



## Highland Tourism Council

P.O. Box 68 • Monterey, VA 24465

540-468-2550 • [tourism@highlandcounty.org](mailto:tourism@highlandcounty.org)

### Considerations for Opening a Short-Term Lodging Rental in Highland County, Virginia

The purpose of this document is to assist anyone interested in starting a short-term lodging business with a physical location in Highland County, Virginia. In addition to the considerations below, you should consult with your attorney, accountant, and insurance agent about your specific situation.

1. Contact the Department of Building and Zoning to make sure you are in compliance with all zoning requirements and any permits, including sign ordinances. Note – Highland County currently does not have a business license.
  - 30 Spruce Street  
P.O. Box 188  
Monterey, VA 24465  
540-468-2323  
[www.highlandcovabz.org](http://www.highlandcovabz.org)  
Zoning Administrator Josh Simmons: [jsimmons@highlandcovabz.org](mailto:jsimmons@highlandcovabz.org)
2. All short-term rentals are **required** to pay a Transient Occupancy Tax of 5%. This tax is self-reported on a quarterly basis. The funds are directed to the Highland Economic Development Authority (EDA), which allocates them to their subcommittee of the Highland Tourism Council solely for the purpose of funding tourism efforts in the county.
  - If your rental is located within the Town of Monterey limits, please contact the following. 3% of the tax is used by the Town of Monterey government, and 2% is used by the Highland Tourism Council.  
115 West Main Street (P.O. Box 460)  
Monterey, VA 24465  
540-468-2472  
[www.townofmonterey.com](http://www.townofmonterey.com)  
Monterey Town Council: [townofmonterey@htcnet.org](mailto:townofmonterey@htcnet.org)
  - If your rental is located outside of the Town of Monterey limits but within Highland County, please contact the following. The entire 5% is used by the Highland Tourism Council.  
165 W. Main Street (P.O. Box 148)  
Monterey, VA 24465  
540-468-2142  
[www.highlandcova.org](http://www.highlandcova.org)  
Highland County Commissioner of the Revenue Yvonne Wimer: [ywimer@highlandcova.org](mailto:ywimer@highlandcova.org)

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3. Register your lodging business with the Virginia Department of Taxation at [www.tax.virginia.gov/register](http://www.tax.virginia.gov/register). Lodging businesses are required to pay sales tax on stays. Sales tax can be found at [www.tax.virginia.gov/sales-and-use-tax](http://www.tax.virginia.gov/sales-and-use-tax). If you have not already done so, for an employee identification number (EIN), register with the State Corporation Commission at [www.scc.virginia.gov/pages/New-Business-Resources](http://www.scc.virginia.gov/pages/New-Business-Resources).
  
4. The Highland County Health Department can answer questions about serving food.  
140 Fleisher Ave. (P.O. Box 558)  
Monterey, VA 24465  
540-468-2270  
[www.vdh.virginia.gov/central-shenandoah/contact-us/](http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/central-shenandoah/contact-us/)
  
5. Advertise your lodging facility. Options include:
  - Highland County Chamber of Commerce - [www.highlandcounty.org/why-join-the-chamber](http://www.highlandcounty.org/why-join-the-chamber) (Keep in mind that if you are paying TOT, the Chamber does offer a Membership with limited benefits through the Highland Tourism Council. Please see the following letter with full details.)
  - Get listed for free on Virginia.org through the Virginia Tourism Corporation (VTC) - [www.vatc.org/marketing/digital-marketing/webmarketing](http://www.vatc.org/marketing/digital-marketing/webmarketing)
  - The Recorder Newspaper - [www.therecorderonline.com](http://www.therecorderonline.com)
  - Allegheny Mountain Radio - [www.alleghenymountainradio.org](http://www.alleghenymountainradio.org)
  - Highland Telephone Company (Classified Telephone Directory) - [www.htcnet.org](http://www.htcnet.org)
  
6. Take advantage of local and regional business support.
  - Highland Tourism Council (Marketing Assistance Grants) - [www.highlandcounty.org/tourism-council](http://www.highlandcounty.org/tourism-council)
  - Virginia Tourism Corporation provides important lodging data mainly from hotels and motels around Virginia and provides this data for free. The best reference for Highland County in the data is under the “Virginia Mountains Region.” You can view and compare data from all across Virginia in areas like Occupancy Rate and Average Daily Rates to see if regional trends match your experience at [vatc.org/research/lodgingreports/](http://vatc.org/research/lodgingreports/). You can also email VTC’s Pratiksha Bhattarai at [PBhattarai@Virginia.org](mailto:PBhattarai@Virginia.org) to be sent the data weekly.
  - SCORE Free and Confidential Business Counseling (Jim Martin) - [www.score.org/blueridge](http://www.score.org/blueridge)
  - Shenandoah Valley Small Business Development Center - [www.valleysbdc.org](http://www.valleysbdc.org)
  - Additional Resources: [www.highlandcounty.org/business-and-nonprofit-resources](http://www.highlandcounty.org/business-and-nonprofit-resources)
  
7. Research local businesses, services, and events for your guests using the “Make Your Move” page at <https://www.highlandcounty.org/make-your-move/>.
  
8. Consider using national booking services like Airbnb ([www.airbnb.com](http://www.airbnb.com)) or VRBO ([www.vrbo.com](http://www.vrbo.com))

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### Welcome Letter to new Short-Term Rental Businesses

Hello,

The Highland County Tourism Council would like to thank you for providing a valuable asset to our community with your short-term-rental lodging facility! You fill a critical need for visitors to Highland County, and you directly contribute to the Transient Occupancy Tax (TOT). This tax provides the Highland Tourism Council with the means to support our tourism industry to attract more customers and consumers to your lodging facility, local businesses, and nonprofits.

Your contributions to the TOT go a long way to marketing Highland County for your benefit. TOT funds support year-round marketing and tourism initiatives, including print and digital advertising, the county tourism map, the Marking Assistance Program, signage, and more.

The Executive Director of the Chamber of Commerce is also the Executive Director of the Tourism Council, and both organizations work closely together to move the county forward by championing economic prosperity and quality of life. The Chamber's website of [www.highlandcounty.org](http://www.highlandcounty.org) is one of the best tools to advertise in the county. Because of your contribution to the TOT with your lodging facility, you have the opportunity to be listed on the website for free on the popular lodging page with a limited listing of your name, address, phone number and email. If you would like to take advantage of this opportunity, please email [director@highlandcounty.org](mailto:director@highlandcounty.org) or call 540-468-2550 for next steps. Please note that this limited listing does not include membership to the Highland County Chamber of Commerce and its accompanying benefits, such as the listing of your lodging facility's website, description, photos, and much more.

To learn more about the Highland Tourism Council, including Board members and meeting times, please visit [www.highlandcounty.org/tourism-council](http://www.highlandcounty.org/tourism-council). If we can be of any assistance, please do not hesitate to reach out. We appreciate your services to support the community and help ensure the success of the county's future! Thank you, and take care.

Sincerely,

Chris Swecker

Executive Director, Highland County Chamber of Commerce

[director@highlandcounty.org](mailto:director@highlandcounty.org)

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