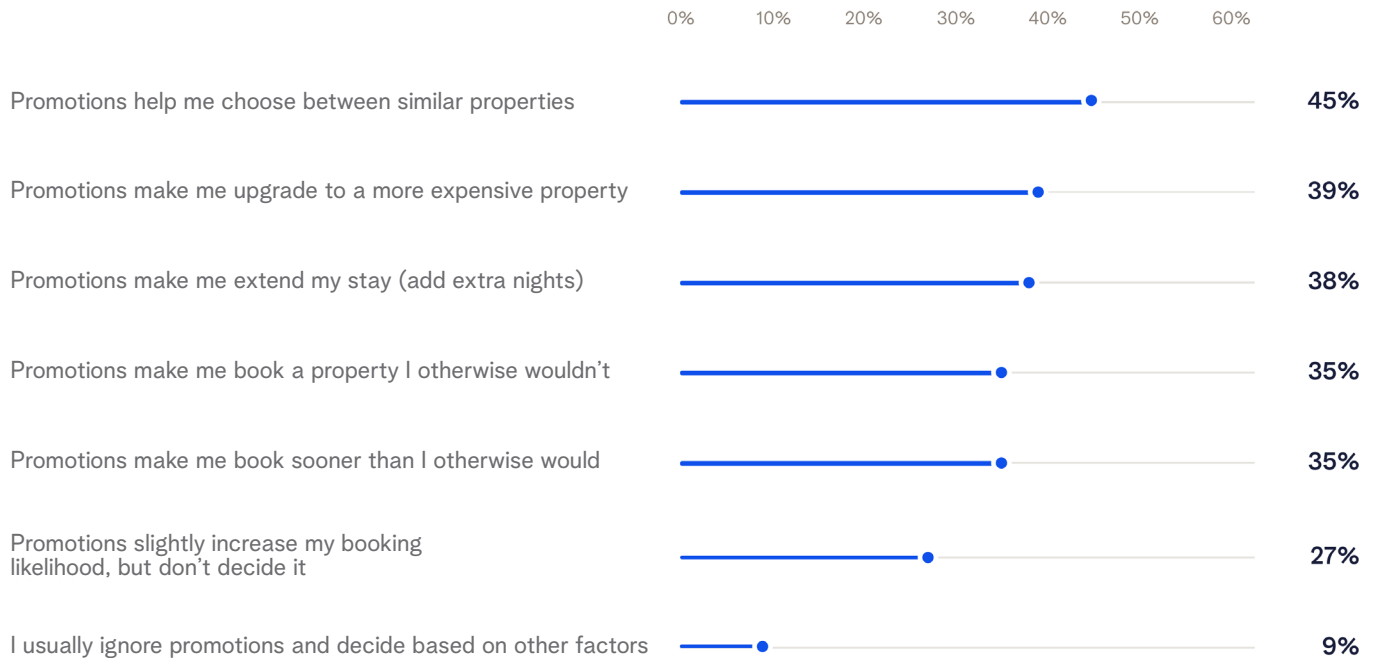
Question 25: For each of the following, please indicate whether it would be a deal-breaker, something that would make you shop around more or not a big issue when booking a holiday rental?

The biggest deal-breakers centre on price clarity. Travellers are likely to walk away when the total price isn't shown clearly up front, when cleaning fees feel high or unclear or when extra fees appear for using amenities. A lack of clear photos of key rooms and few or no reviews can also create enough doubt to stop a booking.

What helps tip the decision in the other direction? Promotions.

91% of travellers are influenced by promotions when booking a holiday rental.

How promotions affect travellers looking to book



Question 27: Thinking about booking a holiday rental property, how do promotions or discounts on that specific property typically affect your booking decision?

Travellers say promotions can help them choose between similar properties, trade up to a more expensive option or extend their stay. In competitive sets where several listings already meet the basics, promotions can provide the final push – especially when they are paired with clear value and low friction.

That dynamic is even more pronounced among Vrbo travellers. **Fifty-four percent say promotions help them choose between similar properties, versus 45% of travellers on average. Nearly half say promotions can lead them to upgrade to a more expensive property (49% vs 39%), extend their stay (45% vs 38%) or even book a property they otherwise wouldn't have considered (45% vs 35%).** In other words, promotions don't just drive cheaper bookings – they can unlock more valuable ones.

Partner takeaway

Remove the friction points that stop bookings. Show the total price up front, keep cleaning and amenity fees simple, make sure key rooms are clearly photographed and continually build fresh reviews that reassure guests. Then use promotions strategically to help your property stand out once the basics are in place – learn how to [master Vrbo promotion strategies](#).



