

Direct Booking: The Secret to Vacation Rental Success

Everything rental managers and hosts need to know about Direct Booking: What it is, how to use it and why it could be the secret to growing your business revenue.

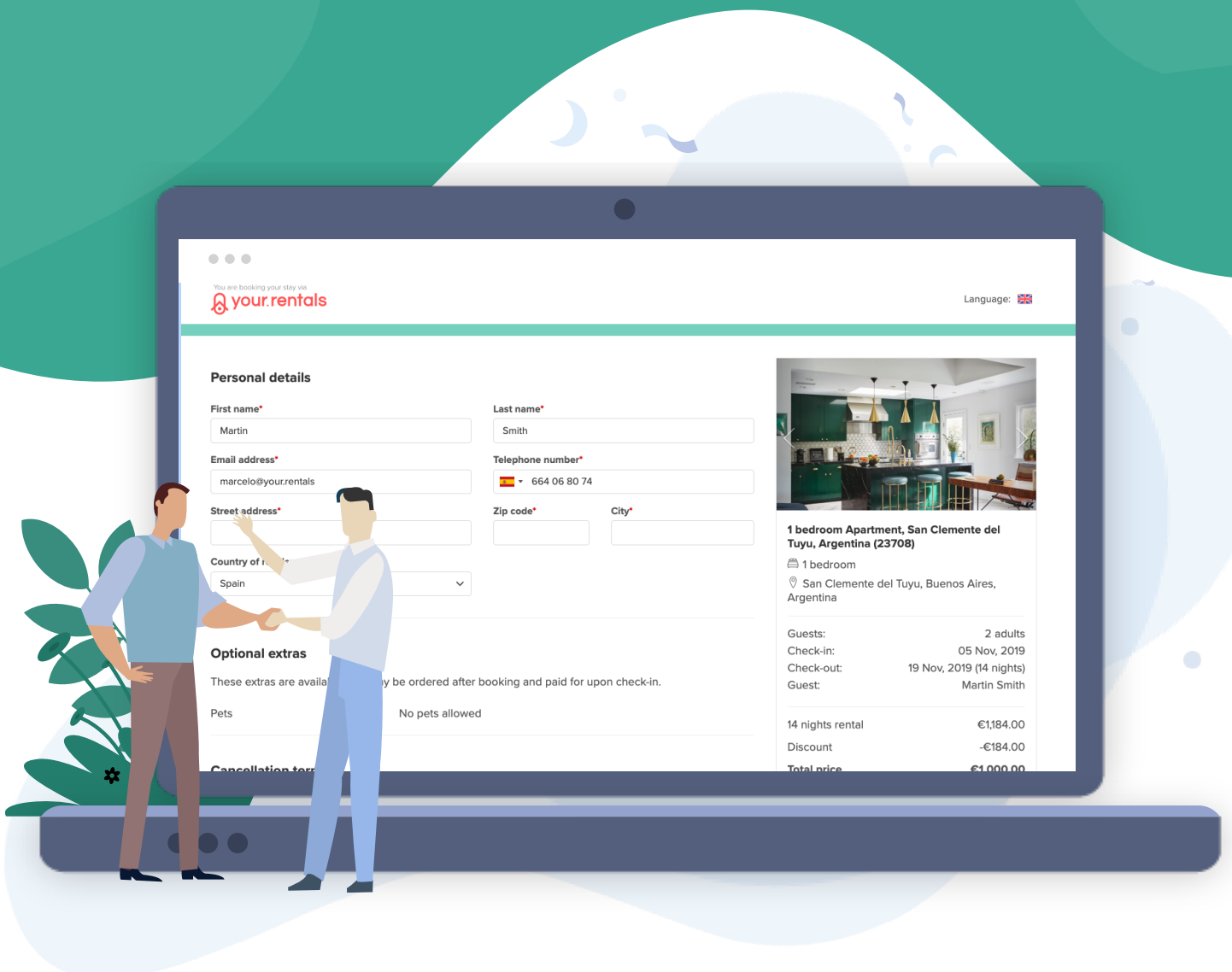




Table of Contents

Introduction	3
What does Direct Booking actually mean?	4
Why is Direct Booking vital in your sales and marketing strategies?	5 - 12
How do you start getting Direct Bookings from guests?	13 - 14
How can you get more Direct Bookings to grow your revenue?	15 - 20





Introduction

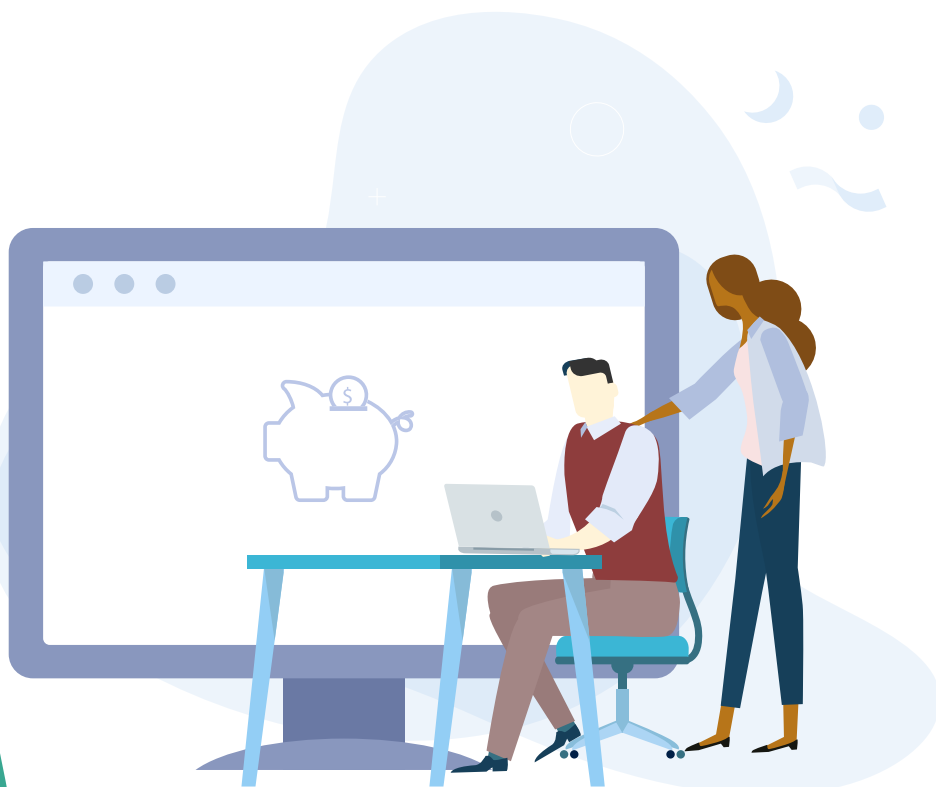
Direct Bookings have become increasingly important to vacation rental managers over the past few years, and that trend shows no signs of slowing down. But what exactly are Direct Bookings, and why should you care about them? And perhaps more importantly, how can you use them to enhance your vacation rental business?

