



Get ready for kickoff:
The STR World Cup
Playbook 2026



Contents

1. Introduction	p 02
2. Understanding the opportunity	p 03
3. Know your market	p 05
4. Pricing strategies that win	p 08
5. Marketing for guest intent	p 12
6. Operational risk control	p 13
7. Choose the right World Cup partner	p 15

This playbook is an educational resource provided by Guesty. It is an independent publication and is not endorsed by, affiliated with, or sponsored by FIFA. The FIFA World Cup™ and related trademarks are used solely for descriptive and informational purposes.

Introduction

A major opportunity in short-term rentals is about to hit North America



The 2026 soccer World Cup will reshuffle travel patterns across the United States, Canada, and Mexico at a scale short-term rentals rarely experience. Across 104 matches, roughly 5 million international visitors will move through 16 cities in 39 days. Hotel capacity is expected to fill. Prices are forecast to climb fast. And any market with reasonable access to a host city will likely feel sustained pressure.

World Cup travel isn't typical tourism. Many fans move in groups, building multi-city itineraries around match schedules. They may anchor themselves in a hub and book short, high-value nights in host cities as teams advance. This creates rapid, uneven demand spikes that reward operators who can price flexibly and stay ahead of booking patterns.

This playbook is built to help you do that. It combines lessons from recent mega-events with practical frameworks for pricing, positioning, operations, and guest experience during one of the most compressed, volatile booking cycles North and Central American short-term rentals will likely see this decade. The focus is on strategy, looking at how demand is likely to behave, where the opportunities will sit, and what you need to have in place before the booking surge.

The World Cup is coming. The hosts and operators who understand its rhythms now will be the ones who capture the upside when the market moves.

Understanding the opportunity

World Cup demand follows the tournament. Fans travel where their teams play, so booking activity shifts from city to city as the match schedule moves. That mobility, together with the volume of visitors, creates the sharp, repeated demand spikes that short-term rentals are well positioned to capture.

Historical data shows how these patterns play out. In Qatar 2022, **short-term rental occupancy surged more than twentyfold** as visitors competed for limited supply. During the 2024 European Championship, some host cities saw **hotel RevPAR double**. The exact numbers vary, but the behavior is consistent: when match-driven travel concentrates large groups in specific cities on fixed timelines, short-term rentals see significant growth.

How fans actually move

World Cup guests follow patterns tied directly to match schedules and group travel needs. They coordinate in groups, build multi-city itineraries, and often choose a primary “hub” market for most of their stay.

At the same time, a significant share of fans fly in and out for one or two matches, booking short, high-value nights tied directly to the games they attend. This creates two patterns:

- **Longer hub stays** in major metros or desirable regional bases.
- **Short, premium stays** in host cities timed tightly around match days.

This behavior expands opportunity beyond immediate stadium zones. Any market with practical access to the game, such as a reasonable drive or a direct train, could become part of the demand map.



The booking timeline

World Cup demand develops in stages. Some of the earliest related bookings in host cities will likely be made by working travelers. Media crews, organizers, and support staff often commit to longer operational stays weeks or months before peak fan travel. Factor **length of stay** into your pricing model to avoid underpricing these early, high-utility guests.

For fans, early interest forms once group-stage locations are announced, but the most decisive booking activity happens as travelers finalize routes, coordinate groups, and lock in budgets. This is when pricing and availability decisions have the greatest impact.

01

Pre-tournament planning period

Fans commit to routes and accommodations. Corporate and media teams secure long operational blocks. Availability tightens in both host and halo cities, and pricing begins moving with booking velocity.

02

Group stage

June 11–27

Predictable, broad demand across all host cities. Many travelers build multi-city itineraries, using one market as a longer-term base and booking shorter stays for specific matches.

03

Knockout rounds

June 29–July 15

The most volatile and profitable phase. Match results reveal host cities only days in advance, triggering rapid booking spikes.

04

Final

July 19

Maximum concentration in the New York–New Jersey region, with spillover into nearby markets offering access and remaining inventory.



The practical takeaway

The strongest booking waves are driven by decisions made closer to match dates, not far in advance. Understanding how demand moves, and preparing for its volatility, is what positions operators to capture the upside.

Know your market

Demand won't hit every city the same way. Each host market has its own mix of international pull, airport connectivity, and inventory. Understanding where your city sits on the tournament map determines how you should position your property.



The 16 host cities fall into three practical groups based on how travelers might use them.



