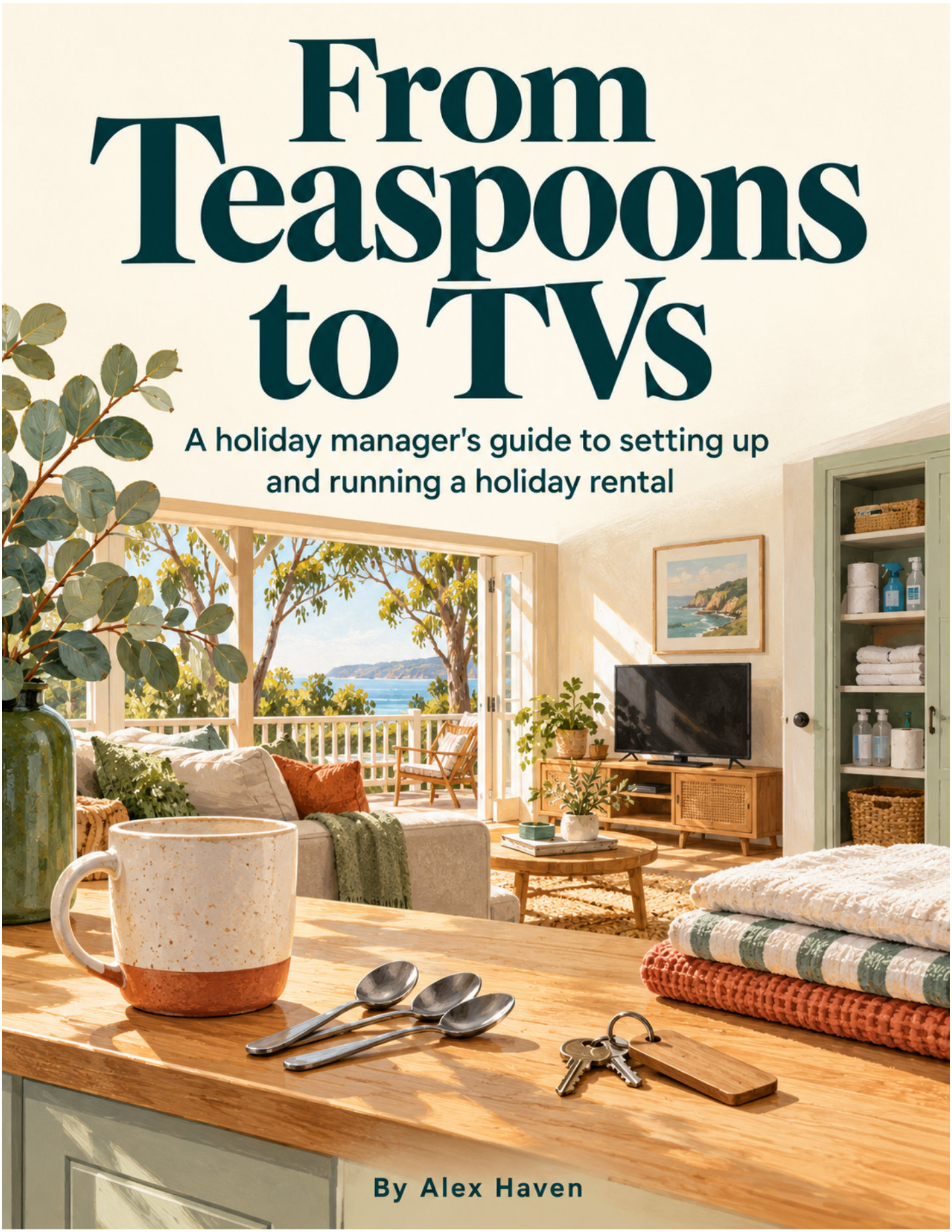
From Teaspoons to TVs

A holiday manager's guide to setting up and running a holiday rental



By Alex Haven

A lifetime around holiday homes

Hi, I'm Alex. Thank you for reading From Teaspoons to TVs.

My introduction to holiday accommodation began in childhood, going with my mum to check holiday houses. Run the hot tap, check the supplies and look at each home with fresh eyes: those ordinary lessons have stayed with me.

I have over two decades of experience in holiday accommodation. I still clean homes myself, train cleaners and coordinate the work. Linen hire is a separate part of what I do. This is practical experience that continues to involve the contents of a vacuum cleaner.

