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Unincorporated Fairfax County vacation rental checklist

Fairfax County, Virginia | Rules checked November 7, 2026

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Outside its three towns, Fairfax County requires a $285 short-term lodging permit, good for two years. You must live in the home at least 185 days a year, rent it no more than 60 nights a year, and host no more than six adults at a time. A posted exit plan is required in every guest bedroom.

> Short-term lodging isn't allowed in detached accessory buildings, accessory living units, or affordable or workforce dwelling units.

> The county permit doesn't override HOA or condo rules, which may ban short-term rentals.

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.

FAIRFAX COUNTY, VIRGINIA

- [ ] **File the transient occupancy tax if guests pay you directly**
  Airbnb and other platforms collect and pay Fairfax County's tax on their bookings. For direct bookings, file a return and pay the Department of Tax Administration every month by the 20th.
  Fairfax County transient occupancy tax: https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/taxes/business/transient-occupancy-tax
- [ ] **Then your town or area**
  Towns set their own zoning and some set their own lodging tax. The county's rules apply outside town limits. Pick your area.

FAIRFAX COUNTY (OUTSIDE HERNDON, VIENNA, AND CLIFTON)

- [ ] **Line up your documents**
  You need a government ID or vehicle registration and a utility bill showing you live at the address, a signed consent letter from your authorized agent (an adult other than you who handles problems), and, if you rent the home, the owner's permission letter confirming the guest parking space.
- [ ] **Apply for the permit in PLUS**
  Apply and pay the $285 fee online. With complete paperwork it takes about 14 days. There's no inspection before the permit is issued, but the county can inspect on request.
  Fairfax County PLUS portal: https://plus.fairfaxcounty.gov/CitizenAccess/Welcome.aspx

- [ ] **Put the permit number in every listing**
  Each ad must show your permit number, where the guest parking space is, and other parking or transit options. Leaving the permit number off is a violation.
- [ ] **Get a business license if you earn over $10,000**
  A county business license (BPOL) is required once your gross receipts pass $10,000 in a calendar year.
- [ ] **Taxes on each stay**
  Stays under 90 days owe 6% 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. For direct bookings, file Fairfax County's 9% transient occupancy tax with the Department of Tax Administration every month by the 20th.

Fees

$285 every two years

Short-term lodging permit (2 years)	Paid online; card payments add 2.35%.	**$285**

Inspection checklist

- [ ] **Multi-purpose fire extinguisher.**
- [ ] **Interconnected smoke detectors.**
- [ ] **Carbon monoxide detectors.** Where a fireplace or gas service calls for them.
- [ ] **Exit plan posted inside each sleeping room door.**
- [ ] **Second way out of basement bedrooms.** Such as an emergency egress window, if a converted basement is used for sleeping.

House rules for guests

Events: Not allowed
No parties, weddings, meetings, fundraisers, banquets, or commercial events.

Guest log: Name, address, and phone of every overnight guest
Show it to county staff on request.

Agent contact: Posted in the rental
And given to guests in writing.

Who to contact

Zoning Permits Section: 703-222-1082
Department of Code Compliance (complaints): 703-324-1300
Department of Tax Administration (lodging tax): 703-222-8234

Unincorporated Fairfax 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

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/

Fairfax County Department of Tax Administration: Transient Occupancy Tax-
. https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/taxes/business/transient-occupancy-tax

Fairfax County Department of Planning and Development: Short-Term Lodging (STL)-
. https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/planning-development/zoning/short-term-property-rentals

A plain-language summary of public rules, not legal advice. Confirm with Fairfax County (outside Herndon, Vienna, and Clifton) before you rent. Latest version: licensedrental.com/va/fairfax-county/unincorporated

Fairfax County Department of Planning and Development: Short-Term Lodging FAQs-
. https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/planning-development/zoning/short-term-property-rentals/faqs