Global destination markets, such as New York, Los Angeles, Miami, Mexico City, Vancouver, and San Francisco, attract international tourism regardless of the event. These cities benefit from strong leisure appeal, long-haul inbound travel, and built-in demand that drives earlier bookings, longer stays, and higher pricing power.



Global gateway hubs, like Toronto, Atlanta, Houston, and Dallas, behave differently. Their airport networks, connectivity, and year-round business travel make them natural bases for multi-city itineraries. Fans may anchor longer stays in these cities and move in and out for specific matches, creating steady compression and strong mid-cycle demand.

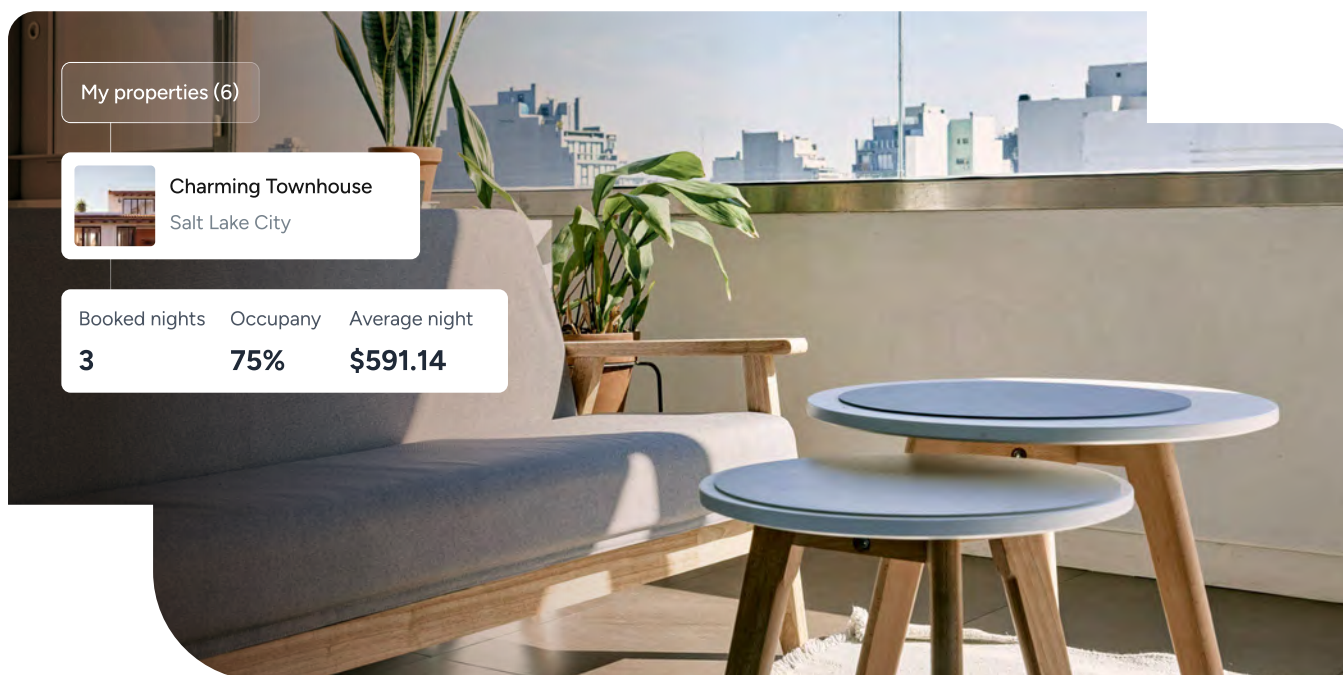


The remaining **event-led markets** are Boston, Kansas City, Philadelphia, Seattle, Guadalajara, and Monterrey. They'll likely see demand tied closely to match locations and team progression. These types of markets typically experience sharper surges closer to match dates, driven by fans traveling directly for specific games and by groups seeking more space or better value.

Halo markets & regional spillover

Demand doesn't stop at city limits. Suburban and secondary areas near major hubs absorb overflow when central markets compress or become too expensive. These areas appeal to groups that want more space, easier parking, or quieter neighborhoods. They can also work well as bases for fans building multi-stop itineraries.

A [report by Deloitte](#) confirms that short-term rentals are the primary driver of regional spillover. In U.S. host cities, hotels are concentrated in only 38% of zip codes, whereas STR listings are present in 67% — nearly double the geographic coverage. This dispersal allows operators in residential halo zones to capture demand that traditional hospitality infrastructure cannot reach.



