

# Interior design is truly an art,

BUT IT'S ALSO DEFINITELY AN INVESTMENT

Airbnb and rental units are popping up left, right and centre, and it has never been so easy to make extra money with the additional space many of us have. Interior designer Elaine Lewis reveals that, with some thought and planning, you too could be earning extra cash from the unused rooms and spaces around you

The types of interiors used for these spaces range from spare rooms, loft conversions and converted double garages, to tree houses, train carriages, shepherd's huts and entire homes, to name but a few. Almost anything goes these days and the quirkiest the better in my opinion. The space you are willing to share is the only limit.

Clever home owners are even able to make a full-time living out of renting out their personal spaces; some even invest in bespoke garden rooms built to a high specification with stunning glazing, turning them into profitable rental spaces.

But, in my experience, interiors are the key. Interior design is truly an art. But, it's also definitely an investment.

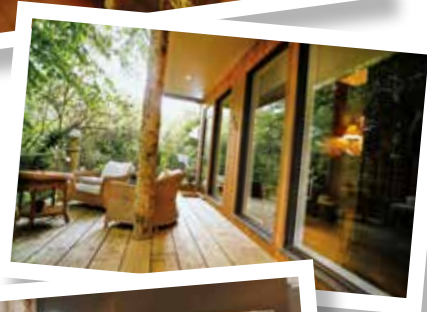
Although the concept may sound easy, the reality in the execution of a successful Airbnb is not easy unless you're prepared to put the time and work in. Your space

must have a well planned and carefully designed interior, which supports all the essential criteria as well as the necessary luxuries someone escaping for a break needs, right down to the extra touches that make the difference to someone's stay. Add a superb location with stunning views and, rest assured, your rental will never be empty.

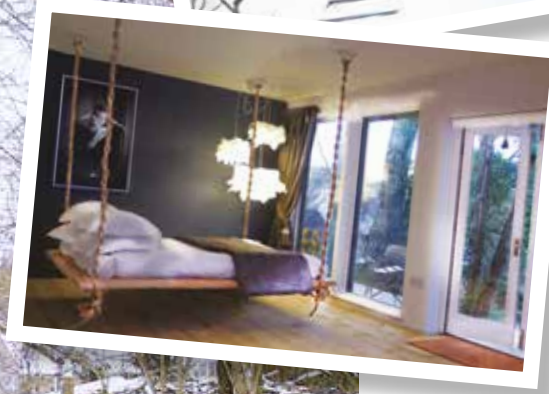
## So what is Airbnb and what do you need?

Airbnb is an online marketplace that enables people to rent out their properties or spare rooms to guests for a commission fee. In February 2018, Airbnb also launched Airbnb Plus for owners of properties whose interiors stand out from the crowd.

Homes can now be booked in 41 cities around the world, a figure that has more than doubled since its launch in February. Plus homes are nine times more likely to



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are also a great source of inspiration for unique pieces that will be the talking point for guests – whether it’s a gorgeous vintage lamp or a retro room divider – it will be a photo opportunity for them to remember.

When in doubt, or you have a very small space, get furniture you can ‘see through’ meaning something with lots of open spaces and not too bulky; it will create a sense of openness.

Wall hooks – strange choice I know – can add a bit of pizzazz to an entry wall without making it feel cluttered. Don’t use just any old wall hook though; cool quirky wooden shaped, trendy or artsy ones look fabulous.

Large colourful framed artwork or canvases can fill a big wall and give the illusion of space. Remember to keep it simple and uncluttered; larger items for a small space often work better than lots of smaller items. Shaped accessories and objects with texture and feel can look stunning with wall boxes accenting some carefully chosen accessories, and plants will complete your look.

Whatever you do, don’t skimp on plants. Indoor plants and their containers act as accessories; they add to the final design and help to create the overall look and feel of the space. For example, cactus and succulents add a south-western feel, palms add a sense of luxury, and tall, sculptural plants add the right touch to a contemporary minimalist feel.

And last, but by no means least, is the photography. Good pictures are possibly the most important element of any Airbnb listing. They bring your property to life and can ultimately be the decisive factor for potential guests. ○

Elaine Lewis has been professionally styling residential and commercial interiors for over a decade. She lives in Malvern with her family. See ► [www.elainelewisdesigns.org](http://www.elainelewisdesigns.org) for more information. Follow her on [Instagram.com/elainelewisdesigns](https://www.instagram.com/elainelewisdesigns) and [Facebook.com/elainelewisdesigns](https://www.facebook.com/elainelewisdesigns). All photos by XXXXXXXXXXXX



be seen by guests because of beautiful interiors and locations, and the hosts are earning 75 per cent more, on average, than other listings.

So, what do you need to get started? If you have a space in your home that isn’t used, or an outdoor space to build something, you are halfway there.

I would advise choosing a ‘theme’ or ‘style’; think vintage, industrial, trendy, elegant or to whatever your space lends itself. Choose your colour scheme and keep it simple; maybe utilise a palette of just four colours. Remember, keep the finishes predominately neutral, including your main flooring, wall colours and finishes, so that you can add splashes of colour with cushions, throws and accessories. Always use white bed linen; it’s a psychological thing (they communicate cleanliness). In addition, quirky wall and floor tiles, wall panelling, boarding, murals, feature lighting and wood burners all help to achieve a look with a difference.

One of the most important things you can do when it comes to the interior design of your Airbnb is to focus on getting the floors right. Buy nice tiles for the bathroom. Rip up carpets and have the old floorboards polished, or buy some beautiful rugs. Guests do care what’s under their feet when they’re staying in a rental. Make it nice.

When it comes to investing in furniture for your rental, there are many places you can buy cool stuff that’s affordable. It’s hard to go past IKEA in terms of home decor because you’re guaranteed to find furniture that’s acceptable to more consumers, is not too offensive and has a reasonable price tag.

If you’re tight on budget, you can still make a fabulous impact using second-hand furniture and using bits and bobs from flea markets and charity shops. Be creative; buy a £20.00 second-hand bedroom chair and have it re-upholstered in some lovely fabric. Second-hand stores