I remember using a huge paper ledger for guest and owner bookings. Following the wrong line could muddle arrangements for agents, owners or guests. The screen is smaller these days; the need to check the details remains.

I have also watched expectations change. In the holiday homes I knew, bringing your own linen was once normal. Today, guests expect much more to be supplied. For an owner setting up a property, working out what belongs in the house can become quite a project. The beds are fairly obvious. The number of teaspoons seems to become important shortly after somebody discovers there aren't enough.

This book comes from my perspective as a holiday manager, doing the work behind the guest experience: preparing homes, talking with guests and owners, checking supplies, driving between properties and keeping up with the administration. A clean room is only the part you can photograph.

I am happy to help a home reach its full potential, whatever that potential may be. That does not mean I will take on every home or every owner. I am not a maintenance manager for neglected properties, and I won't work with owners who think basic courtesy is an optional extra. Owners need to be willing to maintain the home and treat the people doing the work with respect.

Understanding the home is the starting point. A simple property can be thoughtfully equipped and honestly described. A bigger budget brings more choices, along with more decisions about what is useful and what needs looking after.

We will start with the home and its location, work through the budget and setup, and follow the guest journey from booking to checkout. You will find practical lists alongside the stories, whether you plan to do the work yourself or appoint a manager.

And yes, we will get to the teaspoons.

Set up a kitchen guests can use

A holiday kitchen needs to work for the people you are inviting to stay. They should be able to find a teaspoon, make breakfast and prepare the sort of meal your listing leads them to expect. Start there, before wondering whether a bread maker would add character.

Owners sometimes bring every spare kitchen gadget from their main home. Apparently, the holiday house has been appointed guardian of everything they no longer want.

We do not need twelve bottle openers, a mountain of scratched chopping boards or every blunt knife you have ever owned. Those are exaggerations, but the habit behind them is familiar. A cupboard can be full and still be badly equipped.

Start with empty cupboards

Before adding anything, take stock of what is already there. Open every drawer. Check the things tucked at the back. Group similar items so you can see the useful equipment, the duplicates and the items that have quietly retired without telling anyone.

> ***At one property, I counted six different types of cutlery. I made the owners sort through everything before we went live. They were happy when it was done.***

That last part matters. Owners can be attached to the contents, or simply accustomed to them. Helping them sort it out can leave everybody happier, including the person who later has to put the kitchen back together between stays.

A whipper snipper—a powered grass trimmer—has even been offered for guests to use. I have discouraged dog beds and toys, unnecessary bunks, games consoles and catalogued DVD collections too. Each addition needs a reason to be there and someone to look after it. The holiday home need not offer a hobby for every possible spare minute.

Assess each item on condition and usefulness. Something you already own can be perfectly suitable. Something brand new can be entirely unnecessary. Keep what earns its place and remove the rest from the guest kitchen.

Leave room for the guests' groceries. If every shelf is occupied by your collection, their cereal and bread have nowhere to go. A kitchen inventory should include usable space.

Plan around meals and guest numbers

Walk through an ordinary breakfast and dinner for the number of people the home is advertised to accommodate. Can everyone eat together with the crockery, cutlery and drinking vessels provided? Are there pans and serving pieces large enough for the meals you expect guests to prepare? Can they find a chopping board and a useful knife without emptying a drawer?

My usual allowance is two of each everyday plate, bowl and cutlery item per guest. For a house sleeping six, that means twelve of each, plus matching replacement stock. The reserve varies with the home; there is no fixed extra plate, bowl or cutlery total. Plan drinking vessels, cookware and serving pieces separately around capacity and likely meals. The whole reserve need not live in the guest drawers.

Check the small, ordinary tools as carefully as the appliances. A suitable can opener, bottle opener, peeler, spatula and strainer may do more useful work than the novelty gadget occupying half a shelf. The precise list should follow the kitchen you are actually offering. Do not advertise a fully equipped kitchen when the available equipment only supports reheating takeaway.

Give each group of items an obvious home. Clear organisation makes the kitchen easier for guests to use and easier to check after departure. If finding the teaspoons requires local knowledge, the drawer needs another look.

Buy for condition and everyday use

Spend on the items people handle repeatedly. Check that knives are serviceable, pan handles are secure, lids fit and equipment suits the installed cooking appliances. Follow the manufacturers' instructions for use and care. Replace damaged equipment rather than passing it from your own kitchen into somebody else's holiday.

