LICENSEDRENTAL.COM

Bluffton vacation rental checklist

Beaufort County, South Carolina | Rules checked November 6, 2026

Scan for the latest version

Bluffton requires a town business license and a yearly Short-term Rental Unit Permit ($325) for every home rented for under 30 days. Rentals are capped at one per lot in most zones, need one parking space per bedroom, and must have an agent who can arrive within an hour. Tax is 10%.

> The town doesn't inspect short-term rentals but encourages an independent inspection, including decks, balconies, and docks.

> Two or more violation notices in one permit year is itself a violation and can lead to revocation. A sale voids the permit; the new owner must apply again.

Licensing steps

STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA

- [ ] **Get a retail license for direct bookings**
  If you take bookings yourself, you need a SCDOR retail license for each rental property and must file and pay electronically through MyDORWAY. If you rent only through a property manager or an online travel company that takes the payment, they remit the state tax and you don't need a license. Rent no more than one week a quarter and you can file once a year instead.
  MyDORWAY: https://mydorway.dor.sc.gov/
- [ ] **Know what the platform collects**
  Airbnb collects the 5% sales tax, 2% accommodations tax, and the local sales taxes the state collects, on its bookings. It also collects some county and city accommodations taxes, but only in the places it lists. Everything else is yours to file.
- [ ] **Register for local taxes**
  Many counties and cities charge their own accommodations tax (up to 3%), a hospitality tax, or a beach preservation fee. They collect these directly, so you register with the county or city even if a platform pays your state tax.
- [ ] **Check your property tax rate**
  A home that is your legal residence keeps the 4% assessment ratio only if it is rented out 72 days or less a year. Rent it more and it is taxed as a 6% rental property. Ask your county assessor.
- [ ] **Then your county and city**
  Business licenses, rental permits, and zoning are where South Carolina towns differ most. Pick your area.

BEAUFORT COUNTY, SOUTH CAROLINA

- [ ] **Find out who governs your address**
  A Hilton Head, Bluffton, Beaufort, or Port Royal address may be outside town limits. If it is, the county's permit, business license, and 3% accommodations tax apply instead. Check your parcel before you apply.
- [ ] **Then your town or area**
  Permits, caps, and fees differ in every town. Pick your area.

TOWN OF BLUFFTON

- [ ] **Get a business license first**
  The town requires a Bluffton business license before it issues the rental permit. A rental agent who isn't the owner needs a license too.

- [ ] **Apply for the Short-term Rental Unit Permit**
  One application per unit, including accessory units. Include proof of ownership, the initialed life-safety checklist, a signed owner responsibilities affidavit, an affidavit that you notified adjacent owners, and an HOA or POA approval letter if the home is in a planned unit development. Contact the Business License Division to apply.
  Bluffton short-term rentals: https://www.townofbluffton.sc.gov/705/Short-Term-Rentals
- [ ] **Name a local agent**
  The owner or a designated agent (18 or older) must answer the listed phone 24/7, reach the property within one hour of a town call, accept legal notices, and check the rental at least weekly. Tell the town within five days if the agent changes.
- [ ] **Register for state and local taxes**
  The state-collected tax on stays here is 7% (state sales and accommodations tax plus local sales taxes). Airbnb collects it on its bookings; for direct bookings, get a SCDOR retail license and file through MyDORWAY. File the town's 3% accommodations tax with the Bluffton Business License Division (843-706-4501) by the 20th after each period: monthly, quarterly, or yearly depending on how much tax you owe. Airbnb's South Carolina tax article doesn't list Bluffton's local accommodations tax, so plan to file it yourself, including on Airbnb bookings.

Fees

$325 a year, plus the business license tax

Short-term rental fee	Yearly, renewed with the business license.	**$325**

House rules for guests

Quiet hours: 10 p.m. to 7 a.m.

Posted for guests: Permit, agent contact, parking, trash schedule
Also the business license number, maximum occupancy, nearest hospital, and police and fire numbers.

Advertising: Permit number in every ad

Who to contact

Business License Division: 843-706-4501

Official sources

South Carolina Department of Revenue: Accommodations tax. https://dor.sc.gov/tax/accommodations

Airbnb: Collection and remittance by Airbnb in South Carolina. https://www.airbnb.com/help/article/2328

South Carolina Department of Revenue: Revenue Ruling #15-4: vacation rentals of a residence-
. https://dor.sc.gov/resources-site/lawandpolicy/Advisory%20Opinions/RR15-4.pdf

Town of Bluffton: Short-Term Rentals. https://www.townofbluffton.sc.gov/705/Short-Term-Rentals

Town of Bluffton (Municode): Code section.
https://library.municode.com/sc/bluffton/codes/code_of_ordinances?nodeId=COOR_CH6BUBURE_ARTVSHRMREUN

Town of Bluffton: Accommodations Tax. https://www.townofbluffton.sc.gov/268/Accommodations-Tax

Town of Bluffton: Master Fee Schedule, FY2027 adopted-
. https://www.townofbluffton.sc.gov/DocumentCenter/View/435/FY-2026-Master-Fee-Schedule-PDF