The hidden market: Team base camps

Beyond the host and halo cities, a third tier of demand will emerge: team base camps. All 48 teams select specific training headquarters from a FIFA-approved list, often in locations far from the tournament hubs.

Towns like Chattanooga, Salt Lake City, and Green Bay will likely see a surge of high-intent traffic from media, support staff, and superfans who follow their national team exclusively.

Lessons from the data

To win, you need to understand the specific data signals in your market. We analyzed match days in three distinct cities to show you where opportunities and risks are hiding.



Seattle

The profit gap warning

The scenario

A tech-hub with high demand but hesitant hosts.

The data

- Demand surge: +291% (Match 32)
- Occupancy pace: +209%
- Rate growth: +36%

The lesson

Seattle illustrates the biggest risk: underpricing. While demand has nearly quadrupled, booked rates have not kept pace. Early-bird guests are snapping up prime inventory at bargain prices.

If you're in a high-demand market, hold your rates. The demand is there to support a premium.

Kansas City

The volume play

The scenario

A mid-sized market that's about to be overwhelmed.

The data

- Demand surge: +952% (Match 58)
- Occupancy pace: >1,000%
- Rate growth: +3%

The lesson

Never underestimate an event-led market. Kansas City hosts are treating this like a normal summer, pricing flat while demand explodes by over 1,000% in certain areas of the city.

If you have inventory here, you're sitting on a potential goldmine.

Fort Worth

The sleeper halo

The scenario

The twin city to Dallas that hosts forgot.

The data

- Demand surge: +548% (Match 101)
- Occupancy pace: +525%
- Rate growth: -48% (Match 22)

The lesson

This is the power of the halo market. While Dallas is an official host city, fans are flocking to Fort Worth for access to the AT&T Stadium. Yet, hosts are actually lowering rates (-48%).

It's the ultimate opportunity: high demand, low competition, and massive room to raise prices before the rest of the market wakes up.

Data source: [AirDNA](#). Figures reflect year-over-year trends available at the time of publication. Market conditions are dynamic and subject to change as the tournament approaches.

Pricing *strategies* that win

Static pricing will cost you money during the World Cup. The market moves too fast, and guests book too chaotically. Rates have to adjust in real time if you want to capture the upside.



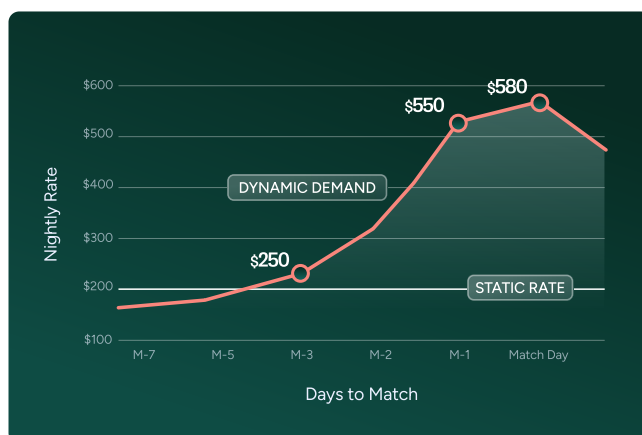
A bigger picture than one-off dates

Match days matter, but the days around the games are where a lot of revenue lives. Guests arrive early, stay late, and combine matches with tourism. Most markets will follow a predictable pattern:

- ✓ **Two to three days before a match:** Early arrivals and long-haul travelers.
- ✓ **Night before and night of the match:** Peak demand.
- ✓ **Day after:** Strong for guests extending their trip or repositioning to another city.

Price each of these periods differently.

