

FREE GUIDE FOR COTTAGE, CABIN AND RENTAL OWNERS

Listing Photo Shot Guide

by Devanthea House · Listing Photos

How to photograph your place with just a phone, so it looks bright, true and inviting on your website, Airbnb, Vrbo and Booking.com. One afternoon, no special gear.

When to shoot | Room prep checklist | Phone setup | 4 rules, with examples | Walk-through route and shot list | Common mistakes | Professional editing | Walkthrough videos

Want it done for you? Take the photos on your phone and we professionally edit them. Email **devanthea.co@gmail.com** or visit **devanthea-house.pages.dev** for details and pricing.

WHY IT MATTERS

Guests decide with their eyes first

Before anyone reads your description or checks your reviews, they scroll through your photos. Better photos are one of the few things you can change this week that guests notice right away.

+9%

higher occupancy for Airbnb homes after professional, verified photos were added

Zhang et al., Management Science (2022): 7,423 properties over 16 months

+19%

more bookings for listings that used Airbnb's professional photography

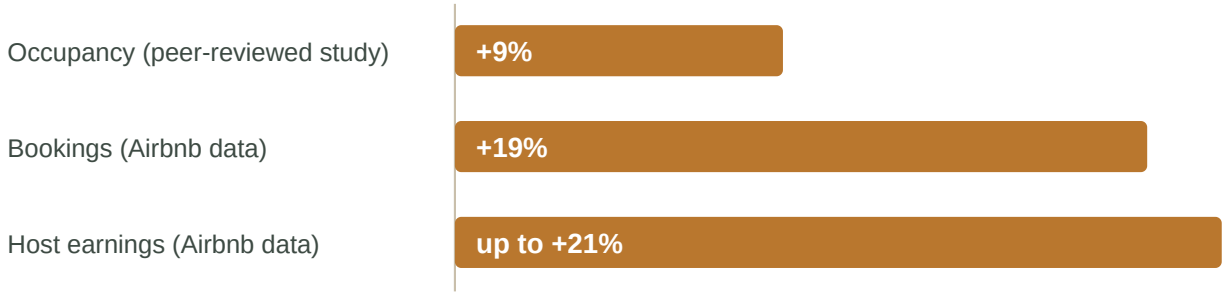
Airbnb, 14,700+ listings worldwide, 2024 to 2025

+21%

up to 21% more host earnings with professional photos

Airbnb, same comparison

Measured lift from professional-quality photos



These studies measured professional shoots. Good light, straight angles and careful editing are what those photos have in common.

WHAT GUESTS READ INTO PHOTOS

Guests judge the host by the photos. Dark or careless shots suggest the place is run the same way.

- ☐ **Bright** says clean and cared for.
- ☐ **Wide** shows the real size and layout, so guests trust it.
- ☐ **Straight and sharp** looks professional, like a business that runs well.
- ☐ **Current** means what they see is what they get, which protects your reviews.

WHY IT PAYS FOR A SMALL OWNER

Airbnb reports that 85% of hosts who paid for its professional photography earned the cost back with a single night's stay. For a family cottage, a handful of extra bookings in a season goes a long way.

The good news: most of what makes a photo work is light, angle and prep, which this guide covers. Professional editing does the rest.

Sources: S. Zhang, D. Lee, P. V. Singh, K. Srinivasan, "What Makes a Good Image? Airbnb Demand Analytics Leveraging Interpretable Image Features," Management Science 68(8), 2022. Airbnb, Pro Photo Program and Help Center figures (14,700+ listings with professional photography vs. 62,300+ without, 2024 to 2025; cost recovery based on 39,270 hosts).

STEP 1

Before you shoot

Guests compare photos before they read a single word. Twenty minutes of prep does more for your photos than any editing.

PICK THE RIGHT TIME

- [ ] Shoot indoors on a bright day, around late morning to early afternoon, when the rooms get the most daylight.
- [ ] Shoot the outside in the first or last hour of daylight for soft, warm light.
- [ ] Open every blind, shade and curtain.
- [ ] Turn on lamps and ceiling lights in any room that still has dark corners. Use bulbs of the same colour in a room.
- [ ] Turn the flash off. Turn TVs and ceiling fans off.

SET UP YOUR PHONE

- [ ] Clean the lens with a soft cloth.
- [ ] Turn on the grid (gridlines) in your camera settings.
- [ ] Hold the phone sideways (landscape) for every room photo.
- [ ] Use the normal 1x lens. Save 0.5x for very small rooms like a bathroom. Rooms that look bigger than they are can cost you accuracy stars.
- [ ] Turn on HDR if your phone has it, so windows and rooms both show.

