

THE REPEAT BOOKING PLAYBOOK

How to turn past guests into loyal,
repeat direct bookers



INTRODUCTION

Repeat bookings are the lifeblood of a sustainable short-term rental business. Not only are returning guests cheaper to acquire than finding new ones, but they also tend to treat your property well and require less hand-holding on subsequent stays.

Perhaps most importantly, past guests who book directly save you from paying OTA fees and give you full control over the guest experience. Direct bookings now account for about one-third of U.S. vacation rental reservations, second only to Airbnb – a clear sign that savvy hosts are moving guests off OTAs and into their own ecosystem.

As Marcus Rader (CEO of Hostaway) puts it, “Having access to guest data makes it possible to encourage repeat bookings, strengthen loyalty and create a more resilient strategy.” In other words, by owning the relationship with your guests, you can keep them coming back year after year.

However, building that relationship has grown more challenging. Airbnb has tightened its grip on guest communications – retiring the option to email guests via the platform and even masking phone numbers except during active reservations. This means hosts must get creative to capture first-party guest information in compliant, value-driven ways.

It’s no longer as simple as exporting an Airbnb guest list; you need to proactively earn the guest’s contact info and consent. That’s where the “repeat booking flywheel” comes in.

This playbook will walk you through each stage of that flywheel:

Attract → Capture Info → Delight → Re-engage → Incentivize & Refer

with practical strategies and real examples. We’ll highlight tools (including Yada’s SMS campaigns, digital guidebooks, and WhatsApp/email marketing) and processes suited for small-to-medium operators (from a few listings up to a few hundred) to help you create your own repeat booking machine.

1. ATTRACT GUESTS AND COLLECT INFORMATION

If you can't reach past guests, you can't market to them – so start capturing contact info from the first stay.

Airbnb hides guest emails and is starting to do the same with phone numbers, so the key is to offer value in exchange for information. These compliant, value-based strategies work:

Wi-Fi Portals

Use tools like StayFi to require an email before internet access. Many PMSs integrate directly, and each reservation can yield multiple new contacts – a goldmine for follow-up campaigns.

Digital Guidebooks & QR Codes

Create a guidebook full of tips and perks. Yada's free guidebooks prompt guests to share an email or phone number in exchange for access. Place QR codes in the unit or pre-arrival email to make it easy.

Pre-Arrival Forms

Use your PMS or another intake flow to collect guest info through check-in forms. This feels natural, since guests already expect to share details for arrival coordination or legal requirements.

Loyalty Sign-Up Cards

Add a flyer or card inviting guests to "Join our VIP Guest Club" for early-bird access, discounts, or welcome gifts. They'll see sharing their info as gaining insider benefits.

Remember

Guests gladly share contact info when it makes their stay smoother – faster Wi-Fi access, better check-in, or personalized recommendations.

2. DELIVER A DELIGHTFUL STAY EXPERIENCE

Once you've attracted your guest, your goal is to make them think "I'd love to come back here" before they even check out.

Personal Touches Before Arrival

Send a warm, personalized message or quick call to thank guests, confirm details, and share a local teaser like a playlist or event guide. It builds excitement and confidence they made the right choice.

Seamless Check-In & Welcome

First impressions matter. Provide clear instructions, and leave a handwritten note or small local gift. Whether you meet them or not, ensure everything is spotless and better than advertised.

Stay Connected During Their Stay

Guests love quick, text-based communication. Automated messages through Yada + Quo can send check-ins, mid-stay follow-ups, or instant answers via your guidebook or AI assistant – keeping service responsive and personal.

Add Local Flavor

Share insider recommendations and local deals in your digital guidebook. Guests appreciate genuine tips and connections to the area – and they'll associate that warmth with your property.

Handle Issues with Grace

When something goes wrong, respond fast, apologize sincerely, and overdeliver in your solution. The effort you show builds trust – and often loyalty for life.

Remember

Guests may forget what you said, but they'll never forget how you made them feel.

3. RE-ENGAGE AND INSPIRE REPEAT BOOKINGS

The guest's stay might be over – but your relationship is just beginning.

A few days after checkout, thank your guest and remind them why they'll want to come back. This moment starts your repeat-booking cycle.

Thank & Invite Back

Send a warm thank-you message with a "book-direct" offer. A small incentive – 10% off, a free night, or an upgrade – signals appreciation and keeps your brand top of mind.

Create VIP Perks

Offer exclusive returning-guest privileges: early check-in, flexible checkout, or priority on popular weekends. These low-cost perks make guests feel part of an inner circle.

Keep It Simple

A "Returning guests always save 15%" message can function as your loyalty program – no complex system needed.

Stay in Touch

Send seasonal emails or SMS/WhatsApp messages throughout the year. Share updates, special deals, or local events. SMS works best for time-sensitive offers – it's fast, personal, and converts.

Segment & Personalize

Use your guest data to tailor messages. Families who stayed last summer get early-bird invites; five-star guests get exclusive previews. Relevance drives rebookings.

