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Gardendale vacation rental checklist

Jefferson County, Alabama | Rules checked November 5, 2026

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Gardendale requires a $150 yearly short-term rental permit and a business license, and allows short-term rentals only in zones that list them (its C-1, C-2, and C-3 business districts). Units need fire sprinklers, $1 million in liability insurance, and a posted exit plan. Lodgings tax is 20%.

> Three substantiated police complaints in 12 months suspend the permit.

Licensing steps

STATE OF ALABAMA

- [ ] **Register for the lodgings tax**
  Create an account at My Alabama Taxes (MAT) and register for state lodgings tax, plus any local lodgings taxes the state administers for your county and city. Cities that collect their own tax need a separate account with the city.
  My Alabama Taxes: https://myalabamataxes.alabama.gov/

- [ ] **File by the 20th**
  Returns are due by the 20th of the following month. Small filers can ask (before February 20) to file quarterly, twice a year, or yearly. Paying on time earns a small discount (5% of the first $100 of tax, 2% after).

- [ ] **Know what the platform collects**
  Under Act 2024-334, Airbnb, VRBO, and other booking platforms collect the state and local lodgings taxes on their bookings unless your contract says you remit. You still owe tax on direct bookings, and the law adds a yearly report of every unit rented more than 14 days.

- [ ] **Keep filing once you register**
  If every booking goes through a platform that collects all your state and local lodgings taxes, you may not need your own account. But if you take direct bookings, or the platform doesn't collect one of your local taxes (often the ones filed with a city, a county, or Avenu), register and file it yourself. Once registered, file every period, even a $0 return, and report platform-collected sales as a deduction. Some county offices ask owners to keep their own account and file monthly even when the platform pays, so ask yours.

- [ ] **Then your county and city**
  Local business licenses, rental permits, and zoning rules are where Alabama towns differ most. Pick your area.

JEFFERSON COUNTY, ALABAMA

- [ ] **Register for the county lodgings tax**
  File the county's 7% monthly with the Jefferson County Department of Revenue (205-325-5171), on top of the 4% state tax through My Alabama Taxes.

- [ ] **Then your city**
  Check your city first: several suburbs don't allow stays under 30 or 90 days in homes.

CITY OF GARDENDALE

- [ ] **Confirm your zone**
  Short-term rentals are illegal in zones that don't permit them. HOA bans still apply.

- [ ] **Apply for the permit**
  Submit your ID, deed, a parking survey, a floor plan, your platforms, a 24/7 emergency contact, $1 million liability insurance, and a sworn statement covering smoke and CO alarms, a posted exit diagram, a sprinkler system (including over the cooktop), and code compliance.
- [ ] **Register for lodgings tax**
  Total lodgings tax here is 20%. The city's 9% is filed with the city. The county's 7% is filed with the Jefferson County Department of Revenue. Airbnb collects the state tax and the local taxes the state administers. For county or city taxes filed with the county, the city, or Avenu, ask your platform whether it remits them; if not, file them yourself by the 20th of each month.

House rules for guests

Maximum guests: 2 per bedroom

Gardendale asks for drawings with your application.
Make the site sketch, floor plans, and evacuation maps to scale from your measurements at FireEscapePlan.com.

Official sources

Alabama Department of Revenue: State lodgings tax. https://www.revenue.alabama.gov/tax-types/lodgings-tax/

Alabama Department of Revenue: Lodgings tax FAQs. https://www.revenue.alabama.gov/faqs/lodgings-tax/

Alabama Department of Revenue: Alabama Tourism Tax Protection Act (Act 2024-334)-
. https://www.revenue.alabama.gov/alabama-tourism-tax-protection/

Avalara MyLodgeTax: Alabama vacation rental tax guide-
. https://www.avalara.com/mylodgetax/en/resources/vacation-rental-tax-guides/alabama.html

Jefferson County Department of Revenue: Jefferson County lodgings tax return-
. https://compliance.jccal.org/Sites/Jefferson_County/Documents/Revenue/Business%20Tax%20Returns/Lodgings%20Tax%20Return.pdf

City of Gardendale (Municode): Code section.
https://library.municode.com/al/gardendale/codes/code_of_ordinances?nodeId=PTIILAUSDE_CH111ZO_ARTVIIIUSRE_S111-259SHRMRERE

Alabama Department of Revenue: Local lodgings tax rates report (November 2026)-
. https://www.revenue.alabama.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/LLreport.pdf

City of Gardendale (Municode): Code section.
https://library.municode.com/al/gardendale/codes/code_of_ordinances?nodeId=PTIILAUSDE_CH111ZO_ARTVIDIRE_S111-166COBUDI