

Homeowner News

Sun Realty | August 2011



Updates: SunRealtyNC.com

Using the latest e-commerce techniques to boost your property's rentals!

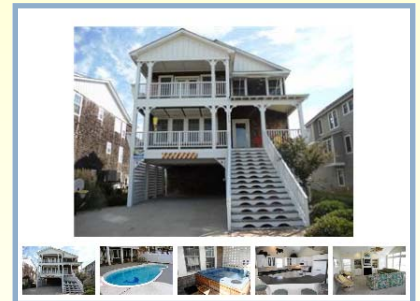
New features on your Property Details Webpage:

- **Tool Tips:** Notice the small question mark icons located beside terms that might not be totally familiar to vacationers. A definition pops up when the potential guest hovers over the icon.
- **New Photo Gallery:** The user-friendly design allows potential guests to easily scroll through photos of your property.
- **Tab Design:** User testing shows that long, cumbersome webpages distract potential guests. The new tab design allows vacationers to access important information at a glance.

Location: Oceanfront ?

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Property Details

Rates & Availability

Amenities

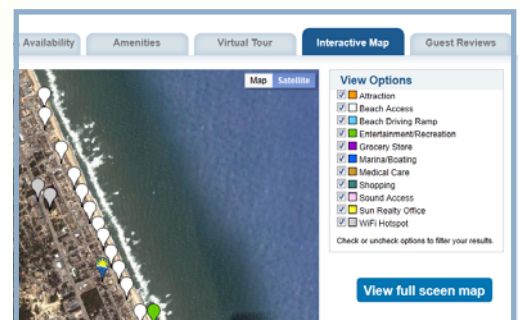
Virtual Tour

Interactive Map

Guest Reviews

- **Call to Action:** Similar to big e-commerce websites like amazon.com or walmart.com, our website encourages potential guests to take action by reserving now, calling a reservationist, emailing or taking part in a live chat.
- **Interactive Map:** You won't find anything like this on a competitor's website. This new feature easily allows guests to see how far the beach access is from their home, what attractions are nearby, where the closest grocery store is and much more!

Reserve Now!

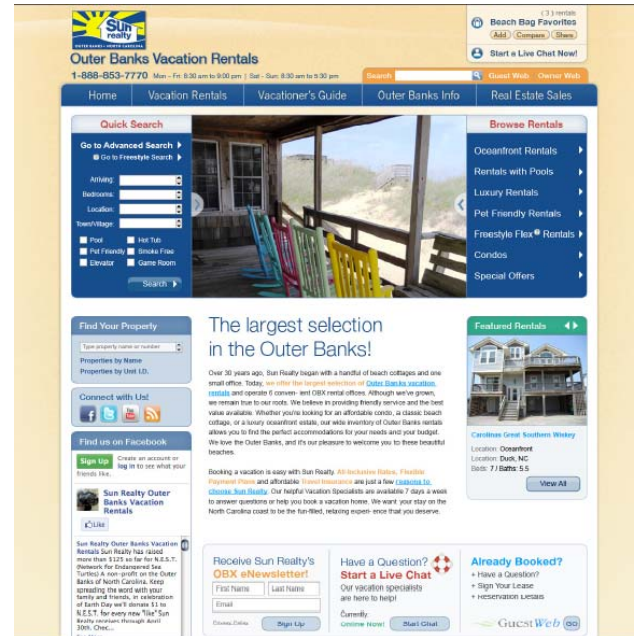


Upcoming Website Projects

Technology is constantly changing and today's savvy vacationers demand a modern, user-friendly website. Sun Realty is proud to offer a powerful and functional website based on proven e-commerce principles. We're consistently upgrading and refining SunRealtyNC.com in order to boost rentals for your property.



- **Search by Community:** Some guests have a strong preference for a specific community/neighborhood due to the location, amenities, planned activities or other features. Potential guests will soon be able to search for properties located within a specific community or condo complex.
- **New Photo Management System:** Property photos play a critical role in a vacationer's decision-making process. The better the images, the more likely we are to secure the reservation. In upcoming months, we'll implement a new internal photo management system that will allow us to display larger, higher resolution property photos on the website.
- **Revamped Homepage:** The new design will have a fresh, appealing look as well as exciting new functionality.



Check It Out

We now offer two new options on our [Advanced Search page!](#) These new search filters were developed in response to feedback from guests. Offering innovative search options allows Sun Realty to tap into niche markets and gives us a competitive edge over other vacation rental companies.

- **No Pets Allowed:** Pet Friendly properties are extremely popular with guests, yet there is a small percentage of vacationers with asthma or allergies who need a pet-free home.
- **Smoking Permitted:** Many smokers have politely requested that we offer this search option. By offering this search feature, we're reaching out to a very loyal segment of vacationers who are highly likely to become repeat guests.