We've compiled this handy book, packed with useful info and actionable advice to help you use Direct Bookings to grow your rental business and increase your revenue.

It covers topics like the key tools you need for a successful Direct Booking strategy, how to optimise your website for search engines and how to use Promos and Offers in a smart, effective manner.

We hope you find it useful!

Regards
your.rentals





What does **Direct Booking** actually mean?

Direct Bookings refer to those that come directly from guests, for example through your own website, via social media or over the phone. This is different from Channel Bookings, which come through a third party like Airbnb or Booking.com.

Whilst Channel Bookings are useful, and should definitely be part of your overall business strategy, they're also subject to sales channel commissions and rules about things like refunds.

Direct Bookings don't rely on a third party, so you have more flexibility when it comes to booking rules and can keep a greater share of booking revenue.



Why is Direct Booking **vital** in your sales and marketing strategies?

Vacation rental managers and hosts are increasingly realising the growing importance of getting more Direct Bookings. With sales channel commissions increasing all the time, and a larger percentage of bookings being charged Online Travel Agencies (OTA) commissions, many vacation rental managers are finding that their profit margins are becoming squeezed. It's never been more important to get more Direct Bookings to complement your channel reservations.



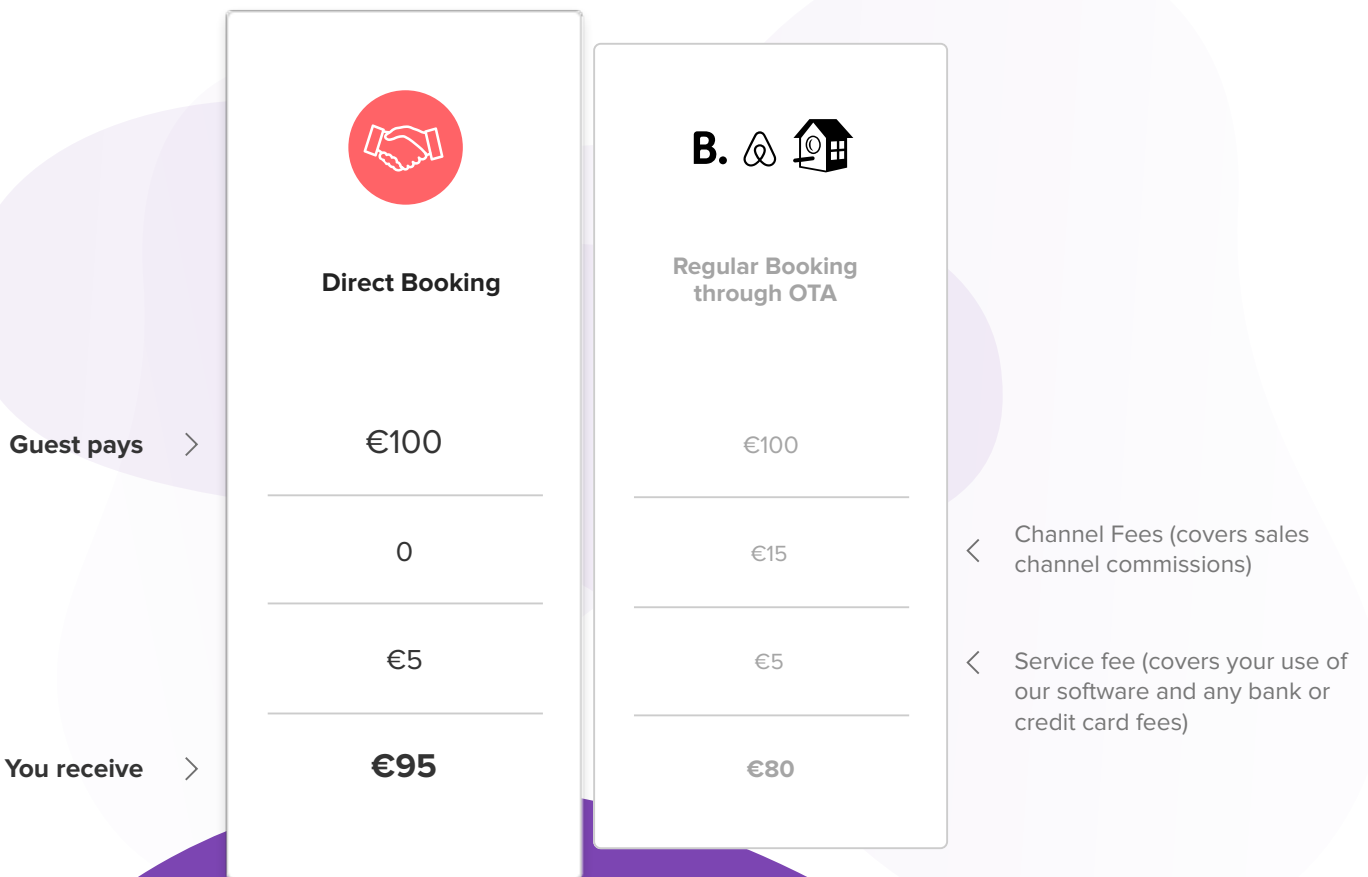
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Reasons why you need Direct Booking

01. Greater share of the revenue

One major advantage of Direct Bookings for property managers is that you don't have to pay sales channel commission, so you can keep a greater share of the revenue.