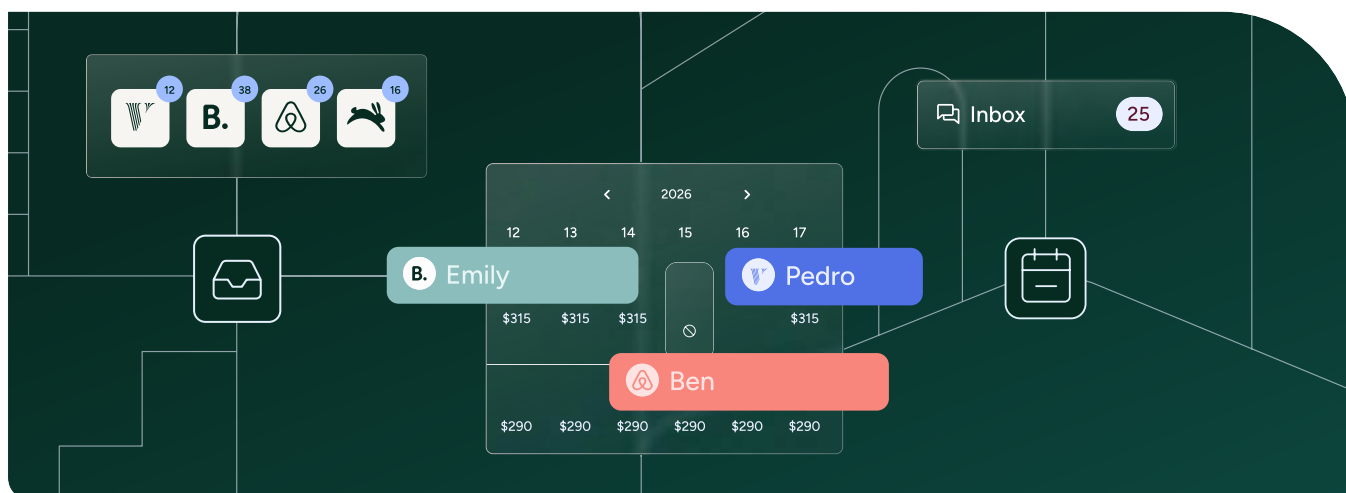
A flat rate for the whole of the World Cup will waste high-value nights and makes lower-demand nights harder to fill.



Layer your rates

Start with your normal summer baseline, then build layers based on actual demand. Raise rates as compression increases. Pull back when booking pace slows. Pricing too high too early kills momentum; pricing too cautiously during surges leaves revenue behind. Let booking velocity guide the adjustments.

For context on premiums, [market analysis by Deloitte](#) for the World Cup forecasts a conservative STR baseline price increase of 90% over standard summer rates. However, their research highlights that historical data from similar mega-events shows hotel premiums often ranging from 136% (F1 Grand Prix) to 296% (2010 World Cup). STR operators have significant elasticity here, but a 2x multiplier serves as a strong starting baseline.



Knockout rounds: volatility is the opportunity

Group-stage demand is predictable. Knockout rounds aren't. Fans only learn where their team will play a few days before each match, and cities hosting those games see sudden, aggressive spikes. That volatility is where short-term rentals outperform:



Raise rates the moment match locations are confirmed.



Watch comparable listings; compression becomes visible fast.



Expect last-minute stays, short lead times, and high willingness to pay.

Don't ignore shoulder nights

Travelers don't move in perfect sync with the match schedule. Shoulder nights may book later but can still command meaningful lift. Price them above baseline but below peak. They fill gaps and increase total revenue without scaring off longer itineraries.



Cancellation policies: protect revenue without killing demand

Speculative bookings are part of tournament travel. Fans reserve multiple options and cancel once their team's next location is clear. Build structure that protects your calendar:

-  **Tiered policies:** cheaper non-refundable rates and higher fully-flexible rates.
-  **Stricter terms during knockout windows:** uncertainty is highest; protect premium nights.
-  **Clear deposits:** reduce the risk of last-minute churn blocking availability.



