

Sunday Times

# HOME WEEKLY

5 APRIL 2015



• AIRBNB, ANYONE?





Yellow GoldFinch paint by Plascon adds personality to a well-equipped, open-plan kitchen.



The TV area becomes a feature wall with paintings and ink drawings by Ben Coutouvidis and photographs by Mary Duncan.



In the lounge, Skinny laMinx textiles and wallpaper complement Klooftique furniture and mid-century finds.



An assortment of indoor plants personalise the space, unlike typical holiday accommodation.

# room to spare

Airbnb is one of the world's fastest growing accommodation start-ups. Here's one woman's story of getting it right – and some advice about how you can make money from your extra space by letting strangers nestle in your home

**Text & production** Simone Borchering **Photography** Justin Patrick

**A**irbnb is a great way to rent out your property to a global audience, or find an affordable place to stay while travelling, but beyond that it's also a way of creating a sense of belonging in an unfamiliar place. The company's winning formula is largely due to its transparent online platform, which allows users to gauge and review a host's or guest's credibility. Airbnb also taps into people's curiosity and growing interest in a sense of community – it brings together total strangers from across the globe and creates shared experiences that otherwise wouldn't have happened.

Cape Town architect and Airbnb host Astrid von Brucken weaves her design skills into making Airbnb apartments feel just like home, or better. "I enjoy meeting new people and tailoring spaces into beautiful

and comfortable homes away from home," she says. She consults on the interior design and the ins and outs of Airbnb hosting; one project in particular being the apartment featured – her friend Richard's 90m<sup>2</sup> Afro-Scandi abode in the heart of the Cape Town CBD. "Richard already had most of the furniture, much of which he collected on his travels, and I added some of my own mid-century furniture. We reupholstered, wallpapered and painted up a storm," says Astrid, describing how they spent two weeks gearing up the place before their first guests arrived.

According to Astrid, refurbishing homes for Airbnb rental is not only a way of enabling property owners to create a new form of income, but also adds inherent value to their properties. And while she says she loves the way listings on Airbnb often attract guests with a similar aesthetic to the host, she believes decorating

Airbnb accommodation is a fine balance between reflecting the owners' personal style as well as leaving room for the guests own interpretation of their surroundings.

As a frequent traveller herself, Astrid believes Airbnb guests are not merely looking for a hotel experience, but rather an authentic, personal space that they can relate to and feel comfortable in. They also like having access to an insider's perspective to the area or place in which they are staying.

Says Astrid: "I use my prior travel experience as my departure point when suggesting to guests how they can access the city and its treasures in a way that a travel guide may not. I think that personal touch is partly why people choose Airbnb." And of course she always buys a bunch of fresh proteas from the local flower seller up the road on her way to meeting her guests for the first time.

## 5 secrets of airbnb success

- 1** Be completely upfront about what you offer so no one is left disappointed. This could simply involve stating that there are three flights of stairs to get to your apartment, bringing to guests' attention certain household rules, or letting them know that your affectionate dog may sleep on their bed at night.
- 2** Update your insurance so you are covered should an accident take place. And make sure your property is up to date with, and abides by, the latest local health and safety regulations.
- 3** Check your local zoning laws and body corporate rules to make sure they allow short-term holiday rentals.
- 4** Speak to your accountant about the tax implications of earning a profit from your Airbnb rentals.
- 5** If you don't have capacity to manage your Airbnb listing, employ someone who can reply to enquiries, update your calendar, meet and greet guests, and tidy up (or arrange a cleaning service) before new guests arrive.





WHAT'S AIRBNB?

Airbnb is an online marketplace that connects people looking to rent their homes with people who are looking for accommodation. Users include hosts and travellers: hosts list and rent out their spaces (in 192 countries worldwide) and travellers search for and book accommodation. The name Airbnb came about when the app's founders, Brian Chesky and Nathan Blecharczyk, inflated three airbeds in their San Francisco apartment and rented them out to people looking for a place to stay during an international conference. Breakfast was part of the deal, hence the original name, Air Bed & Breakfast. Visit [airbnb.com](http://airbnb.com) or download the app.



Vintage market finds and overseas travel treasures make for an eclectic main bedroom.