With the likes of Airbnb, Expedia and Vrbo all well-established sources of vacation rentals, and with Google and other companies moving into the space, direct booking helps vacation rental managers and hosts to increase your margin.





02. Give you an opportunity to offer a lower price to guests

An increasing number of guests are savvier and more well-versed in the art of online bookings than ever before. They'll shop around for a bargain, and if they can find a property cheaper elsewhere, they'll happily forgo the familiarity of a sales channel to save a little cash.

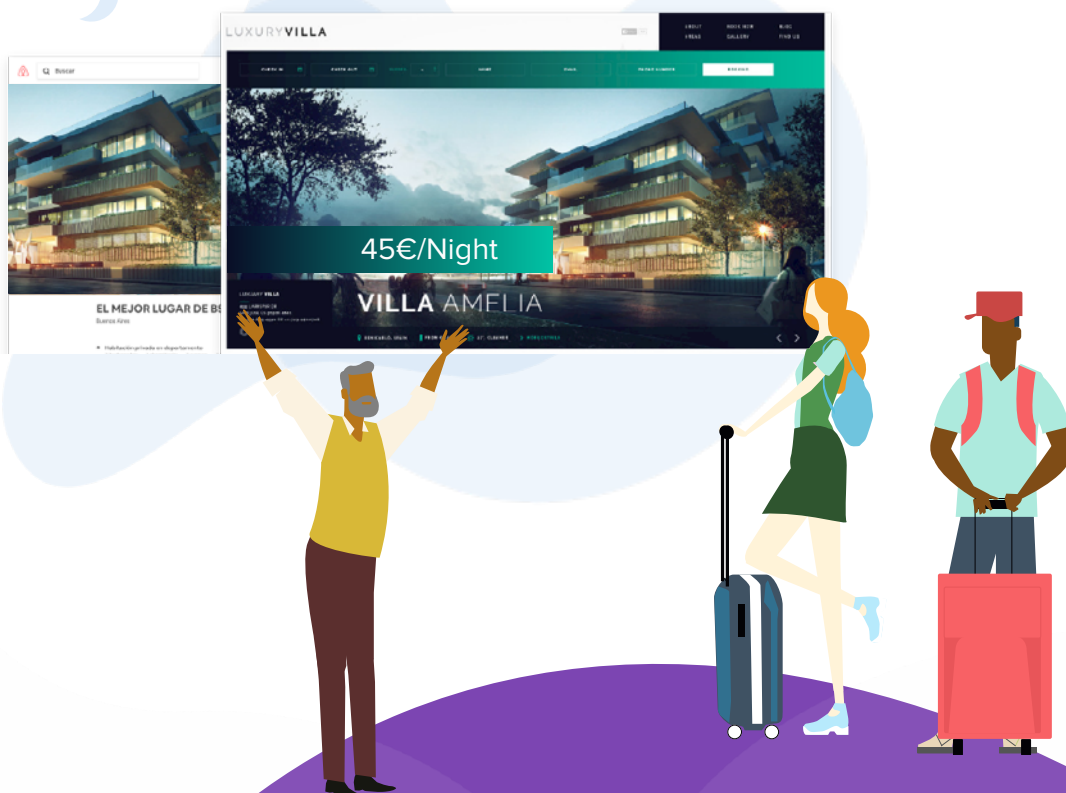
Without sales channel commissions to consider, you can afford to bring your price down for Direct Bookings. In many cases this can justify a lower price being charged to the guest, who will undoubtedly be happy to cut out the booking fees charged by sales channels. A happy guest is your most valuable sales tool!

03. Mitigate the risk of heavy reliance on OTAs

With companies like Airbnb making inroads into direct property management, owners and managers are understandably hesitant to put all of their property management eggs into the proverbial sales channel basket, lest their listings suddenly fall out of favour and start slipping down the search results.

Additionally, Google's increasing interest in the vacation rentals market has certainly caught the attention of many in the business, all of whom are asking: "What exactly does this mean for property managers today?"

Whilst OTAs aren't going anywhere anytime soon, those with one eye on the future are considering the importance of Direct Bookings in their vacation rental property management strategy.





04. Additional revenue stream

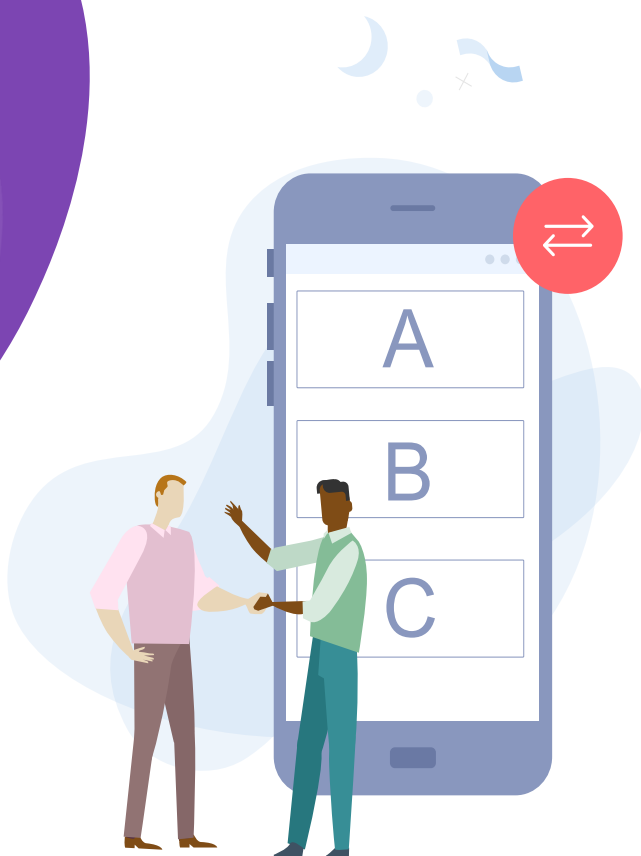
Direct booking adds a new revenue stream and reduces reliance on a single source of bookings. Incorporating Direct Bookings into your property distribution strategy (alongside multiple OTAs and Sales Channels) can be a sensible move if you're looking to increase your share of booking revenue and diversify your sources of bookings. Adding another string to your property management bow can help you maximise your booking revenue in today's increasingly competitive vacation rentals market.