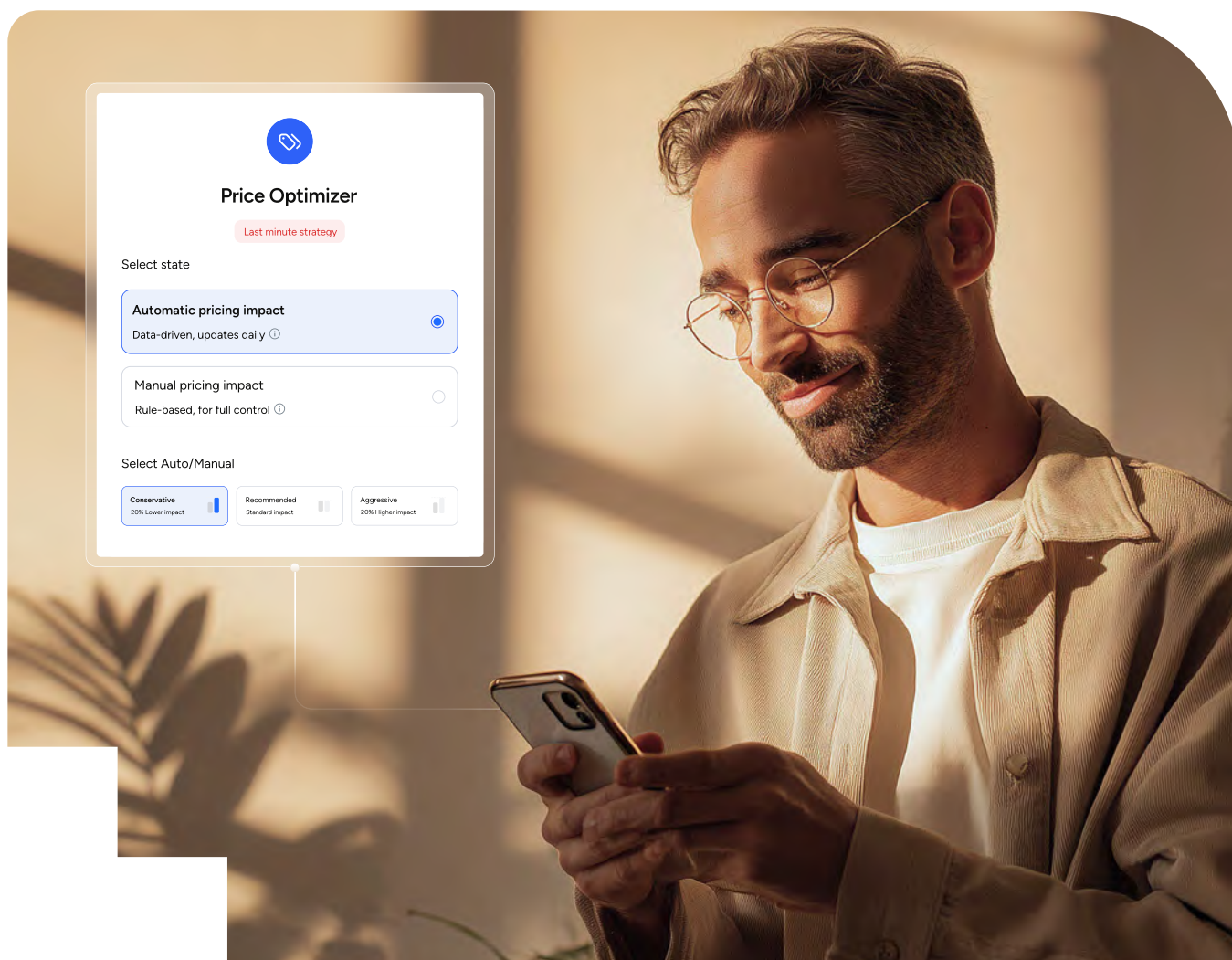
The goal isn't to eliminate cancellations, but to make sure the bookings that stick are profitable.

The pricing mindset

Adjust early enough to build momentum, fast enough to catch surges, and strategically enough to stay competitive in softer windows. Operators who treat pricing as a living system will outperform those who “set and forget.”

Use tools to help you

World Cup pricing is a live environment. Manual adjustments aren’t fast or smart enough, and static calendars guarantee missed revenue. A **dynamic pricing tool** that responds to market compression, booking pace, and competitor changes will outperform manual rate-setting, especially during knockout rounds.



Marketing for guest *intent*

The tournament will attract international groups and multi-generational families coordinating complex itineraries. Standard luxury signals (thread count, art, decor) matter less than logistical capacity.



They're not browsing for inspiration; they're solving a geometry problem. If a guest has to message you to ask "Will this fit us?" or "Is it near the train?", you've already lost the booking. Adapt your listings to fit their intent.



Pivot to capacity: Swap close-up vignettes for wide-angle utility assets. Prove the dining table seats eight. Show bed configurations clearly to resolve group sleeping anxiety



Visual proof of transit: Don't just write "10 minutes to the stadium." Upload a screenshot of the map verifying the walking distance to the transit line or stadium gate. World Cup guests prioritize logistics over aesthetics.



Align with search intent: Travelers search by event, not just city. Inject natural keywords into your titles and descriptions: "Near [Stadium Name]," "Direct train to Fan Zone," or "Group Capacity."



Price the hub: Recognize that your unit may serve as an anchor for fans traveling to other cities for specific matches. Market the stability of a long stay in a gateway hub like Atlanta or Dallas.



Work the basecamp: If a team selects your city as their home for the tournament, you're no longer marketing to general tourists — you're hosting a specific national fanbase. Pivot your listing titles and guidebooks to welcome them directly.