GET EACH ROOM READY

- [ ] Make beds with smooth, light-coloured linens. Plump and line up pillows.
- [ ] Clear counters, tables and nightstands. Leave one or two nice touches, such as a bowl of fruit or a plant.
- [ ] Hide cords, chargers, remotes, bins, cleaning supplies, toiletries and personal photos.
- [ ] Close toilet lids. Hang towels neatly. Open or neatly close shower curtains.
- [ ] Straighten rugs and furniture so the room faces its best feature, like the fireplace or the view.
- [ ] Outside: sweep the porch, set out chairs, uncover the grill, move cars and bins out of sight.
- [ ] Remove anything seasonal you will not have all year, so photos stay accurate.

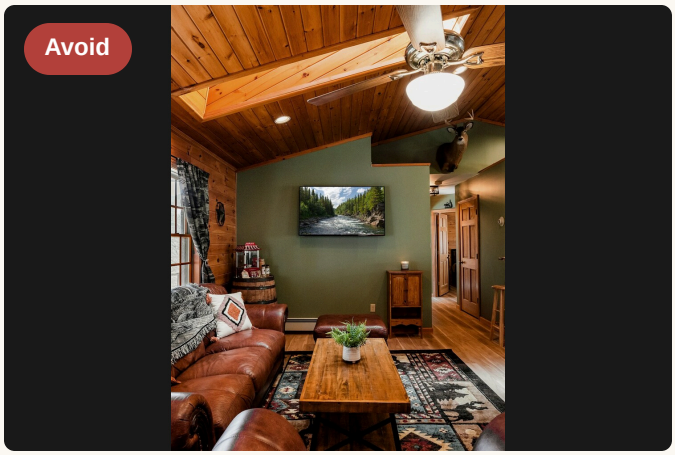
Keep it honest. Show the place as guests will find it. Bright and tidy is good. Hiding a problem or showing furniture that is not there leads to bad reviews.

STEP 2

Four rules that make the biggest difference

1 Hold the phone sideways

Booking sites show photos wide. In search results they are often cropped to squares, and listing pages display them in landscape. A tall photo gets cut off or shrunk with empty bars on each side.



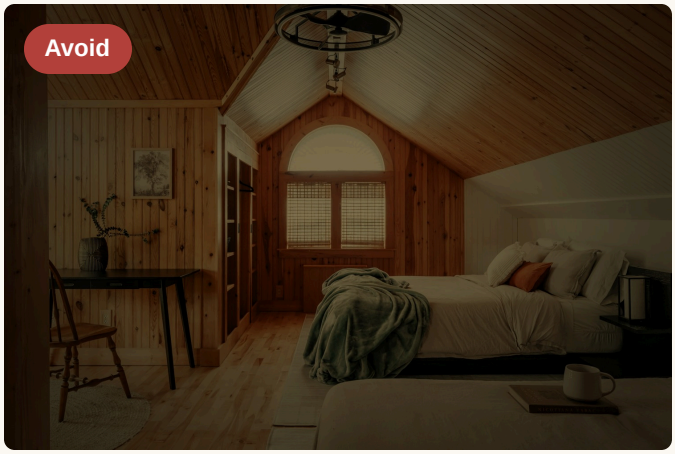
Tall phone shot: the site fills the sides with empty space.



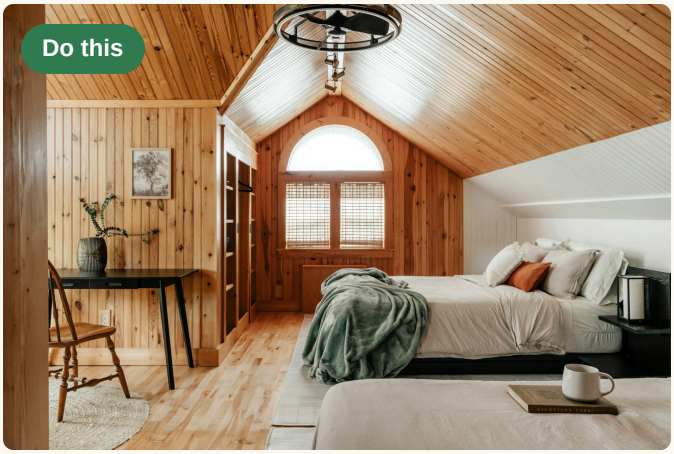
Wide shot: the whole room, the kitchen and the doorway all show.