05. Own your guest relationship and data

Direct Bookings as the name suggests are those made directly between a guest and the owner or manager of the property. In the truest definition, there are no middlemen or services between the two parties.

Direct booking allows you to have a more direct engagement and relationship with the guests. It also gives you valuable information that you can use to reach out to those guests in the future to offer repeat bookings.





4

Must-have functions for Direct Booking

01. A booking engine/ widget is a must

Booking a vacation should be an exciting, enjoyable experience but too many vacation rental websites make it actively painful. Too many websites rely on contact forms for guests to make enquiries. Some don't even do this, instead just providing contact information and hoping guests will reach out of their own accord. The reality is, they won't.

If you want to get more Direct Bookings you need to make it easy and simple for your guests to make a booking in the first place. Don't force them to contact you and wait for a response. As a bare minimum, you need a **Booking Engine** on your website. Also known as a **Booking Widget**, this allows guests to select available dates for a given property and make a booking there and then.

Just as importantly, they should be able to make an online payment too – you don't want to be messing around with bank transfers or asking for cash on arrival.

With Your.Rentals, your Booking Widget will be synchronised with your selected channels. That means whenever you receive a booking, we'll block those dates on all the channels you use plus your own website, so you never need to worry about double bookings.

[Get a Booking Widget](#)

Register free. No credit card required



Tip!

If you already have a website (built with WordPress, Joomla, Squarespace, Drupal, Wix or others) you can easily install Your.Rentals booking widget in minutes on your website with no technical skills required.



02. Secure payment is essential

Guests are incredibly security conscious nowadays, especially when it comes to something as important and potentially expensive as a holiday. This means that they need to feel that they can trust that their booking will be handled securely and that there will be no issues with their payment.

Your.Rentals uses [extra secure measures](#) for all bookings, and allows guests to pay by a variety of credit cards and even PayPal for extra convenience and security.

Guests book securely with Your.Rentals' flexible payment options, and you receive your payout directly to your bank or PayPal account.

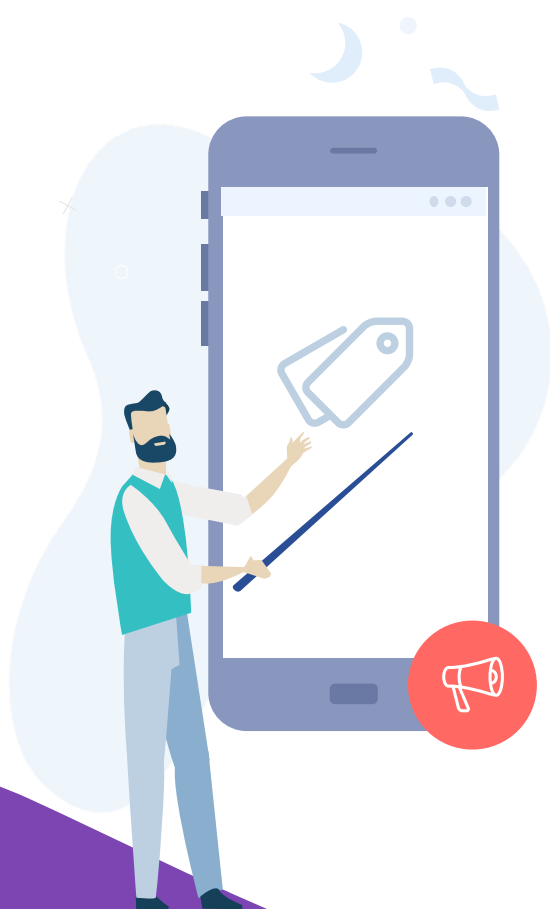


03. Enabling you to send promo and offers is key

Promo Codes. Vouchers. Special Offers. Coupons. Giveaways. Loyalty programmes. Whatever you want to call them, the idea of offering a special deal to encourage customers to make a purchase is nothing new. But when it comes to vacation rentals, using special offers and promotions can be the key to securing those all important Direct Bookings.

Since OTAs have become more powerful and well-known, it can be harder to persuade guests to book directly, especially if they've never stayed with you before. Guests trust the brand power of the major channels, so property managers may need to offer something extra in order to persuade them to book directly.

What if you make Direct Bookings cheaper than channel bookings? Or what if you offer something extra, like free airport transfers or a complimentary welcome basket when guests book directly with you instead of via a channel?





These little things can make a huge difference. Your.Rentals allows you to create Promo Codes and special offers, so you can really reward your guests for coming directly to you. Remember, with Direct Bookings you're not paying any sales channel commission, so you can afford to offer discounted rates and still maintain a greater revenue share.

Encourage your guests to book directly with you by offering different pricing for Direct and Sales Channel bookings.



Offer percentage discounts when guests book directly with you



Offer fixed amount reductions as an incentive or reward.



Create urgency with limited time offers.



What you can do with Your.Rentals' Promo and Offers

Treat your guests to special extras like airport transfer or complimentary breakfast.