- Pet Friendly
- No Pets Allowed
- Smoke Free
- Smoking Permitted

Want to Stand Out in the Crowd?

Sun Realty offers a variety of optional advertising opportunities for homeowners. These a la carte services are **reasonably priced** and are **tailored specifically for YOUR property**. This is a great way to fill in shoulder season weeks or to get a jump on 2012. Select from opportunities such as **Pay-Per-Click advertising, email blasts to previous guests, Facebook, Twitter, Craigslist.com and blog posts**. Contact your Rental Manager today for pricing and details!



Quick Tip #1

Many guests want to come back to the OBX for a quick second vacation during the fall. Special events such as the Outer Banks Marathon also attract vacationers during the shoulder/off-season. Allowing Mini Vacations is a great way to boost your post-summer rentals.

~ Christina Pergerson, Reservations Manager

Did You Get Your Mid-Season Clean?

Late summer and autumn reservations are rolling in! Does your property look fresh and inviting or does it look like it's had a busy summer? Guests vacationing in August through December deserve the same clean surroundings as your early summer visitors. It's not too late to improve your guests' satisfaction with a thorough Mid-Season Clean.

Sun Realty's professional Housekeeping Department performs a light clean following each guest departure. However, a deeper, more thorough clean is necessary after 8-10 weeks of vacationers living in your home. A professional Mid-Season Clean includes:

- Dust ceiling fans and light fixtures
- Dust window and door casings and sills
- Wash silverware and cooking utensils
- Wipe out kitchen drawers and cabinets
- Dust A/C vents and cold air returns
- Wipe deck furniture
- Dust decorative items
- Thoroughly clean utility room
- Wipe out dresser drawers, bathroom drawers and bathroom cabinets
- Launder soiled mattress pads, shower liners, bedspreads, throw rugs, etc.



Investing in a Mid-Season Clean results in happier guests, which results in REPEAT guests. We still have a limited number of Mid-Season Clean appointments available. Call or email your Rental Office today for scheduling.

Corolla
[Brenda O'Neal](#) (252) 453-4844

Duck
[Mary Griffin](#) (252) 261-5523

Kitty Hawk
[Edna Valentin](#) (252) 261-1884

Kill Devil Hills & Nags Head
[Mona Howard](#) (252) 441-7415

Salvo
[Joanne Hatchell](#) (252) 987-2766

Avon
[Janice Brown](#) (252) 995-7917

Or feel free to contact [Vivian Henning](#) or [Pam Creef](#) about any of your housekeeping needs. Thank you!

Rental Trends 2011: How to Make Your Home a Stand-Out

Your vacation home is an investment and each week that your calendar is open is an opportunity to generate rental income. **The Outer Banks vacation rental market is very competitive.** Prospective guests have lots of choices. It's important to offer an attractive, up-to-date home with comforts and amenities that entice new guests and turn them into "be backs" (repeat guests).

So, how to ensure your home has a competitive advantage? With all of the changes going on in the hospitality industry, staying on top of evolving guest expectations is critical. You also need to determine which amenities and upgrades best suit your style of home. Consult your Personal Coordinator or Property Consultant about which of these are the best options for your home. *(As a rule of thumb, plan to invest at least one full week of prime season rental income in upgrades for your home each year.)*

Pools and Hot Tubs: Not a new trend, but still a leading one. Guests appreciate the convenience and luxury that on-site pools and hot tubs afford them. Families with small children are reassured that their kids will be able to play in the water, regardless of the ocean conditions. Adults find relaxing in the hot tub in the evenings a special treat. These are costly investments initially and you need to factor in weekly service costs, but they will add to your weekly rental income and your number of weeks rented.



WIFI: We've seen requests and preferences for WIFI homes increase steadily over the past few years. With the prevalence of laptops and tablets (iPads!), nobody seems to disconnect anymore. Given a choice between a home that offers WIFI and one that doesn't, all other things being equal, guests almost always choose the home that offers WIFI.

Deluxe Bedding: A slumber oasis ensures comfort, rest and relaxation. Comfortable beds are a must. Going beyond that and providing deluxe mattresses is a luxury that can increase repeat rentals. Take a lesson from leading hotels - don't skimp on bedding. Upgrade to a more indulgent style if it suits your level of home. King sized beds are best for your master bedrooms. Many guests sleep on them at home and don't want to downgrade while on vacation.



The Convenience of Linens: More vacation homes are offering linens as an amenity. Sheets and towels add convenience and value to your home. providing guests with a linen package means one less thing for them to worry about packing and adds to the perceived value of your rental home. [Contact OBX Linen Solutions](#) for packages and pricing.

People Love their Pets: Vacations have gone to the dogs! Family vacations now often mean the entire family, dog included. There are also families where the dog IS the "child." Either way, if your home allows pets, you've opened yourself up to a wider audience of prospective guests. Our Pet Friendly properties consistently show stronger rentals than similar non-pet homes.



