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Unincorporated Albemarle County vacation rental checklist

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Albemarle County, Virginia | Rules checked November 7, 2026

Outside Scottsville, Albemarle allows short-term rentals only as homestays: a single-family home that is the owner's primary residence, with the owner living on the parcel at least 180 days a year. Homes in residential zones or on under 5 rural acres can rent two bedrooms with the owner present; rural parcels of 5 acres or more can rent up to five and allow limited unhosted stays. Each homestay needs a zoning clearance, an annual fire inspection, and an evacuation floor plan in every room. Stays pay 5.3% sales tax plus a 9% lodging tax.

Licensing steps

COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA

- [ ] **Know who pays the tax**
  When a platform like Airbnb books the stay, it collects and pays the state sales tax and the local lodging tax for you. If guests pay you directly, register with Virginia Tax for sales tax and with your county or city for the transient occupancy tax.
  Register a business with Virginia Tax: https://www.tax.virginia.gov/registering-new-business

- [ ] **Register with your locality if it has a registry**
  Many counties and cities require short-term rental hosts to register every year. Registration is a simple filing (your name, each address, and the owner's permission if you lease the home), but listing an unregistered rental can cost up to $500 per violation.

- [ ] **Check your zoning**
  Counties and cities keep their power to decide where short-term rentals are allowed and whether you need a zoning or use permit. HOA and condo rules still apply on top. Pick your area for the local rules.

ALBEMARLE COUNTY, VIRGINIA

- [ ] **File the lodging tax every month**
  Albemarle's 9% transient occupancy tax is due by the 20th of the next month. Even when Airbnb or another platform pays the tax, you still file a return reporting your total receipts and what the platform paid.
  Albemarle transient occupancy tax:
  https://www.albemarle.org/government/finance/business-license-taxes/transient-occupancy-tax

- [ ] **Then your town or area**
  Zoning rules are set by the county outside town limits and by each town inside them, and towns can add their own lodging tax. Pick your area.

ALBEMARLE COUNTY (UNINCORPORATED AREAS)

- [ ] **Check that your home qualifies**
  The home must be a single-family house and your primary residence, and you must live on the parcel at least 180 days a year. In residential zones and on rural parcels under 5 acres you can rent up to two bedrooms, in the main house only, while you're there. On rural parcels of 5 acres or more you can rent up to five, use an accessory building built before August 7, 2019, and host unhosted stays up to 7 days a month and 45 days a year.

- [ ] **Prepare the safety items and floor plan**
  Post an emergency evacuation floor plan showing the exits and the 911 address in every habitable room. Mount a 2A:10BC fire extinguisher in the kitchen, install interconnected smoke alarms in and outside sleeping rooms and on every floor, keep bedroom egress windows working and unpainted, and post your address at the driveway.

- [ ] **Apply for a homestay zoning clearance**
  Submit the Homestay Zoning Clearance application with the $169 fee (plus a 4% technology surcharge), plan parking for two cars plus one per guest bedroom on the property, and name a responsible agent within 30 miles. The county mails a notice to your neighbors, and a fire and building safety inspection comes before approval. Then enroll in the Short-Term Rental Registry by emailing homestays@albemarle.org.
  Albemarle homestays: https://albemarle.org/government/community-development/learn-more-about/homestays
- [ ] **Renew every year**
  Re-enroll in the registry ($27) and pass the annual fire safety inspection ($50). Some rules can be modified by a Special Exception from the Board of Supervisors.
- [ ] **Taxes on each stay**
  Stays under 90 days owe 5.3% sales tax, and stays under 30 days also owe the local transient occupancy tax. Airbnb collects both on its bookings. If guests pay you directly, file sales tax with Virginia Tax. Albemarle's 9% transient occupancy tax is due by the 20th; file a return even when the platform paid the tax.

Fees

About $176 the first year and $77 a year after

Homestay zoning clearance (application and inspection)	**$169 + 4% technology surcharge**
Short-term rental registry, first enrollment	**$0**
Registry re-enrollment (annual)	**$27**
Annual fire safety inspection	**$50**
Special Exception (if needed) The county page also shows $508; confirm with Zoning. Not refunded if denied.	**$503 + 4% surcharge**

Inspection checklist

- [ ] **Fire extinguisher.** 2A:10BC in the kitchen, preferably wall-mounted.
- [ ] **Smoke alarms.** Interconnected, in each sleeping room, outside sleeping areas, and on every story.
- [ ] **Evacuation floor plan.** In each habitable room, with exits and the 911 address.
- [ ] **Egress windows.** Operable and unpainted in each bedroom.
- [ ] **Electrical.** Guests can reach the panel; no extension cords in place of wiring.
- [ ] **Address.** Posted at the driveway.

House rules for guests

Parking: 2 spaces + 1 per guest bedroom
On the property; no street parking.

Food: Health Department approval needed to serve food

Who to contact

Albemarle Zoning (homestays): 434-296-5832
Homestay registry: homestays@albemarle.org
Albemarle Finance (lodging tax): 434-296-5851

Unincorporated Albemarle County 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

A plain-language summary of public rules, not legal advice. Confirm with Albemarle County (unincorporated areas) before you rent. Latest version: licensedrental.com/va/albemarle/unincorporated

Virginia Tax: Guidelines for sales tax on accommodations (P.D. 21-116)-
. https://tax.virginia.gov/laws-rules-decisions/rulings-tax-commissioner/21-116

Virginia General Assembly: Short-term rental registries (Va. Code § 15.2-983). https://law.lis.virginia.gov/vacode/15.2-983/

Albemarle County Finance & Budget: Transient Occupancy Tax-
. https://www.albemarle.org/government/finance/business-license-taxes/transient-occupancy-tax

Albemarle County Community Development: Learn More About Homestays-
. https://albemarle.org/government/community-development/learn-more-about/homestays