Create Promos and Offers to win bookings directly from guests



Offer custom deals and personalised pricing





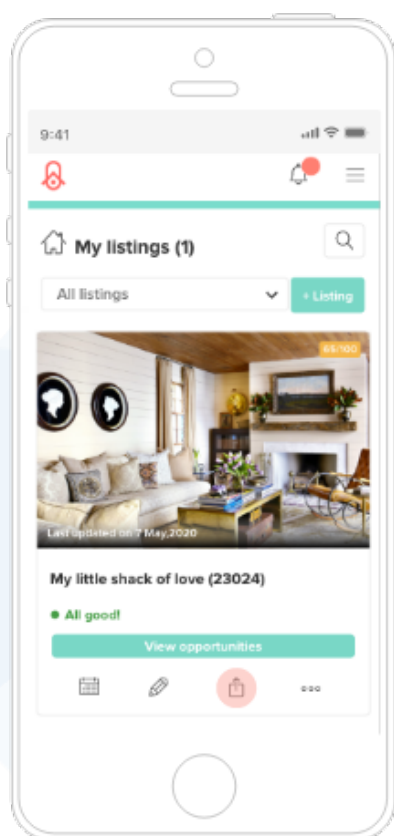
04. Social sharing to give you more opportunities

What if you don't have a website yet? Then the function of publishing your listing on most popular social networks and sharing with your guests in one click is of utmost importance.

Your.Rentals allows you to easily share your listing pages via Social Media, Email, Mobile Messenger, or anywhere with a URL.

By doing this, your guests will be able to see your listing pages in all their glory, with full property details, availability calendars and booking options.

This is especially good for property managers who don't currently have their own website.



You can share links to your listings via your existing marketing channels like WhatsApp, Messenger and email, and still capture online bookings and payments.



Facebook



Twitter



Whatsapp



Messenger



Email



SMS



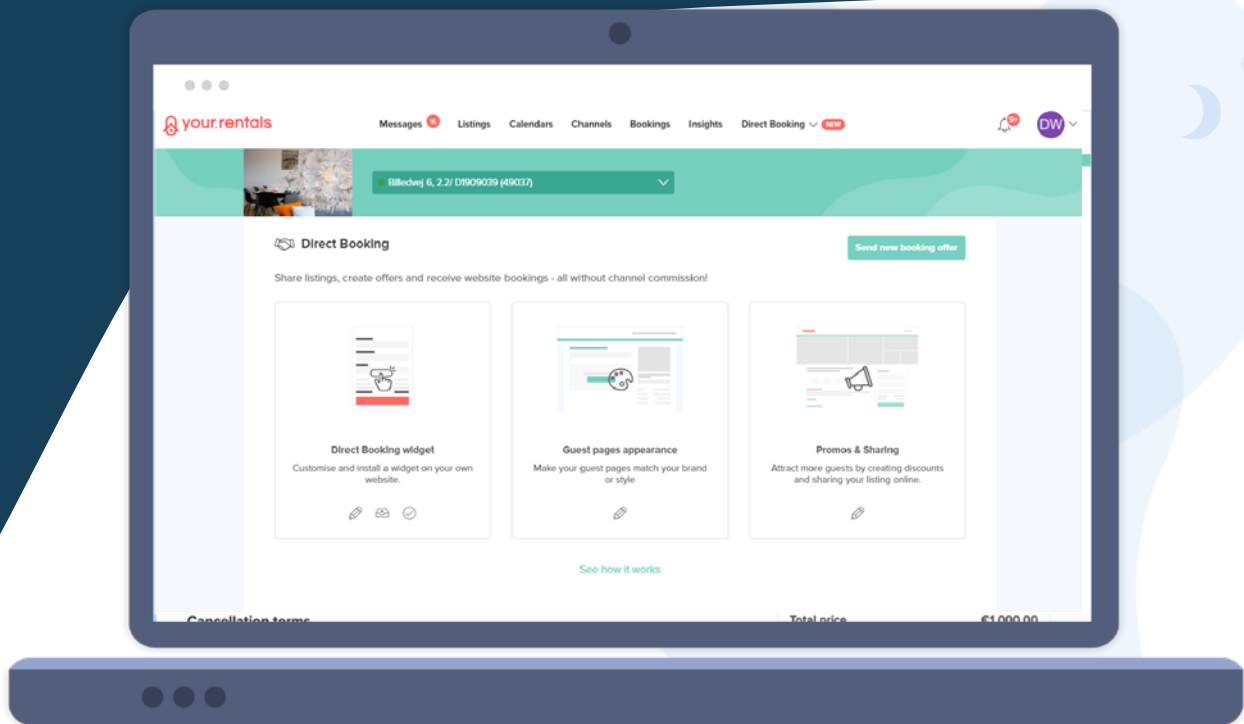
How do you **start** getting Direct Bookings from guests?

No need to be tech savvy!

[Sign Up for Direct Booking](#)

Another factor influencing the return to prominence of Direct Bookings is that it no longer requires a great deal of tech expertise or fiddly paperwork to set up. Adding Direct Booking capabilities to your website can now be as simple as adding a couple of lines of code, and offering guests instant online payment for Direct Bookings is easily done in a matter of minutes.

Services like Your.Rentals give property managers the ability to offer Direct Bookings easily so that guests can book and pay securely in a couple of clicks. These Direct Bookings can then be synced to the property calendar on sales channels so that there's no risk of double bookings.