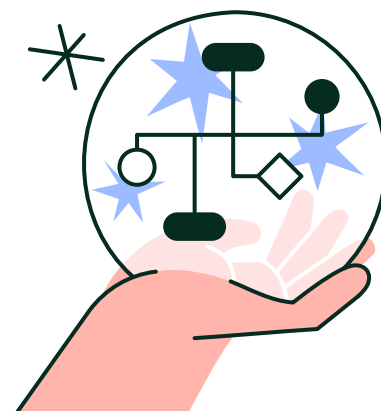


Bridge the last mile: GPS navigation and cellphone reception can fail during stadium exits. Update your digital guidebook — advise guests to walk fifteen minutes to a specific intersection to escape the rideshare surge zone.



Solve the broadcast gap: International guests assume they can watch their match on your TV, but North American rights are split up between broadcasters. They might not find their game on basic cable.

Audit your streaming packages to ensure full access to World Cup games, and mention it in your listing. Email a cheat sheet ("France vs. Brazil is on Channel 402") ahead of the match.



Operational risk control: Systemizing the *chaos*

The 2026 World Cup could prove a 39-day infrastructure stress test of your systems. Uneven arrival times, cross-border travelers, and high-velocity turnovers create single points of failure that manual operations will struggle to handle. You need to hard-code your operations to mitigate risk before the first fan arrives.

The turnover firewall

Match schedules dictate your turnover windows, not your cleaning staff. When overtime pushes a match late, guests may arrive in the middle of the night, while departing groups will push check-out limits to the final minute. A standard turnover window is a liability, so you must build a firewall around your operations:



Eliminate just-in-time inventory

Don't rely on runners to restock toilet paper or coffee during the tournament. Traffic patterns around games will likely impact logistics.



Foolproof your access protocol

Physical key handovers are impossible at scale during a tournament. Deploy smart locks with automated backup code generation. If a primary code fails at 2AM, your system must provide an instant fallback without needing your support team.



The precheck protocol

High-volume, high-value international bookings are a magnet for credit card fraud and chargebacks. Your infrastructure must verify the human behind the booking before you release check-in details.



Automate ID validation

Use integration tools to match government ID to the credit card on file instantly.



Proactively flag documentation

The U.S. has introduced a FIFA Pass to fast-track visa interviews. Mention this and ESTAs in your automated booking confirmation to help avoid potential issues. If a guest doesn't get approval to travel on time, it becomes your cancellation vacancy.

The behavior buffer

You can't suppress the energy of a World Cup but you can reroute it. Trying to strictly prevent noise often leads to backlash or ignored rules. Instead, use your digital guidebook to redirect the celebration.



Recommend where to celebrate

Share geolocated pins for local Fan Zones or late-night bars where rowdy behavior is welcomed.



Frictionless protection

Chasing security deposits for breakages is administratively heavy. Get a **damage protection product** that covers content damage automatically, keeping your team focused on turnovers rather than claims.