That's Entertainment: Upgrade from basic cable, switch to DVD players instead of VCRs, have flat screen TVs in living areas and TVs in bedrooms as well. Guests have these conveniences at home and expect the same when they are on vacation.



Everyone Has One: These days, iPods are omnipresent. Mom, Dad, kids, grandparents—they're probably all traveling with one. Your guests are on vacation for fun, and that includes their tunes! Alarm clocks with iPod docking stations, entertainment systems with iPod hooks or stand-alone iPod docks are an inexpensive and welcome extra.

Back to Basics (and Not So Basic Too): The kitchen is the heart of any home, including a vacation home. A well-stocked kitchen is a long-standing expectation. Invest in quality pots, pans and baking dishes. Don't forget serving platters and utensils. Sharp knives are a must for any cook! Specialty items like waffle irons and ice cream machines can add to vacation fun for the little ones. Adult beverage glasses (wine, margarita, martini) make evening cocktails more festive. If you have a pool or outdoor eating area, provide reusable plastic plates and cups for guests.



Green Has Meaning: Green is a hot trend. CFL bulbs and programmable, lockable thermostats show a commitment to energy conservation. ([Sun Services](#) can assist with cost-effective upgrades such as these.) Recycling bins and [curbside recycling](#) service shows a commitment to local resource conservation. Bikes allow guests to save gas and reduce emissions. Make a donation to an environmental organization or buy a [carbon offset credit](#) for each reservation. Let us know if you decide to participate in any of these environmentally responsible initiatives and we'll advertise it on your property's webpage.



Your guests' vacation expectations have changed. A vacation is an indulgence, a splurge and a family treat. **Most expect their vacation home to be as nice, perhaps nicer, than their own home.** After enticing them into making a reservation, you want to meet, if not exceed, their expectations. Repeat guests are vital to business. Make improvements and upgrades each year to keep them coming back for more. Contact your rental office today to discuss how you can re-invest in your vacation home to maximize your 2012 rental potential!

Quick Tip #2

Consider offering a "special extra" instead of immediately discounting an available week. Guests find value in restaurant gift certificates, free pool heat, free bed/bath linens, free bike rentals, etc. Such incentives will give your property an advantage over similar homes!

~ Christina Pergerson, Reservations Manager

Sun is # 1 in Real Estate Sales!

We are proud to announce that Sun Realty was ranked the #1 real estate company on the Outer Banks of North Carolina for the first half (Jan-June) of 2011 by the Outer Banks Realtor's MLS system. According to MLS statistics, Sun Realty is the leading real estate company in total dollar volume sold AND in the number of units sold.



We employ 34 sales agents in 7 sales offices covering the entire area. Our experienced, knowledgeable team has led the way in the Outer Banks market for over 30 years. Being locally-owned and managed, we've developed a reputation as a trustworthy Outer Banks company. When you combine our agents' expertise with the power of Sun Realty brand, it's no surprise that we frequently rank at the top of the pack.

"The real estate market has changed dramatically and Sun Realty has made important investments to develop a progressive support system of marketing, technology, information resources, training and support services for their sales agents," said Sun Realty VP of sales Richard Hess. "This has enabled us to provide the best possible real estate services to our customers and attract the best agents to our firm. That is why our sales are up 40% year to date over last year."

Congratulations to our sales team for this impressive accomplishment!

Curious about the current OBX real estate market? Visit www.SunRealtyOBX.com to view all properties for sale or to contact one of our professional sales agents.

Nags Head Beach Nourishment 75% Complete

Nags Head's beach nourishment project is on track and continues into the final stages. At the end of July the project moved 1.777 million cubic yards of sand (39% of the 4.6 total), with 19,000 linear feet of beach (36% of the 10 mile total) nourished between mileposts 14.9 – 17.4 and mileposts 18.75-19.8.

An important part to sustaining the project is the development of the underwater profile. The nourished sand will begin shifting offshore as well as to the north and south to form a natural landscape. The "lost" sand will build a parallel bar along the coast. This is a key component in helping to break waves and absorb their energy as they come ashore. Typically after storm events, sand from the bar is pushed back to the visible sand line; creating a stable beach cycle. Nags Head expects a 10-year life span for the beaches nourished this summer.

For more information and the latest news regarding beach nourishment, please visit the [Town of Nags Head's website](#). You'll find construction photos, weekly reports, progress maps and more.

Want to see more about the beach nourishment project? Check out [Sun Realty's YouTube Channel](#) to see a time lapsed video showing the crews at work (as well as tons of other fantastic videos about the OBX).



Pool Covers 101

Think of a pool cover as an investment, not an expense. In the long run, a quality pool cover will save you money and increase your peace of mind. Here are some facts about pool covers...