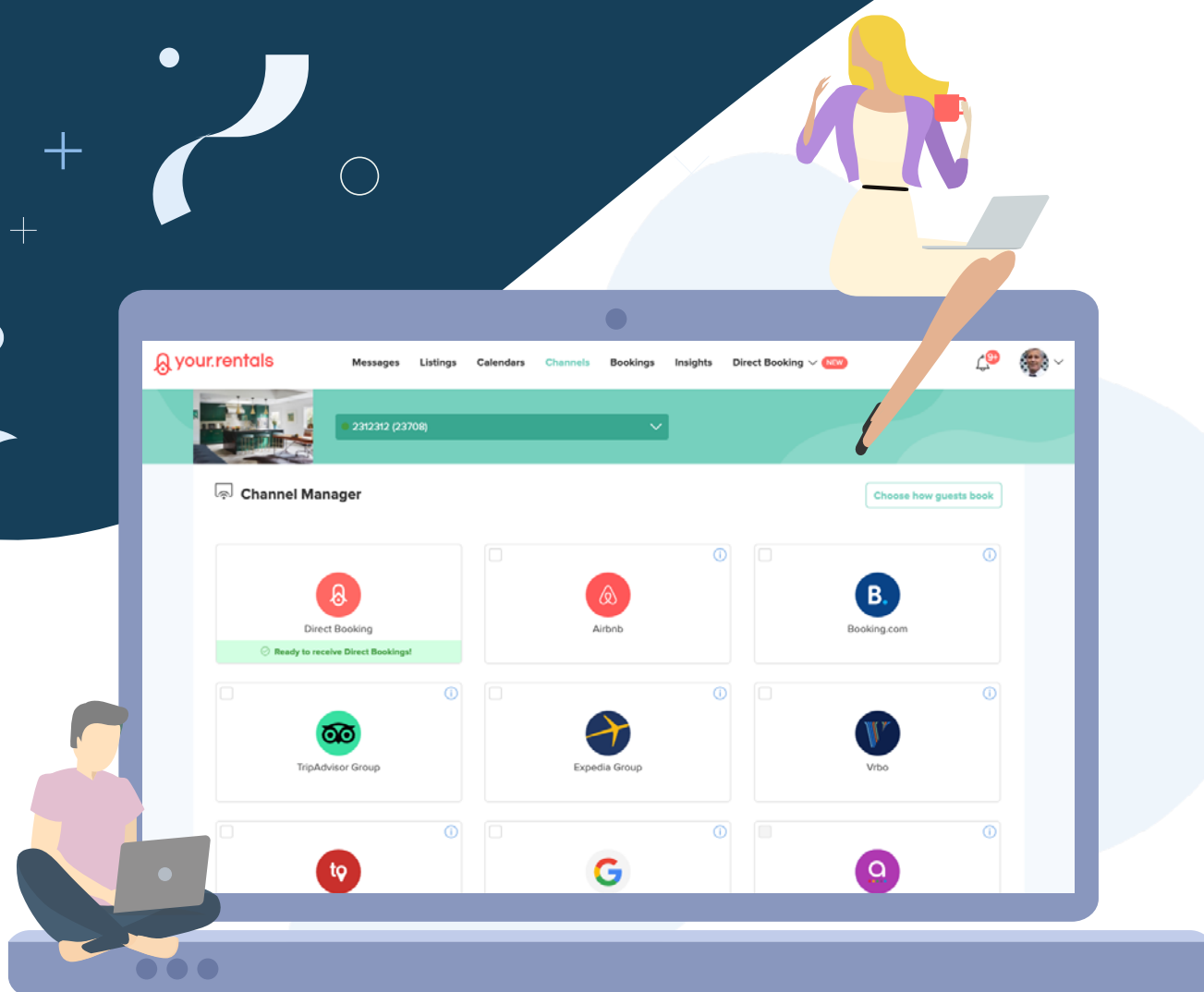




You can create and customise Direct Booking offers using Your.Rentals (adding personalised discounts if you choose), so if you've got a couple of empty nights in your calendar why not send a friendly message to your previous happy customers?

You can also capitalise on word-of-mouth – instead of referring their friends to a sales channel where they made the booking they'll be sending potential customers directly to you.

By using Your.Rentals to process your Direct Bookings, you'll be able to manage your payments, calendars, listings and channels all from one central platform, so you don't need to make a choice between a Direct Booking model and channel distribution. If you'd like to see how easy it is to add Direct Bookings to your management strategy, [sign up today for free](#) and start offering Direct Bookings in just a few minutes!





How can you **get more** Direct Bookings to grow your revenue?

Sourcing Direct Bookings through your website, Facebook, email or even traditional offline marketing can help reduce your reliance on sales channels and lead to an increase in those all-important high-margin bookings.

And if you have a website, boosting your SEO is necessary in order to attract your guests and promote your properties.

In this section, we discuss how to get you more direct bookings.



Boosting SEO for your website

SEO stands for search engine optimization. Google, Yahoo, Bing are just a few examples of search engines, and Search Engine Optimisation is about getting your website listed and visible on their search result page, so you can get free website traffic (organic traffic).

What is organic traffic?

When users are writing keywords on search engines, (for example, “best London vacation rentals”), they will be provided with several search results. The first few links with little blue ad labels are the paid search ads. Under them may appear a box of information, which is the feature snippet. After scrolling down the page, users will see other links related to what they have searched for. These are the organic links. You can indeed create compelling and relevant content, get them indexed by Google (or Bing or Yahoo) and get ranked accordingly.



1

Get Your Pages Indexed By Google

First, to get your pages indexed by Google, you have to make sure that you don't have any broken links such as 404, 500, and that you have a clear website and page structure. When you're ready, submit your sitemap to Google through the Google search console. The search console will then show you the indexing and let you know which page has an error. The better the pages indexed and the less error, the better the website is in terms of SEO.



2

Check Your Website Page Speed

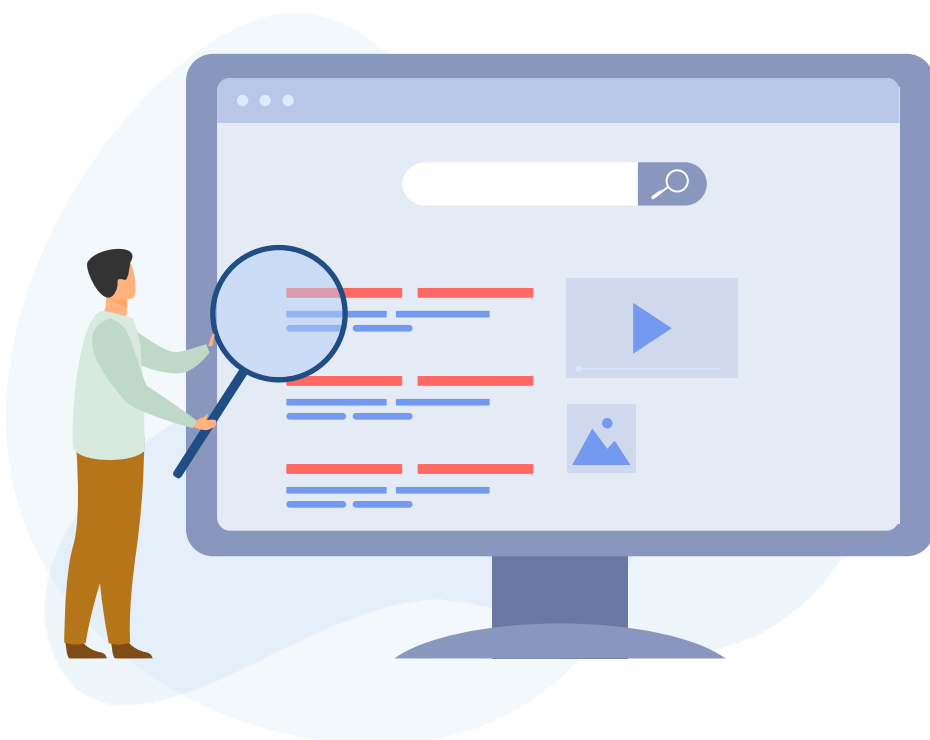
Second, the faster your page loads, the better the SEO ranking is. Therefore, check your website page speed with Google page speed insight. Just type your website address and you will get a score as well as feedback on how to improve your site speed. One way to make your page load faster is to use internet-friendly pictures of your properties. You can find several online tools to optimize your images for the Internet, such as TinyJPG, for example.