The city traveller

- Looking to be immersed in local neighbourhoods
- Anxious about check-in instructions
- Expects quick response times if issues arise



The beach traveller

- Looking for great locations and luxury/recreational amenities
- Higher expectations around accuracy of listings
- More influenced by promotions

How guest expectations vary by destination



The lake traveller

- Anxious about cancellations and overwhelming house rules
- Looking for ample recreational amenities
- More likely to say lack of badging is a deal-breaker



The mountain/ski traveller

- Looking for well-equipped kitchens
- Appreciates local, personalised recommendations
- Will pay more for properties with stronger trust signals



The countryside traveller

- Looking for strong value and thoughtful extras
- Sees high or unclear cleaning fees as a deal-breaker



Translating insights into success on Vrbo

These findings point to a clear opportunity for Vrbo partners. Travellers have become more specific about what they want, what they trust and what they won't tolerate. The next step is to turn those expectations into actions that improve performance on Vrbo: stronger listings, better-maintained amenities, clearer trust signals and more strategic promotions.

1

Build a stronger listing to reduce traveller anxieties

A stronger listing reduces uncertainty before a guest even books. Make sure the listing clearly communicates bed set-up, bathrooms, amenities, entry details, parking and outdoor spaces, so travellers can quickly tell whether the property works for their trip. Keep photos and listing information tightly aligned to the real experience. Accurate listings aren't just good practice; they directly support trust.

Vrbo data shows that photos matter to travellers also. We see that net-new properties with **25+ photos convert 7–9% higher** than those with fewer photos.²

Offering flexibility can also help reduce hesitation. Travellers who are already worried about uncertainty are more likely to move forward when cancellation terms feel clear and manageable. Want more guidance on flexible cancellation policies? [Check out our blog.](#)

Deliver the core amenities travellers count on

Unique amenities are a major reason travellers choose holiday rentals, but they are also one of the things guests worry most about being broken or not available. Regularly check and maintain the amenities guests depend on most, especially WiFi, heating and air conditioning, kitchen appliances, hot water and entry systems. These aren't minor operational details. They play a major role in whether a stay feels dependable.

When travellers are searching for holiday rental properties across

Vrbo, Expedia and our B2B network, **the most-used amenity filters are pools, hot tubs, parking, air conditioning and free WiFi.**³

However, looking at the filters driving the highest conversion rates points to a slightly different set of priorities: **kitchen, pet-friendly and washer/dryer filters are especially strong conversion signals**, suggesting that the amenities most likely to drive booking are the ones that help travellers picture an easier, more functional stay.⁴

2

3.

Build trust before guests arrive

Trust is built through the basics: strong reviews, responsiveness, clear policies and check-in information, accurate photos and a track record of following through. Use Vrbo tools – including the Vrbo Owner app, guest messaging and email templates – to answer questions quickly and proactively send guests the details they need before they have to ask.

Top-performing hosts already do this well. **Eighty-seven percent of Vrbo's Top 1% of hosts initiate communication before a booked guest even asks a question, whether by providing check-in information, local tips or trip logistics.**⁵

It also helps to protect the booking itself. Taking steps to maintain a strong [honoured booking rate](#) can increase guest confidence and make travellers feel safer committing to the stay.

An achievement you can earn through building that trust is Premier Host status. That recognition goes a long way in signalling to travellers that you consistently deliver quality. Premier Host listings see an average of 2x more page views than non-Premier Host listings, and **Premier Host listings convert page views to bookings at a 76% higher rate than similar non-Premier Host listings.**⁶

Use promotions strategically to tip the booking decision

Promotions can do more than lower the price. They can help travellers choose between similar properties, trade up to a more expensive stay, extend their trip or consider a property they otherwise might not have booked. The opportunity isn't just to offer the same stay for less but to use promotions to unlock better outcomes once the fundamentals are already in place.

Hosts see an average uplift of 15% in incremental net booking value (NBV) across promotion types.⁷

Think about promotions as a way to stand out in a competitive set, not as a race to the bottom. For ideas on how to do that well, [read our blog post](#) on how to master Vrbo promotion strategies.

4.



See how the research plays out in real life

Karl Tretter's hosting style is a strong example of how to put these learnings into practice. Read how he expanded from one property to 14 by making quality a priority from the start.

[Read the blog](#)



¹Unless otherwise noted, data in report is from Expedia Group, Built to Stay Report: The keys to winning traveller trust in holiday rentals, 2026

²Vrbo internal data, 2025–Q1 2026, across 1- to 4-bedroom homes

³Expedia Group internal data, June 2025–June 2026

⁴Ibid.

⁵Vrbo internal data, 2025

⁶Vrbo internal data, 28 Jan–31 Mar 2026

⁷Expedia Group internal data, 2025