The Blueprint For How to Analyze an Airbnb Deal

A Step-by-Step Way to Know What a Property Will Make

Hey, it's Rob. This is how I analyze a short-term rental before I make an offer, using a model I've run thousands of times.

Analysis paralysis is real. I get it too. So I run the numbers once, run them again, then stop. This blueprint walks you through my process, from the first Zillow search to a number you trust and a yes or no.

Set your criteria first. If a property hits them, make the offer. I've put in hundreds of offers and had around 10 accepted. Hesitate and someone else gets the house.

What You'll Do

- **Research the market:** Size up the area and audit the competition on Airbnb. (Steps 1 and 2)
- **Size and comp the house:** Pick the right guest count and run comps. (Steps 3 and 4)
- **Test the revenue:** Check seasonality, run the Rentalizer, and check it by hand. (Steps 5 and 6)
- **Build the deal:** Add up the costs, run 3 scenarios, and set a minimum return. (Steps 7 and 8)

The Example Deal in This Blueprint

$285,000	$106,500	$67,800	20%
Purchase price	AirDNA yearly revenue estimate	Cash to close	My minimum return

From my January 2022 video, "This Is Exactly How Much Your Property Will Make on Airbnb."

The 8 Steps

1. Size up the area.

Start on Zillow or Redfin. Check the price points, how many homes are hot, how long they sit, and how inflated the prices are. You're learning what a normal deal costs here before you analyze a single house.

2. Audit the competition.

Open Airbnb and browse the area like a guest. Look at:

- **Photos and copy:** Are the photos professional and the listing copy any good?
- **Calendars:** Are they getting booked?
- **"Rare find" clusters:** A pocket of 3 or 4 listings with the badge in the same neighborhood means something is pulling guests there.
- **Design:** Target and IKEA, or high-end?

You're hunting for competition that isn't dialed in. Bad photos and an empty house mean you can step in and win.

3. Right-size the house.

My rules: 2 guests per bedroom at a minimum, and no more than 5 guests per bathroom. Then raise the guest count by 1 at a time in AirDNA and watch the revenue. On the 4-bedroom house in my example, 8 guests earned about $106,000 and 12 guests earned about the same. I sleep 8. More guests means more utilities, more wear, and more linens to replace.

4. Run your comps on Airbnb.

Search the town and leave the dates blank, because dates hide any place that already has a booking. Set the guest count and bedrooms to match your house, and stay close to your address. Then check each comp:

- **Reviews:** I want at least 25. 50 is great.
- **Rating:** A rating in the mid 4s means guests are finding problems you can fix.
- **Calendar:** Count the booked nights in the next 3 months and multiply by the nightly rate.
- **Review dates:** Monthly reviews mean a full-time rental. Reviews months apart can mean a second home.
- **Quality:** If a comp is nicer than your house, expect to earn less than it does.

Update: Airbnb now shows guests the total price with fees in search, so compare comps on the total price a night.

5. Check seasonality before you panic.

A slow month tells you about the season. It says nothing about the market. AirDNA's seasonality chart shades each day blue for low and red for high. In my example, June through August carried the year: 1 comp with 10 bedrooms booked 54 nights at about $2,100, around $113,000 in 3 months. The other 9 months may only cover expenses.

6. Run the Rentalizer, then check it by hand.

Use the AirDNA Rentalizer as a first temperature check. It's an average, so don't live or die by it. Look at revenue growth over 2 years, the seasonal forecast, and the top 5 comps, and open each comp on Airbnb to see if a regular host could match it. Then do the math yourself. In my example, 1 comp averaged $425 a night. At 80% occupancy, that's about $124,000 a year. AirDNA said $151,000. A gap that size means keep digging.

7. Build the numbers.

Add the down payment, closing costs, remodel, setup costs, furnishing, and legal fees to find your cash to close. Then add what it costs to run:

- **Closing costs:** I use 3% to stay conservative.
- **Remodel:** Stay under $15,000. Paint, floors, maybe the exterior. Skip kitchen and bathroom remodels.
- **Furnishing:** $10 a square foot. For 2,200 square feet, that's $22,000.
- **Mortgage payment:** Get a real loan quote. As of November 12, 2026, Freddie Mac's 30-year average was 7.11%.
- **Airbnb fee:** 15.5% of the booking subtotal, taken from your payout. The subtotal includes your cleaning fee. Skip this line if your revenue number already has the fee taken out. AirDNA's FAQ says its estimate subtracts platform fees.
- **Maintenance:** 4% to 10% a year. Pad it.
- **Cleaning:** $150 to $200 a clean on a 4-bedroom.
- **Stays a month:** I typically host 8 to 12. In longer-stay markets like the Poconos or the Smokies it's closer to 6 or 7. I used 8.
- **Management fee:** 15% to 30%, only if you hire a manager.

AirDNA's revenue number includes cleaning fees and isn't profit. If you're new, subtract your cleaning costs.

8. Run 3 scenarios and set your minimum.

Run good, better, and best. Change the nightly rate, the occupancy, and the number of stays. In AirDNA you can pick a percentile for your occupancy. The 50th is an average host, the 75th is a strong host, and the 90th is where I live. If you're new, use the 50th or the 75th.

My minimum is a 20% cash-on-cash return. That's your yearly profit divided by the cash you put in. Then stress test the deal at 65%, 60%, and 55% occupancy. If it still works, make the offer. Don't chase 70%, 80%, or 100% returns. Pad your numbers so a bad year doesn't wreck you.

Before You Make an Offer

- **Short-term renting allowed?** Check the zoning, the city or county permit rules, and the HOA before you fall in love.
- **Which loan fits?** A second-home loan can go up to 90% of the price, so 10% down. But you have to occupy the home for part of the year, keep exclusive control of it, and you can't use the rental income to qualify. A management company that controls your calendar can break those rules. If you won't use the house yourself, ask about an investment-property loan.
- **Re-run the numbers:** Use Airbnb's current fee and a real loan quote.
- **Insurance:** Ask your agent what covers short-term guests before you close.
- **AirDNA plans:** The Rentalizer has a limited complimentary plan. Check the pricing page for paid plans.

Run Your Own Numbers

	Example (January 2022)	Your numbers
Purchase price	$285,000	
Cash to close	$67,800	
Mortgage rate	3.5%	
Airbnb fee	3%	
Est. gross annual revenue	$106,500	
Yearly profit	$55,170	
Cash-on-cash return	81.37%	
Payback	About 14.7 months	
Target cash-on-cash return	20%+	

The example uses the fee and loan rate from when I filmed it. For your numbers, use Airbnb's current fee and a real loan quote.

The Host Camp Take

A deal clears when it still works after you pad the numbers. I run the cases, pad the numbers, and make the offer when the property clears my minimum with room to spare.

Disclaimer: This guide reflects my approach to short-term rentals. Results vary by market, financing, and execution. Talk to a licensed real estate professional, a lender, and a CPA, and run your own numbers before buying.

What to Do Next

You've now got the process I use to analyze a property. Running the numbers alone is harder than it looks, and a second set of eyes catches what you miss.

Kai and I 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 run your numbers with you and tell you straight if your deal makes sense.

Book your complimentary strategy call here →