2 Bring in the light

Dark, orange photos make rooms look small and tired. Shoot when the room is brightest, open everything up, and turn the lamps on to lift the corners.



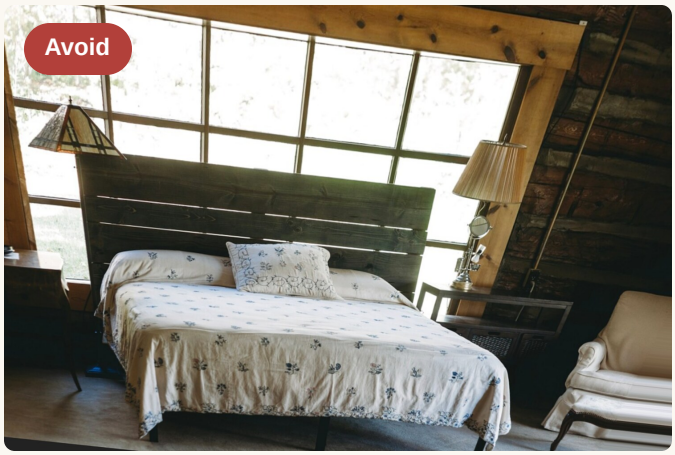
Evening light, shades half closed: dim, orange, corners lost.



Daylight plus lamps: bright, clean colours, every corner visible.

3 Keep the phone level

Hold the phone at chest height and keep it straight, not tilted down. Line up a door frame or wall corner with a grid line. Straight walls make a room look larger and well cared for.



Phone tilted: walls lean and the room looks off balance.



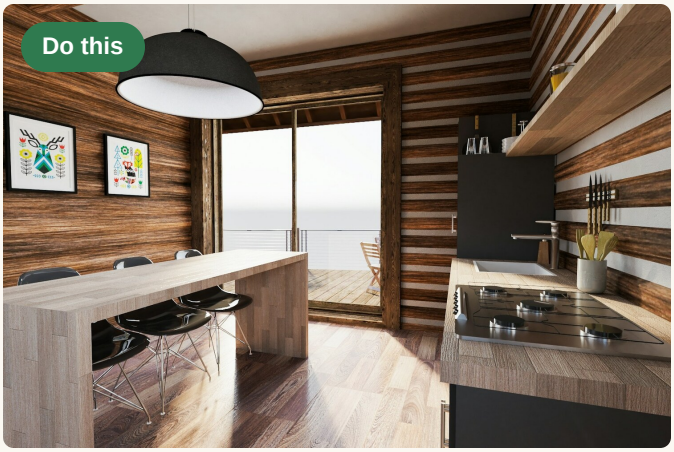
Phone level: upright walls, a calm and trustworthy photo.

4 Back into a corner

Stand in a doorway or corner so two or three walls are in the frame. Guests should be able to tell how the room is laid out. Save close-ups for special details, after the wide shot.



Too close: a nice stove, but which room is this?



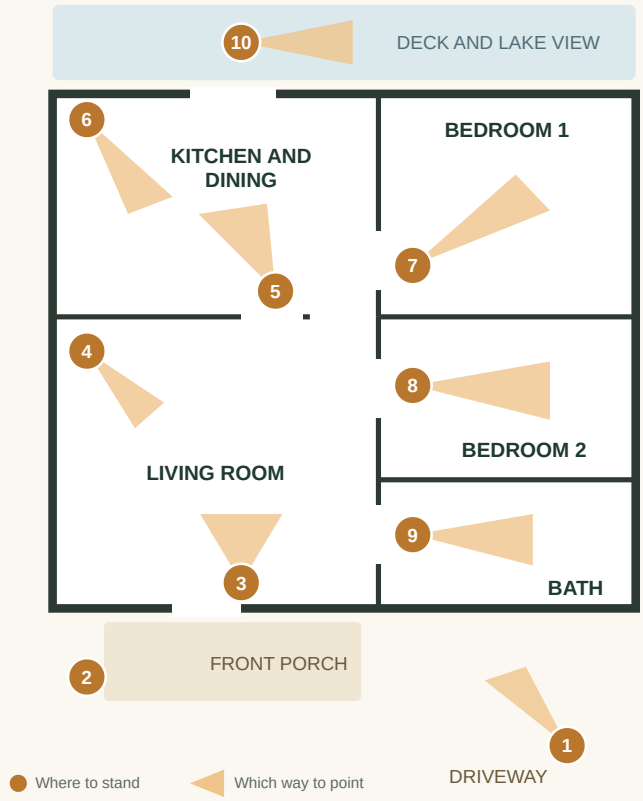
From the corner: kitchen, table and the door to the deck.