- They are designed to protect and preserve your most expensive amenity.
- They prevent unsightly stains from leaves, pine needles and other types of debris on the bottom of fiberglass or concrete pools.
- When left uncovered during the off-season, vinyl liners will fade due to increased exposure to UV rays. A pool cover will protect the vinyl liner.
- Winter storms often blow tree limbs and other types of debris into pools. Vinyl liners are often punctured or torn during such storms. A pool cover will protect the vinyl liner from damage.
- Fiberglass pools are resilient but the gel coat will last much longer if protected by a pool cover.
- Spring, autumn and holiday reservations are becoming more popular each year. Don't allow your shoulder-season and off-season guests to see an unsightly green pool.
- The top reason why you should install a pool cover: **LIABILITY**. "Pool Closed" signs and other communications are not sufficient. A covered pool is the best possible way to protect yourself from potential liability.



Feel free to give us a call at (252) 491-8701 with any questions regarding pool covers or pool safety.

Ron Akers, Sun Services

Brant Honeycutt, CasNCals Pool & Spa



Learning from the Experts

Sun Realty's Internet Marketing Manager Attends Intensive Training in Atlanta, GA

Sun Realty understands the power of Internet marketing and is committed to staying ahead of the industry curve. We frequently invest in training and education in order to maintain our edge over the competition.

Marketing Sherpa is one of the most highly respected names in the marketing industry. They specialize in the optimization of e-commerce websites, email marketing strategies and online advertising. Marketing Sherpa's empirical research provides benchmarks and best practices for the field of online marketing.



Melissa Gladwell Crocker, Sun Realty's Internet Marketing Manager, recently attended Marketing Sherpa's [2011 Optimization Summit](#). This intensive 3-day training took place at the Westin Peachtree Plaza Hotel in Atlanta, GA. The conference was attended by a diverse group of marketing professionals including employees of Cisco, NC State University, Verizon, Wells Fargo, Scottrade, Barneys New York and many more.

Melissa successfully completed the course work and passed the required exam. She is now certified in Landing Page Optimization. Applying the science of landing page optimization to SunRealtyNC.com will increase our online conversion rate and ultimately lead to more reservations for your property.



First Impressions Count!

Follow these staging secrets to boost rentals and guest satisfaction.

If your property was for sale, you'd stage it in order to give potential buyers a fantastic first impression. The same rules apply when appealing to potential guests. Proper staging will allow guests to visualize themselves enjoying your vacation home, which leads to more reservations and more revenue for you!

De-Clutter: Remove the extra trinkets and knick-knacks from dressers, bookcases, countertops, etc. They only add to making the house look cluttered and dirty. All of these items collect dust and can make the house look worn.

Find the Right Fit: Make sure that the furniture you have in the room is the right size for the space. A king bed in a small room just makes it look crowded while a twin in a big master bedroom looks lost. Be sure that you have space to move around so the guests can enjoy themselves. This goes for greatrooms and living areas as well. Over-stuffed couches are comfy but can overwhelm a room quickly.

Find the Right Place for "Extras": Just because you have an extra twin bed or bunk bed does not mean it will work well in the corner of the game room. Guests want to have the extras but no one wants to sleep in the game room while the rest of the family is playing pool. Generally, a room needs to have a closet in order to be considered a bedroom. A quality pullout sofa in the gameroom or rec room looks appropriate AND provides your guests with flexible sleeping arrangements.

Spick-N-Span: Be sure that your house is deep cleaned each spring before your first guests arrive. No one wants to walk into a house in June and find last year's dirt and stains. Be sure that you have the carpets cleaned and touch up the traffic areas as needed. If your property rents more than 10-12 weeks, plan on a mid season cleaning in July or August to freshen up the house and have your fall guests be just as happy. Again, no one wants to stay in a dirty, stained house.

Fix It Up: Guests notice EVERYTHING, even the minor damages. Things like broken drawers, cabinet doors and windows give the impression that the home is in overall disrepair. Remember, guests will take better care of a well-maintained property.

Let There Be Light: Be sure all of your rooms are well lit, including laundry rooms, garages, carports, covered decks and large closets. Guests do not know the layout of your house and feel better if they can see everything. Make sure you have lamps in all bedrooms and living areas.

Guests respect a vacation home that is updated, clean and obviously well cared for. They will be more careful while staying in your home, which will drastically reduce damages and your overall repair costs. A well-maintained vacation home will also lead to repeat rentals, which means more money for you!

Please let your Rental Office know whenever you complete significant restaging or remodeling. We'll have new photos taken for the website! Show off your hard work and enjoy the increased marketability of your property.



Quick Tip #3

Take your guests' comments and feedback seriously. Following up on their suggestions is sure to boost repeat rentals. Pay attention to guest reviews on SunRealtyNC.com and talk to your Rental Office about guest survey results.

~ Christina Pergerson, Reservations Manager