

Your Glamping Startup Blueprint

How a \$3,000 Tent Turned Into a Six-Figure Business

Rob Abasolo's first glamping tent had an ROI of 300% in Year 1, measured against his roughly \$10,000 all-in setup cost, not the \$3,000 tent alone.

A single safari tent costs less than a used car and can out-earn a house. This blueprint breaks down the math behind why.

The Math That Started It

Rob's first glamping tent cost \$3,000, with an all-in setup near \$10,000. It stayed fully booked for its first 3 months and grossed about \$5,049.50 a month. Year 1 profit landed close to \$30,000, a 300 percent return on the roughly \$10,000 he put into the full setup.

Why Glamping Outperforms Traditional Real Estate

Long-term rentals average around a 10% cash-on-cash return in a good year. Glamping units regularly run 50-200% because the entry cost is a fraction of a house, but the nightly rate isn't.

Where the Opportunity Is

National park gateway towns are consistently underserved. Rob saw this firsthand in Gatlinburg, Tennessee, right outside the Great Smoky Mountains: 12.1 million visitors came through in 2020, against roughly 3,000 Airbnb listings in the entire town at the time. That gap between tourism demand and lodging supply is the pattern worth hunting for in any market. Gatlinburg's own listing count has since grown to somewhere between roughly 2,300 and 4,000 Airbnb listings depending on the data source, so check current supply directly in whatever market you're evaluating rather than assuming the same gap Rob found in 2020 still holds today.



Check Permitting Before You Check Pricing

Rob doesn't run glamping in his own home market of Joshua Tree because it's difficult to permit there, despite being one of the best short-term rental markets in the country. Glamping structures often get classified differently than a standard house or condo, sometimes as temporary structures, sometimes under camping-specific ordinances that don't exist for traditional STRs. Confirm what's legal on your specific land before you spend a dollar on equipment.

What It Costs to Start

- Basic tent alone: \$3,000 to \$5,000
- Realistic all-in setup, DIY and resourceful: \$10,000 to \$12,000
- Realistic all-in setup, hiring out decks, bathrooms, and trades: \$16,000 to \$20,000

What About the Land?

You don't need to own land to start. Renting someone else's works, and it's how a lot of hosts get their first unit up without a mortgage attached to it. Two structures worth knowing:

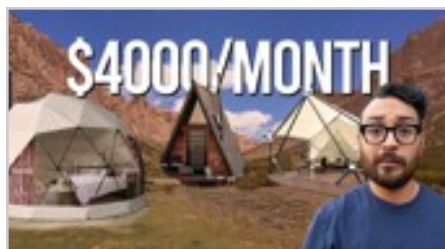
Revenue share. You pay the landowner a percentage of what each stay brings in, typically 10% to 20%, instead of a fixed monthly rent. This is the lower-risk option if you're not sure yet how the property will perform, you're not on the hook for rent during a slow month.

Flat monthly rate. You pay the landowner a set amount regardless of bookings, similar to a standard land lease. This works better once you have a track record and know roughly what the site will earn, since you keep 100% of revenue above the flat rate.

Either way, get it in writing. A handshake deal on someone else's land is the fastest way to lose a season's worth of work if the relationship changes.

Real Comps From This Video

WATCH THE VIDEO



A teardrop trailer in Moab, Utah:
Build cost roughly \$30,000 to \$45,000, charging \$109 to \$130 a night, running close to 90 to 100 percent occupancy, grossing an

estimated \$35,000 to \$55,000 a year depending on the season.

How to Comp Your Own Market in 5 Minutes

- Go to airbnb.com/stays/camping or airbnb.com/stays/campsites, then search your target city or the nearest national park, state park, or national forest. These pages surface tents, treehouses, and glamping setups directly, without depending on a filter that may not show up in every market.
- Don't touch the "type of place" filter. It's now limited to House, Apartment, Guest House, or Hotel. Turning it on hides tents, yurts, and treehouses from your results.
- Open a listing's calendar and count the booked (gray) dates.
- Multiply booked nights by that listing's nightly rate to estimate their monthly gross.
- Check the calendar again 30, 60, and 90 days out. A listing booked solid next weekend but empty 3 months from now tells a different story than one already booked out that far, and that gap is worth knowing before you commit to the same market.
- Do this across 3 to 5 listings in your target market before you commit to a unit type or location.



Run Your Own Numbers (Single Unit)

	Example (Teardrop Trailer)	Your Setup
Unit + setup cost	\$40,000	
Est. nightly rate	\$100+	
Target occupancy	80%	
Est. gross annual revenue	~\$29,200	
Monthly note (financed)	\$625	
Monthly profit potential	~\$1,500	
Annual profit potential	~\$18,000	

5 units at this profit level clears \$90,000 a year, a full-time income built from equipment that costs less than a car.

The 2026 Reality Check

Tent, teardrop trailer, and off-grid equipment costs have risen since 2020, and financing rates are higher than the 4 percent used in this example. These figures prove the underlying math works, but tent, trailer, and financing costs have moved since 2020. Price out your specific unit and financing terms before committing.



The Host Camp Take

A \$3,000 tent outperforming a house comes down to entry cost. Glamping compresses the capital between you and your first dollar of revenue, and that compression is the whole advantage.

Disclaimer: These figures come from 1 host's real results and comps observed on live listings. Glamping income varies by market, permitting, season, and execution. Check local zoning and short-term rental rules before purchasing any unit, some markets restrict or ban this use.

What to Do Next

You don't need a big down payment to get into short-term rentals. A single unit costing less than a car can outperform a much larger property, and the model scales unit by unit instead of requiring a new mortgage each time.

Rob Abasolo and Kai Andrew built Host Camp into the world's biggest resource for short-term rentals. Visit our website for blogs, newsletters, tools, and personally mentored coaches, all built to help hosts go from managing 1 property to managing a real portfolio.

We'll look at your market and budget and tell you honestly whether a glamping setup makes sense for you.

Book your complimentary strategy call here →