The chopping boards deserve particular attention. Replace boards when deep cuts or other damage prevent effective cleaning and sanitising. A superficial mark is not the same thing as a board whose condition makes it impossible to clean properly. Having a large stack does not compensate for their condition. [18]

A microwave should be clean, safe, functional and straightforward to use. There is no need to buy an elaborate model purely for appearance. Equally, the holiday house does not owe lifelong employment to the microwave you received as a wedding present in 1987.

Check appliances in place before the first booking. Open doors, check the space around them and read the installation instructions. Make sure the equipment you describe in the listing is actually available and working. Keep model details and instructions somewhere accessible to whoever manages the property.

If an appliance needs a short explanation, provide one. Keep it specific to that appliance. A clear instruction for the unfamiliar control is more useful than a collection of manuals left for guests to excavate.

Spend carefully at every budget

On a tight budget, put money into a complete, serviceable basic kitchen. Reuse suitable items in good condition and replace the worn essentials before adding decorative purchases. Choose pieces you can readily replace individually rather than relying on a collection that becomes difficult to maintain after one breakage.

With a larger budget, improve durability, ease of cleaning and how well the equipment works together. Better storage and sensible organisation may be more useful than another electrical appliance. Buy additions because the intended guests will use them, not because a cupboard looks empty.

For a premium property, the finish and equipment should support the experience advertised. More expensive does not automatically mean more complicated. Someone paying for a comfortable holiday still wants to make breakfast without completing an induction course.

Across all three budgets, allow for breakages and replacement. Take a photograph of the organised drawers and cupboards and keep an inventory for the people preparing the house. This gives them something concrete to check against as items are replaced, moved or lost.

Keep the kitchen in order after launch

Getting a property ready is only the beginning. Contents can multiply over time, particularly when owners visit and bring a few things that might come in handy. I have put an owner's growing collection of fluff and knick-knacks away and told them why. A few subsequently found their way back out. Their determination was impressive.

Keep additions deliberate. A new item creates something else to clean, check, store and eventually replace. Ask whether it improves the guest's stay enough to justify that work. Owners and managers should agree before making changes that affect the setup or advertised equipment.

Cleaning also needs attention beyond the visible bench. Under fridges and dishwashers are places where I have found dirt that a routine clean can miss. Include accessible hidden areas in a planned deeper clean. Built-in or connected appliances may need appropriate help to move or access safely; hauling them out should not become an improvised changeover task.

The chairs went out to lunch

We had a trade booking with guests who were actually very good. During a routine clean partway through their stay, housekeeping noticed that two dining chairs were missing. We asked about them. The guests had taken them to the building site to sit on at lunch.

Both chairs came back completely fine, without a mark. I asked that they stay at the property in future. The dining room had supplied the seating; it had not been advertised as a portable lunchroom.

Your kitchen setup check

- Sort the existing contents before shopping and remove unusable items and unnecessary duplicates.
- Provide two of each everyday plate, bowl and cutlery item per guest; plan drinking vessels, cookware and serving pieces separately.
- Check knives, boards and everyday utensils for condition and usefulness.
- Verify that appliances work, suit the space and match the listing.
- Leave usable room for guests' food and belongings.
- Record the inventory and keep replacement stock separate from everyday guest supplies where practical.
- Agree who checks quantities, reports faults and deals with deeper cleaning.

The finished kitchen should feel easy to use. Guests have come to stay in the house. They should not need to sort it out first.



Useful sources for room setup

These sources support the safety and equipment-care points in the preceding chapters. Sources 16–18 are Australian sources checked 28 October 2026. Source 19 is US general household guidance checked 28 October 2026; it does not prescribe the author's protector-washing interval. Check the requirements where your property is located.

16. Australian Competition and Consumer Commission, Blinds curtains and window fittings guide. Consumer guidance on cord hazards, safety fittings and furniture placement.

17. Australian Competition and Consumer Commission, Bunk beds guide. Consumer guidance on positioning, assembly and suitable mattresses.

18. NSW Food Authority, Cutting and serving boards. Guidance on condition, cleaning and sanitising, used here for practical equipment care. Its food-business context does not establish that every requirement applies to a self-catering holiday home.

19. US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, When and How to Clean and Disinfect Your Home. Updated 31 January 2025; checked 28 October 2026. General guidance on following care instructions, using detergent and the recommended laundry temperature, and drying items completely.