Pro tip:

Keep your messages friendly, occasional, and valuable. Stay visible without becoming noise.

4. TURN HAPPY GUESTS INTO YOUR BEST MARKETERS

Reviews, referrals, and social sharing keep your flywheel spinning.

A strong repeat-booking engine doesn't just bring guests back – it turns them into ambassadors who attract new ones.

Ask for Reviews

Request feedback right after checkout. Guests are 3 times more likely to leave a review when you ask. A simple message like, "It was a pleasure hosting you – would you mind sharing your experience?" builds social proof that draws new and returning guests alike.

Reward Referrals

Invite past guests to share your property with friends and family. Offer a two-way incentive – "You both get 15% off your next stay." It's win-win: you get new bookings, and they get a reason to come back.

Encourage Social Sharing

Create a unique hashtag or contest – "Tag us in your stay photo for a chance to win a free night." You'll grow reach and keep guests emotionally connected long after checkout.

Build Community

Stay in touch through a VIP guest group or newsletter. Share updates, new amenities, and local news. Guests who feel part of your story are far more likely to return.

On-Site Reminders

Add subtle cues at the property – a small sign or card saying, "Love it here? Book direct next time and save 15%." You'll catch guests when they're already dreaming of their return.

Pro tip:

Every review, referral, and tag extends your brand. The more you nurture happy guests, the more they market for you.

5. SMART PRICING & PROMOTIONS FOR REPEAT BOOKINGS

Use your pricing tools and creativity to fill your calendar – profitably.

A strong repeat-booking strategy isn't just about offers; it's about timing and precision. The goal is to attract returning guests with smart discounts that make sense for your business.

Use Dynamic Pricing Tools

Let software like PriceLabs, Wheelhouse, or Beyond adjust your rates, then target gaps with personalized deals. For example, offer "20% off this weekend" to local past guests when midweek stays go unbooked. Automation keeps it profitable.

Offer Geo-Targeted Deals

Guests within a few hours' drive are ideal for last-minute escapes. Use your guest list to send "locals-only" offers during slower seasons – quick wins for both you and them.

Create VIP Loyalty Rates

Give returning guests a private code (like VIPRATE) for 10–15% off when booking direct. They'll think of your site first next time instead of an OTA.

Run Timed Flash Sales

Seasonal promotions – "Book your summer week by March 1 and get one night free" – drive urgency and keep repeat guests engaged year-round.

Tie Offers to Events & Anniversaries

Remind guests about the festival, wedding, or birthday they celebrated with you last year – with a personalized message and small discount to make it easy to say yes again.

Pro tip:

You already save 15% in OTA fees when guests book direct – share that savings with them through creative, well-timed offers. Everyone wins.

6. TRACK, LEARN, AND REFINE YOUR FLYWHEEL

Measure what matters so every campaign gets smarter.

Your repeat-booking strategy only improves when you track what's working. Build a simple dashboard or spreadsheet to monitor progress and refine your approach.

Key Metrics to Watch

- Direct bookings and repeat guest rate
- Percentage of revenue from returning guests
- OTA fee savings from direct bookings
- Campaign engagement (email opens, SMS replies)
- Guest satisfaction and review trends

Attribute Your Results

Use promo codes and tracking links to measure which channels drive bookings. SMS might bring instant results, while emails convert over time – both matter if you can see the data.

Listen to Feedback

Guest comments and surveys reveal what keeps people coming back. Mention what they loved in future outreach – or fix what held them back.

Keep Optimizing

Try new campaigns, adjust timing, and focus on your happiest guests. Drop low-value tactics, double down on what drives loyalty.

Pro tip:

Celebrate progress. Every repeat booking and saved OTA fee is proof your flywheel is working.

CONCLUSION

Using this playbook, you can create your own repeat booking flywheel: attract guests with great listings and value, capture their info through creative means, deliver an outstanding stay, follow up with smart marketing, and encourage referrals – which bring in new guests to start the cycle anew.

It's about transforming one-time visitors into lifelong guests. The tools are at your disposal: digital guidebooks to grab emails, automated messaging, shared phones and AI assistants to elevate service, CRM and marketing platforms to personalize outreach, and loyalty incentives to sweeten the deal.

Whether you have 3 listings or 300, the principles remain the same. Start laying the groundwork now – compile that guest list, set up that Wi-Fi portal or guidebook, craft that thank-you email template – and begin nurturing those past guests.

In time, you'll find your past guests are booking longer stays, filling your slow season gaps, and bringing their friends along too. That repeat guest flywheel will be spinning, driving your revenue and growth to new heights while you spend less on advertising and less time worrying about where the next booking will come from.

Here's to turning great stays into repeat stays, and making direct booking the first choice for your guests going forward!

READY TO GROW YOUR DIRECT BOOKINGS?

The strategies in this report are just the beginning. Yada + Quo help short-term rental managers like you:

- Drive repeat bookings through SMS & email campaigns
- Automate guest communication with AI
- Build guest relationships that lead to more profit, less churn

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