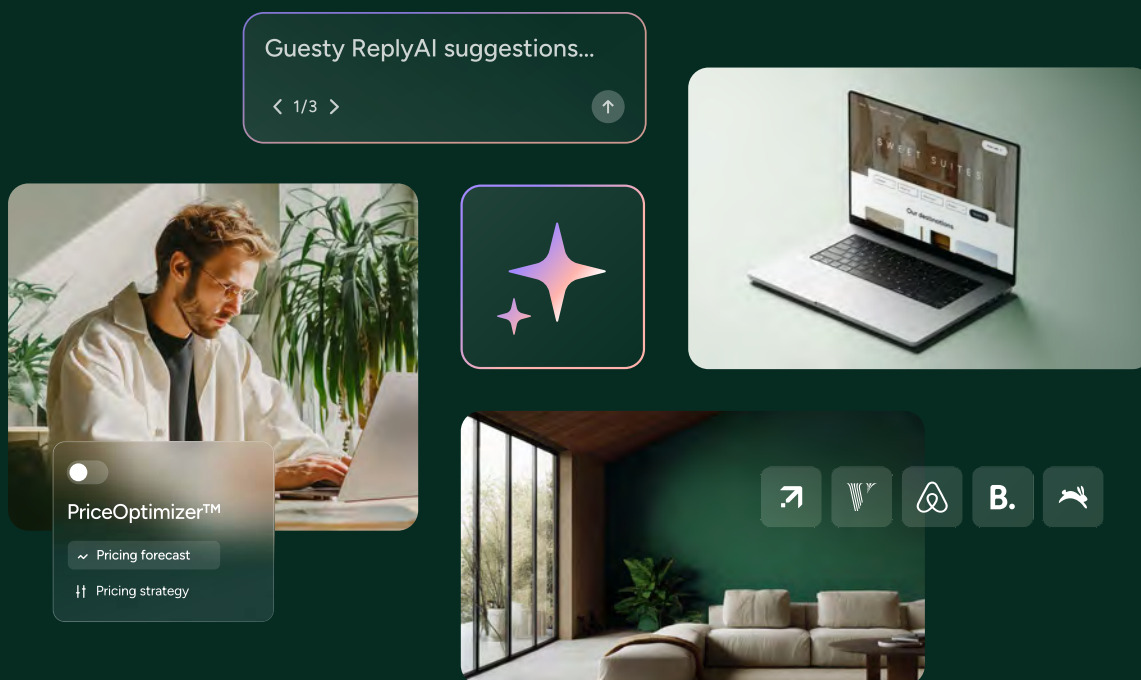


The bottom line

In a high-compression event, execution scales. The operators who win won't just be the ones with the best rates; they will be the ones whose infrastructure holds up when the pressure hits.

Choose the *right* World Cup partner

The World Cup creates a level of operational pressure that exposes weak systems fast. Guesty helps operators stay in control by centralizing operations, stabilizing communication, and keeping calendars, pricing, and availability in sync across every platform.



Reach more guests through more channels

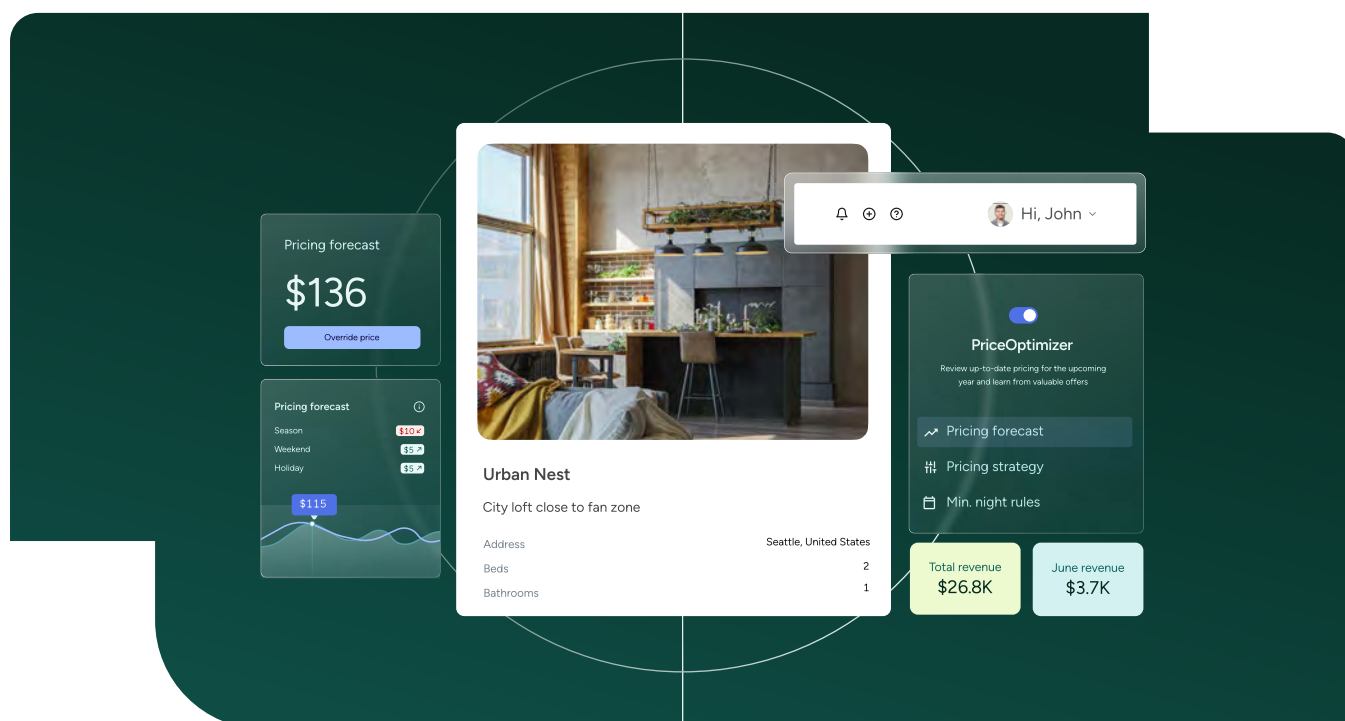
Different countries tend to prefer different booking channels, and international guests rely heavily on the platforms they trust. A strong presence across multiple OTAs and channels matters more during international events.