Quick test before you move on: look at the photo on your phone at arm's length. Is it wide, bright, straight, and can you tell what room it is? If yes, move to the next spot.

STEP 3

Walk it like a guest

Shoot in the order a guest would arrive and move through the place, following the numbers. Stand at each dot and point the phone the way the shaded wedge shows. The same order works for your photo gallery and for a walk-through video made from your photos.



Example layout of a two-bedroom cottage. Your rooms will differ; the idea is the same.

1	**Arrival**	The cottage from the drive, door and porch in view.
2	**Front porch**	From one end, chairs set out, toward the door.
3	**Living room**	Just inside the door, facing the main seating.
4	**Living room**	From the far corner, looking back toward the door.
5	**Kitchen and dining**	From the doorway: table, counters and appliances.
6	**Kitchen and dining**	From the far corner toward the table and deck door.
7	**Bedroom 1**	From the doorway corner, bed and window in frame.
8	**Bedroom 2**	From the doorway corner, bed and window in frame.
9	**Bathroom**	From the door, shower or tub fully visible.
10	**Deck and view**	From the deck toward the water. Your best view.

Also add, if you have them:

- [ ] Stairs, loft or a second floor
- [ ] Laundry, mudroom or storage for gear
- [ ] Parking spot and the path to the door
- [ ] The view out of the best window

For a walk-through video: at each numbered spot take 2 or 3 photos, turning slightly left to right between them. Keep the phone at the same height the whole way. No filming needed; the video is built from these photos.

Short on time? Shots 1, 3, 5, 7 and 10 cover the most. Start there and add the rest later.

STEP 4

Outside, details and putting it together



Arrival shot: the whole building, in soft light, with nothing parked in front.



Porch or deck: furniture out and ready, so guests picture themselves there.

DETAILS WORTH A CLOSE-UP

- [ ] The view from the best window or deck
- [ ] Fireplace or wood stove
- [ ] Coffee maker and the stocked kitchen
- [ ] Fire pit, grill, kayaks, dock or beach
- [ ] Anything guests ask about, like parking or the washer

CHOOSING AND ORDERING

- [ ] Aim for about 20 to 30 photos for a one or two-bedroom place: one or two of the best per space, no near-duplicates.
- [ ] Put your strongest photo first, then the next four best. Guests mostly look at the first five to ten.
- [ ] Make the cover a living room or the view, not a bedroom.
- [ ] Then follow your walk-through order, room by room.
- [ ] Add a short caption to each, such as bed size or which floor the room is on.
- [ ] Do not add text, logos or borders on the photos.

COMMON MISTAKES

- ✕ Tall phone shots
- ✕ Shooting at night or with blinds closed
- ✕ Phone tilted down, walls leaning
- ✕ Flash glare on windows and mirrors
- ✕ 0.5x lens everywhere, rooms look stretched
- ✕ People, pets or your reflection in the shot
- ✕ Cords, bins, toiletries and clutter left out
- ✕ Blurry shots in dim rooms (rest the phone on something steady)
- ✕ Ten photos of one room, none of another
- ✕ Photos that are years out of date

Keep them current. Retake photos every 12 to 18 months, and after any refresh, new furniture or paint, so guests always find what they saw.

DONE FOR YOU

Professional results, without the photo shoot

A professional shoot is still the best choice for a luxury home. For a big step up without the cost, the booking or the wait: **you take the photos on your phone, we professionally edit them and send back listing-ready files.**

	Professional photo shoot	Devanthea House Listing Photos
Cost	About $500 to $1,500 or more for a full package with drone, twilight and video, depending on the photographer and home size	A fraction of a full shoot. Email us for pricing.
Booking	Find a photographer, book a date, wait for good weather, be there for the visit	No appointment. Shoot on your own phone whenever the light is good.
Your time	Prep, plus the shoot itself	Prep, plus one afternoon with your phone and this guide
Turnaround	Often one to two weeks from booking to final photos, longer with video	Two to three days after your photos arrive, often sooner
Best for	Luxury homes that need drone, twilight and full staging	Cottages, cabins and rentals that need a clear step up, fast

