

# Making Your House Work: Offer It as a Vacation Rental

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You don't need a second home to cash in on the burgeoning vacation-rental market. "It's becoming more popular for people to vacate their primary homes for renters," said Christine Karpinski, author of "How to Rent Vacation Properties by Owner" (Kinney Pollack, \$26).

The recession is making vacation rentals more appealing to travelers because they're typically less expensive than resort hotels. So you should have no problem finding paying guests.

Annette O'Brien, 64, began renting out her five-acre property in Stowe, Vt., 30 years ago. At first she made it available only during winter vacations. But over the years, O'Brien has outfitted her home with an eye toward attracting guests -- adding a game room, two Jacuzzis, an outdoor hot tub and a 40-inch flat-screen TV. She stockpiles towels and extra sheets, and she brings in a cleaning crew.

Before guests arrive, O'Brien spends about six hours packing up and locking away personal items. And while her five-bedroom colonial is occupied -- guests have stayed from one night to seven weeks -- she either vacations herself or rents a smaller place nearby.

O'Brien spends about \$2,000 a year advertising her house on 20 different Web sites, including her own (HouseinStowe.com). HomeAway (at <http://www.homeaway.com>), the most popular vacation-rental site, charges \$329 to list a property with up to 12 photos for a year.

O'Brien's efforts have a big payoff: Depending on the season, she can rake in from \$400 to \$1,000 a night.

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