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South Padre Island vacation rental checklist

Cameron County, Texas | Rules checked November 8, 2026

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South Padre Island requires a yearly short-term rental license ($125) with the number on every ad, a 24/7 local contact who responds within an hour, and a smoke detector in every sleeping room. Since 2026, three citations in a year can cost you the license. Stays owe 17% in hotel taxes; Airbnb collects only the 6% state share, so owners file the city and county taxes monthly.

> The city lists its own hotel tax as 8.5% plus 2%; the Comptroller's 2025 data show 9% plus 2%. City violations can bring fines up to $2,000 a day. The license fee comes from a tax-service summary; confirm it with the city.

Licensing steps

STATE OF TEXAS

- [ ] **Know who pays the hotel tax**
  Airbnb collects and pays the 6% state hotel tax on its bookings. If guests pay you directly or through a site that doesn't collect, register with the Comptroller and file the state tax yourself.
  Texas hotel occupancy tax: https://comptroller.texas.gov/taxes/hotel/
- [ ] **Register for local hotel tax**
  Your city (and in some places your county) charges its own hotel tax, filed with that city or county, not the state. Airbnb pays it only in the places on its list; everywhere else you register and file it yourself, even for Airbnb bookings.
- [ ] **Check your city's rules**
  Many Texas cities require a short-term rental permit or registration, and some require an inspection, a local contact, or posted rules. Outside city limits there's usually no permit, but deed restrictions and HOA rules often limit rentals. Pick your area for the local rules.

CAMERON COUNTY, TEXAS

- [ ] **Then pick your city**
  Texas counties can't zone, so rental permits and the local hotel tax are set by each city. Pick your city, or the unincorporated page if you're outside city limits.
- [ ] **File the county hotel tax**
  Register your rental in the Localgov portal (choose Cameron County, Texas) and file the county return by the 20th of each month, even with no rentals. Late returns owe a 5% penalty after 30 days.
  Cameron County hotel tax: https://cameroncountytx.gov/cameron-county-hotel-tax-information-hot

CITY OF SOUTH PADRE ISLAND, TEXAS

- [ ] **Open your tax accounts**
  Open a city hotel tax account for the 10.5% city tax, get a Texas taxpayer ID for the 6% state tax (unless every booking goes through Airbnb or VRBO), and register with Cameron County for its 0.5%.
  South Padre Island hotel tax: https://www.myspi.org/hottax
- [ ] **Get the short-term rental license**
  Apply for the city's yearly short-term rental license ($125), name a local contact who can respond to the city within an hour at any time, and put the license number in every ad.
- [ ] **Set up the rental**
  Put a smoke detector in every sleeping room, post the contact and license number at the property, and give guests the city's standards of conduct, including parking and quiet hours.

- [ ] **Hotel taxes on each stay**
  Stays of 29 nights or less owe the 6% state hotel tax, which Airbnb collects on its bookings. If guests pay you directly, file it with the Texas Comptroller. South Padre Island's 10.5% city tax and Cameron County's 0.5% aren't collected by Airbnb. File city returns monthly, even with no rentals; the city says reports go through Deckard from October 1.

Fees

$125 a year

Annual STR license	**$125**

Inspection checklist

- [ ] **Smoke detectors.** In every sleeping room.

House rules for guests

Quiet hours (Districts A and E): 10 p.m. weeknights, 11 p.m. Friday and Saturday, to 7 a.m.
No outdoor amplified sound.

Guest conduct: Owner responsible
Noise, overcrowding, parking, and nuisance calls count against the license.

Parking: No 24-hour parking in city public spaces
Overnight parking in city lots isn't allowed.

Who to contact

City hotel tax: 956-761-8382
City hotel tax: hottax@myspi.org
Localgov (county hotel tax filing): 877-842-3037

Official sources

Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts: Hotel Occupancy Tax FAQs: Airbnb. https://comptroller.texas.gov/taxes/hotel/airbnb-faq.php

Airbnb: Occupancy tax collection and remittance by Airbnb in Texas. https://www.airbnb.com/help/article/2331

Texas Legislature: County zoning authority (Local Government Code ch. 231). https://statutes.capitol.texas.gov/Docs/LG/htm/LG.231.htm

Cameron County: Cameron County Hotel Tax Information (HOT). https://cameroncountytx.gov/cameron-county-hotel-tax-information-hot

City of South Padre Island: Hotel Occupancy Tax. https://www.myspi.org/hottax

Avalara MyLodgeTax: South Padre Island short-term rental operators face consequences for multiple legal violations (February 2026). https://www.avalara.com/mylodgetax/en/blog/2026/02/south-padre-island-texas-short-term-rental-operators-face-consequences-for-multiple-legal-violations.htm

City of South Padre Island: Short-term rental ordinances. https://www.myspi.org/egov/documents/1770753096_20645.pdf

Port Isabel-South Padre Press: SPI rental owners face license crackdown (February 19, 2026)-
. https://www.portisabelsouthpadre.com/2026/02/19/spi-rental-owners-face-license-crackdown/