WHAT DEVANTHEA HOUSE LISTING PHOTOS PROFESSIONAL EDITING INCLUDES

- ☐ **Exposure correction:** dark rooms brightened without blowing out windows
- ☐ **White balance:** yellow, blue or green tints removed
- ☐ **Vertical and horizon straightening:** leaning walls and tilted floors fixed
- ☐ **Lens distortion correction:** the bulge from a phone's wide lens
- ☐ **Shadow and highlight recovery** for dark corners and bright windows
- ☐ **Noise reduction and sharpening** for low-light shots
- ☐ **Colour correction:** true-to-life wood, fabric and paint
- ☐ **Light decluttering:** cords, bins and toiletries removed; linens and towels tidied
- ☐ **Reflections and smudges** on glass and mirrors cleaned up
- ☐ **Full-resolution files** ready for Airbnb, Vrbo, Booking.com and your website
- ☐ and much more

Our promise: natural, never over-brightened. We never hide anything a guest would find on arrival. No covering stains or damage, no fake views, no furniture that isn't there.

What editing can't do: add a view, a light or a room the camera never captured. A well-taken phone photo gives us the most to work with.

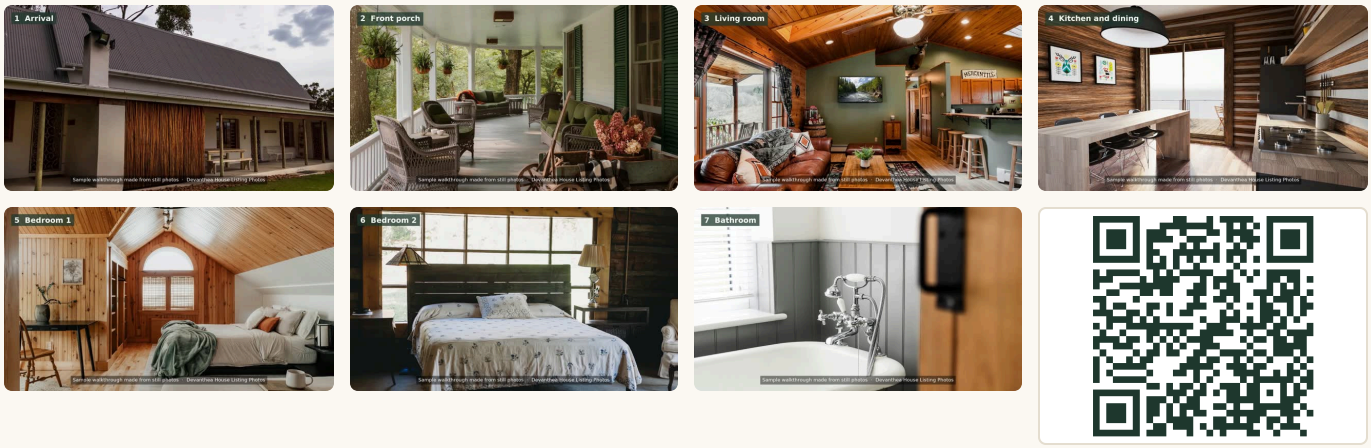
Ask about pricing:
devanthea.co@gmail.com
devanthea-house.pages.dev

Price range based on published 2026 package prices from US real estate and rental photographers (for example full packages with drone, video and twilight listed at about $550 to $1,500). Prices vary by region and home size.

GO FURTHER

Bring it to life with a walkthrough video

A short video walks guests from the driveway to the deck in under 30 seconds. It's built from the photos you take with this guide, in the same numbered order, so there's no filming to do.



Frames from a sample walkthrough made from stock photos. Scan the code to watch the sample on our website.

HOW IT WORKS

- [ ] **Shoot:** follow the walk-through route, 2 or 3 photos at each spot.
- [ ] **Send:** email us your photos, in order.
- [ ] **Receive:** edited listing photos plus a short walkthrough video for your website, social media and anywhere that takes video.

WHY VIDEO HELPS

A video shows how the rooms connect, which photos alone can't. In home sales, 48% of buyers' agents said videos were more important to their clients, and 43% said the same of virtual tours (National Association of Realtors, 2025).

Ready for photos that get booked?

Tell us your property name and how many rooms. We'll reply with pricing and next steps.

devanthea.co@gmail.com

See samples and the walkthrough at **devanthea-house.pages.dev**

Source: National Association of Realtors, 2025 Profile of Home Staging (survey of 1,266 Realtors, February 2025). Sample video built from Unsplash photos. Photos: Unsplash, used under the Unsplash License; "Avoid" examples were made by editing the same photos. Tips draw on public guidance from Airbnb and vacation rental photographers, written in our own words. Not affiliated with Airbnb, Vrbo or Booking.com.