Choose The Right Keywords

Another tip is about keywords. Keywords are the search terms your target audience uses to search on search engine and find your webpages. For example, if you manage a vacation rental in London, you would definitely want your website to appear on Google search result page when people search for “London best vacation rentals”. Bear in mind that you should NOT associate all your pages with the same keywords. Otherwise your pages will be competing with each other to get ranked on Google.

Moreover, these popular keywords (“London best vacation rentals”), have probably been used by many other websites. Therefore, it can be very difficult for a new website to be ranked high or on the first page of this page result. That’s why the idea of a keyword group comes into place. After choosing a focused keyword, such as “London vacation rentals”, you need to determine a group of keywords with a similar meaning that your target audience likes to use. If “London vacation rentals” is the focused keyword, then “best London holiday letting”, “London ultimate vacation home”, “London bnb”, “top London cottage” can belong to the same keywords group.

3





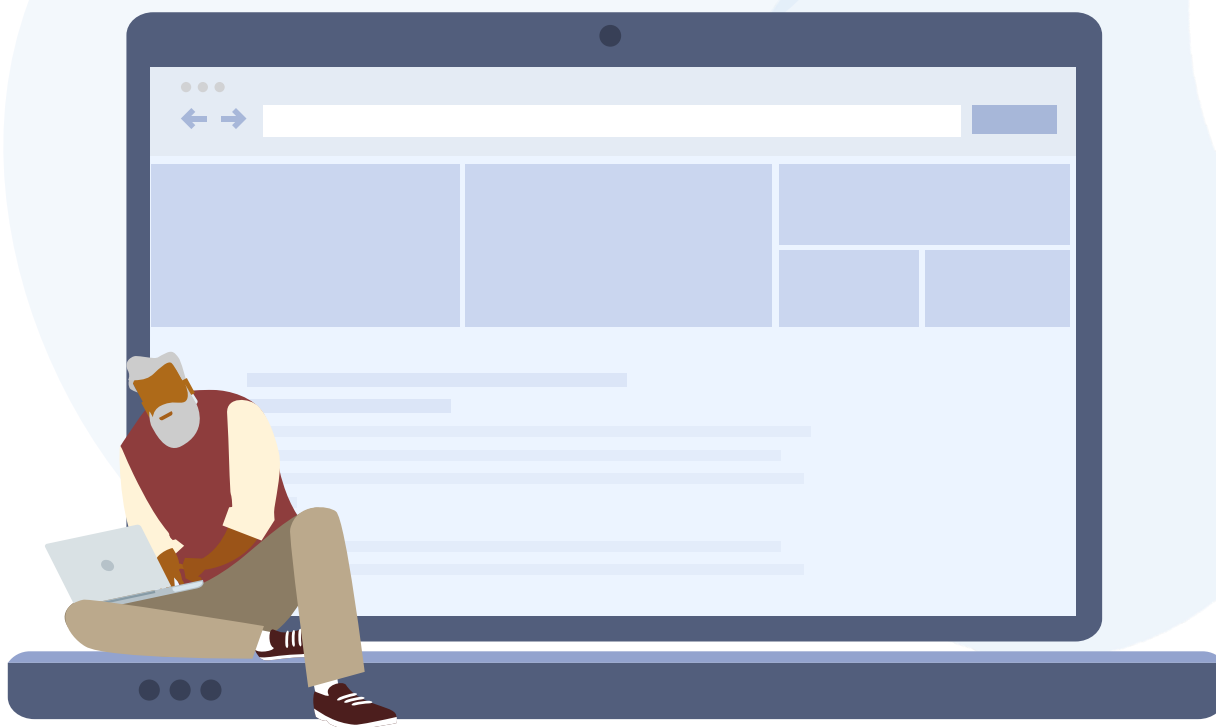
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Use Tools To Get Keywords Ideas

But where to get these keywords ideas? How can you figure out which keyword is less competitive and has a higher chance to be ranked? Google Trends is a free tool that can help you understand the big term and trends. If you have invested in Google ads, you can also utilise its Keyword Planner. Try to test your keywords directly on Google to see many other alternatives which people use at the bottom of the search result page. These free tools are a good starting point. And if you want to invest more, you can try software like SEMrush or Ahrefs to get more ideas of keywords and their corresponding difficulty.

Tip!

If you are using Wordpress as your website platform - install Yoast SEO plugin and follow its recommendations.





5

Spread The Keywords Throughout Your Article

After you confirm the keywords, it's time to write. You need to create blog articles and web pages containing the keywords you have identified. Your pages and articles will then appear in search results for those terms: people will see your website when they are using these keywords. A last tip is to sprinkle your keywords throughout the article or page. Put the keywords in the title, meta description and H1, use synonyms in the article as well as keywords in image alt tags.

