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Renting out your home for Super Bowl is no sure win

Vacation rentals require work, face tough competition

By Doreen Hemlock
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Renting out your home, timeshare or yacht for the [Super Bowl](#) may sound like a way to make a quick buck, but property owners beware: it's not as easy as it might appear.

Besides advertising on Web sites or elsewhere, owners face a host of tasks: ensuring their condo board or homeowners association allows short-term rentals, screening renters, obtaining a security deposit, removing personal items from the home, stocking up with goods that renters need, setting conditions for use and checking those conditions are met, among others.

"It's not like lending the house to friends or relatives for a few days," said Hollywood resident Valerie Galsky, who works year-round on vacation rentals and is offering two properties for the days around the Feb. 7 championship football game. "This is a business."

About 120,000 visitors are expected in South Florida for the Super Bowl this year, but business conditions have changed radically since the last time the area hosted the game in booming 2007.

Back then, area hotels commanded an average \$499 a night for the bowl, a premium over their usual winter rates. About 7 percent of visitors opted to stay outside hotels, said Kathleen Davis, president of Sport Management Research Institute of West Palm Beach.

But rates are less buoyant in today's weak economy - down roughly 20 percent last year from 2008 levels, according to Smith Travel Research. And more homeowners now see rentals as relief from recession.

"For hotels and rentals, the key word now is value," Davis said. "You have to be cost-effective, reasonable and competitive."

Many people listing South Florida properties for the Super Bowl have yet to find takers.

Retired engineer Mark Kavanaugh thought he'd have a contract by now on his two-bedroom timeshare condo in Pompano Beach. He's listed it online for four nights at \$880, with half paid upon reservation.

He hopes interest will pick up when people know which teams will play, but he's not holding his breath. "I'm kind of thinking I may not be able to rent this," Kavanaugh said from his home in Michigan.

Tammy Domanico and her husband also are waiting to find renters for their three-bedroom, two-bath waterfront home in Pompano

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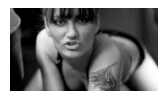
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vacation rental, helping supplement income they've lost in the recession. They're seeking \$4,800 for Super Bowl week – or at least \$1,000 a night for the big game, more than other times of year.

To prepare for visitors, Domanico is busy readying her other house to move in and preparing to take out family photos and other personal items from the current one. "It's a lot," said the hospital pharmacist. "But it makes sense for us. This house is more rentable."

Even yacht owners are looking to charter their boats rather than have them sit idle during Super Bowl this year.

Entrepreneur Malcolm Cohen wants to rent out his 90-foot yacht that usually docks in Lighthouse Point. He's offering the four-bedroom, four-bath vessel with nine flat-screen TVs and other perks for \$40,000 for five nights docked in Miami Beach, closer to parties. The ship comes with some crew, but not a chef, food, gas or tips.

Cohen won't accept just anyone with cash either. Besides background checks, he requires a "very strong contract" that includes no smoking aboard, no pets, limits on the number of people on the yacht and those dockside for parties, plus a default clause-- in case of violations.

"You have to be very selective who you charter to," said Cohen.

To promote their properties, owners are turning to a range of websites, both free and paid. One gaining ground is sportseventrentals.com, a Phoenix-based company that charges a \$99 flat fee per calendar year, with no commissions or percentages. People who see listings on the site deal directly with owners by email or phone.

Robert Hayes, chief executive for the listing company, said the Super Bowl definitely ranks as the most popular event on the rental site, but "until we know who's playing, we won't know how big the traffic will be."

Doreen Hemlock can be reached at dhemlock@sunsentinel.com or 305-810-5009.

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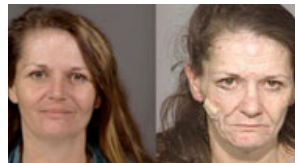
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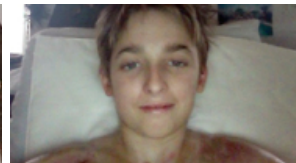
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