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Top 10 ROI-Driven Design Moves for STR Owners

Your vacation rental isn't just a property—it's a business. Every design choice you make should work as hard as you do to drive bookings, 5-star reviews, and repeat guests. Here are 10 design strategies that deliver the highest return on investment (ROI) for short-term rental owners, property managers, and investors.

Amy Susanne Powers | Vacation Rental In A Box®



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Invest in Quality Bedding

- Guests forgive small things—but never a bad night's sleep.
- A high-quality mattress + luxury bedding set justifies higher nightly rates.
- ROI: More 5-star reviews, fewer complaints, and repeat bookings.



Create a Photo-Ready Living Room

- Your living room is the “hero shot” in your listing.
- Prioritize seating for your full guest count, layered lighting, and a strong focal point.
- ROI: More clicks → more bookings.



Add Work-Friendly Spaces

- Even leisure travelers expect reliable Wi-Fi and a spot to work.
- Add a desk, comfortable chair, and outlet access in at least one room.
- ROI: Attracts digital nomads, business travelers, and longer stays..



Focus on Bathrooms That Shine

- Guests equate bathroom quality with cleanliness.
- Upgrade lighting, mirrors, and fixtures. Add fluffy towels + hotel-style amenities.
- ROI: Higher reviews and competitive ADR.

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Use Durable, STR-Proof Materials

- Choose stain-resistant fabrics, washable rugs, and wipeable surfaces.
- Saves money by extending product life.
- ROI: Reduced replacement costs, faster turnovers.



Add Family- or Pet-Friendly Features

- Families = travel-ready cribs, high chairs, kid-safe zones.
- Pet owners = bowls, beds, leash hooks, fenced runs.
- ROI: Opens your property to entire new booking segments.



Design for Accessibility & Inclusivity

- Wider pathways, ramps, grab bars, and caregiver-friendly layouts.
- Service pet accommodations (relief areas, slip-resistant flooring).
- ROI: Attracts underserved markets willing to pay for inclusive hospitality.



Create “Instagrammable” Touchpoints

- Murals, themed corners, or a unique design feature guests want to share.
- Doesn't have to be expensive—just memorable.
- ROI: Free social media marketing from your guests.

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#9 Upgrade Outdoor Spaces

- Fire pits, grilling stations, and entertainment zones (pickleball, mini-golf).
- Comfortable seating + lighting extends usable space.
- ROI: Higher nightly rates + competitive edge.



#10 Think Maintenance Strategy, Not Just Design

- Schedule seasonal refreshes and routine checks on high-use items.
- Keep décor fresh and eliminate anything worn or dated.
- ROI: Protects long-term profitability and prevents negative reviews.

Design isn't about making things *pretty* it's about making them PROFITABLE.

When every decision runs through this question:
“Will this make my guest's stay easier, safer, and/or more memorable?”

It's easy to stop wasting money on fluff and start investing in what truly delivers ROI.

That's Vacation Rental Design Strategy in action.

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Thank You!

I hope this checklist helps as you strategically plan your next STR. If you have any questions or need a hand, feel free to email me.

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About the Author

Amy Susanne Powers is a nationally recognized Short-Term Rental Designer, Speaker and founder of **Vacation Rental In A Box®**. Known for her guest-obsessed, ROI-driven approach, Amy creates inclusive spaces that balance luxury, sustainability, and accessibility. She is the author of *Eco-Friendly Design: Sustainable Practices for Environmentally Conscious Short-Term Rentals* and is developing her next book on Accessible Design for STRs.