This is the reason why a group of keywords is helpful, as you can play with the alternative terms in the article. Remember not to stuff your keywords in your article, otherwise you will get a penalty from Google. Start applying these tips to give your business a better visibility on search engines!

Extra tips!

1. Make sure you include your focus keyword in the page description as close to the beginning as possible. The description text should not exceed 155-160 characters.
2. If you have time/money - invest in marking your key pages (listings and categories) with a schema.org markup. This could be done via Google Tag Manager by utilising JSON-LD notation.

Sounds difficult? It probably is, but SEO efforts payout in the long run. With Your.Rentals Direct Booking you can get an SEO pre-configured Wordpress site. That includes:

- ✓ Booking engine and a payment hub
- ✓ Calendar sync to your other booking channels (through Your.Rentals channel manager)
- ✓ Three responsive Wordpress themes designed for short-term rentals
- ✓ SEO friendly URLs for your listings
- ✓ Title, H1 and description templates with focus on the local vacation rentals SEO
- ✓ Schema.org markup on the listings pages to help search engines better rank your website
- ✓ Technical support with site setup including listings import and basic SEO

Get a Website



Promote Promos to generate more bookings

Creating Promo Codes and Special Offers is also a great way to encourage guests to make Direct Bookings with you instead of through a sales channel. Utilise email marketing, social media or your website to let guests know what offers you have available. For example, you could offer a discount or a free extra to help seal the deal.

If you use a system like Your.Rentals to manage your Direct Bookings, you can create as many Promo Codes as you like, and distribute them however you choose. A great way to attract bookings is to email your previous happy guests with special offers. One suggestion could be to send people on your mailing list a discount Promo Code on their birthdays.

You could also put a banner on your website with your Promo Code. This can be a great way to encourage guests to make a booking with you instead of going through a Sales Channel. For example, you could offer Free Breakfast to everyone who books directly with you. Just make sure you get that message out there!

Here are tips that make your Promo Codes work!

1

Create urgency with time sensitive offers

Humans hate missing out on cool stuff. Create a Promo Code with a limited validity period to increase the urgency. If you tell people that they've got a month to use a code, they'll probably forget. But if it's only valid for 48 hours, they're much more likely to jump on their computer and act fast so they don't miss out!

In Your.Rentals you can decide whether or not to set a time limit on your special offers. You might be happy to let an offer run forever, or create urgency by making it time sensitive.





2

Reward your best customers

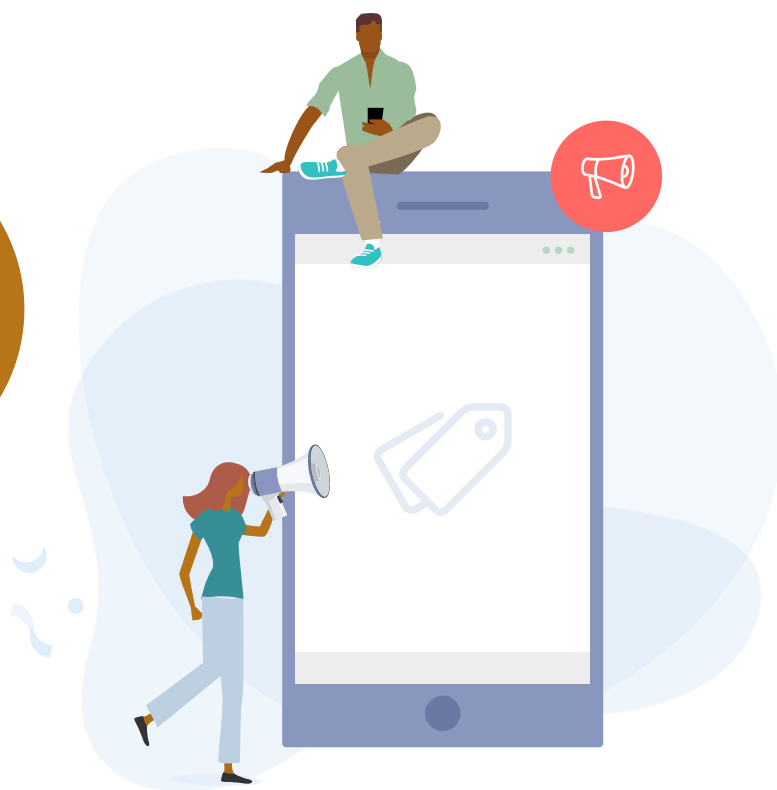
Reward loyalty in your best customers by creating Promos just for them. Maybe you decide to offer an especially generous discount for guests who have made several bookings in the past. Maybe you choose to thank guests who gave you a great review with a special offer for their next booking. Or even the other way around – if you've had an unhappy guest you could offer them a little something as an apology.

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By creating a unique code and distributing it only to selected guests, you're able to really personalise the service you offer. Remember, the personal touch can really help differentiate you from the major sales channels when it comes to guest experience. **Offer something different.**

Property Managers want repeat bookings but guests often want variety. One way to secure repeat bookings from guests is to create Promo Codes for properties they've not visited yet. If you've got multiple properties, why not encourage previous guests to try a different one with a special offer?

In Your.Rentals you can choose to apply your Promo Codes to all your properties, or to specific listings if you prefer. That way, you have more control over your occupancy distribution across your portfolio.



There's nothing wrong with advertising your properties on multiple major sales channels – in fact, it's still the number one way to increase your audience and grow your booking potential. But more and more vacation rental managers are realising the benefits of balancing channel bookings with direct bookings in order to increase revenue share and provide a more personal touch to their guests. By creating unique special offers, you can encourage guests to book directly with you and increase your revenue with Direct Bookings.

About us

Your.Rentals was founded in Denmark in 2016 and is now based in Sweden, Vietnam, and Gran Canaria. We work with thousands of property managers in hundreds of locations worldwide in multiple different languages.

We're here to make managing vacation rentals simple, effective and profitable by providing a complete solution for all aspects of your property management business.

Let's make renting simple.

[Sign Up for Direct Booking](#)

Register free. No credit card required



Contact us