Guesty's **Channel Manager** connects to 60+ major platforms with **real-time sync**, not scheduled updates. That speed matters when demand spikes and availability changes in seconds. It protects you from double bookings, keeps your listing surfaced everywhere, and ensures prices and minimum stays are aligned across channels.

Capture demand spikes instantly

World Cup demand is volatile. Maximizing profit will be impossible without dynamic, reactive, AI-powered rate optimization tools. **Guesty PriceOptimizer™** automates your pricing by processing hyper-local data points to adjust your rates in real-time.

You can set event-based rules to capitalize on match days and demand pacing to automatically increase rates as occupancy fills up. This ensures you capture maximum revenue during surges without monitoring the market 24/7.



Centralize communication

Guesty consolidates every message from your guests into a single **Unified Inbox**, capturing messages from OTAs, email, SMS, and WhatsApp.



With WhatsApp serving as the primary communication standard for international travelers, this integration ensures you track every interaction in one command center without switching apps, losing threads, or missing time-sensitive inquiries.

Overcome the language barrier

Being able to communicate with international guests in their own language is a game changer. According to a paper in the [European Journal of Tourism Research](#), guests who were able to communicate with accommodation in their native language left significantly higher reviews.

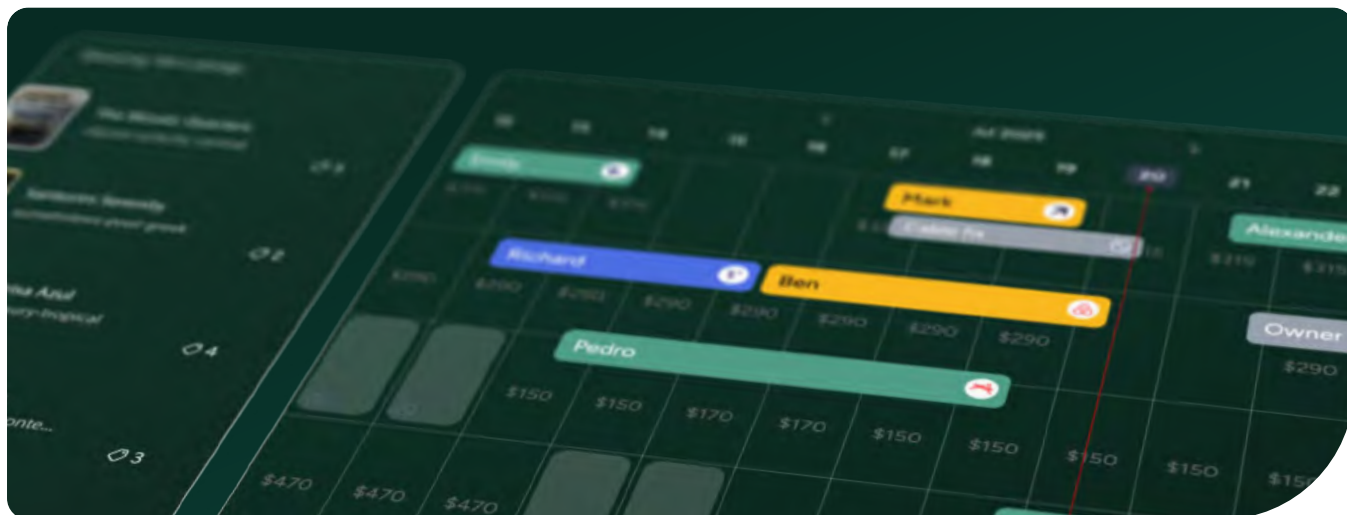
Guesty ReplyAI™ integrates directly into your Unified Inbox to save you switching between translation apps. It automatically translates incoming messages and analyzes sentiment to detect urgency.

The AI then generates context-aware responses in the guest's native language, allowing your team to communicate clearly and quickly without ever leaving the dashboard.



See all your bookings at once

With fans moving between cities and booking late, calendar availability needs to update instantly. Guesty's **Multi-Calendar** shows every reservation, every hold, and every channel in one place — with real-time adjustments. This prevents calendar gaps, blocks, and the kind of double bookings that carry heavy penalties during peak demand.



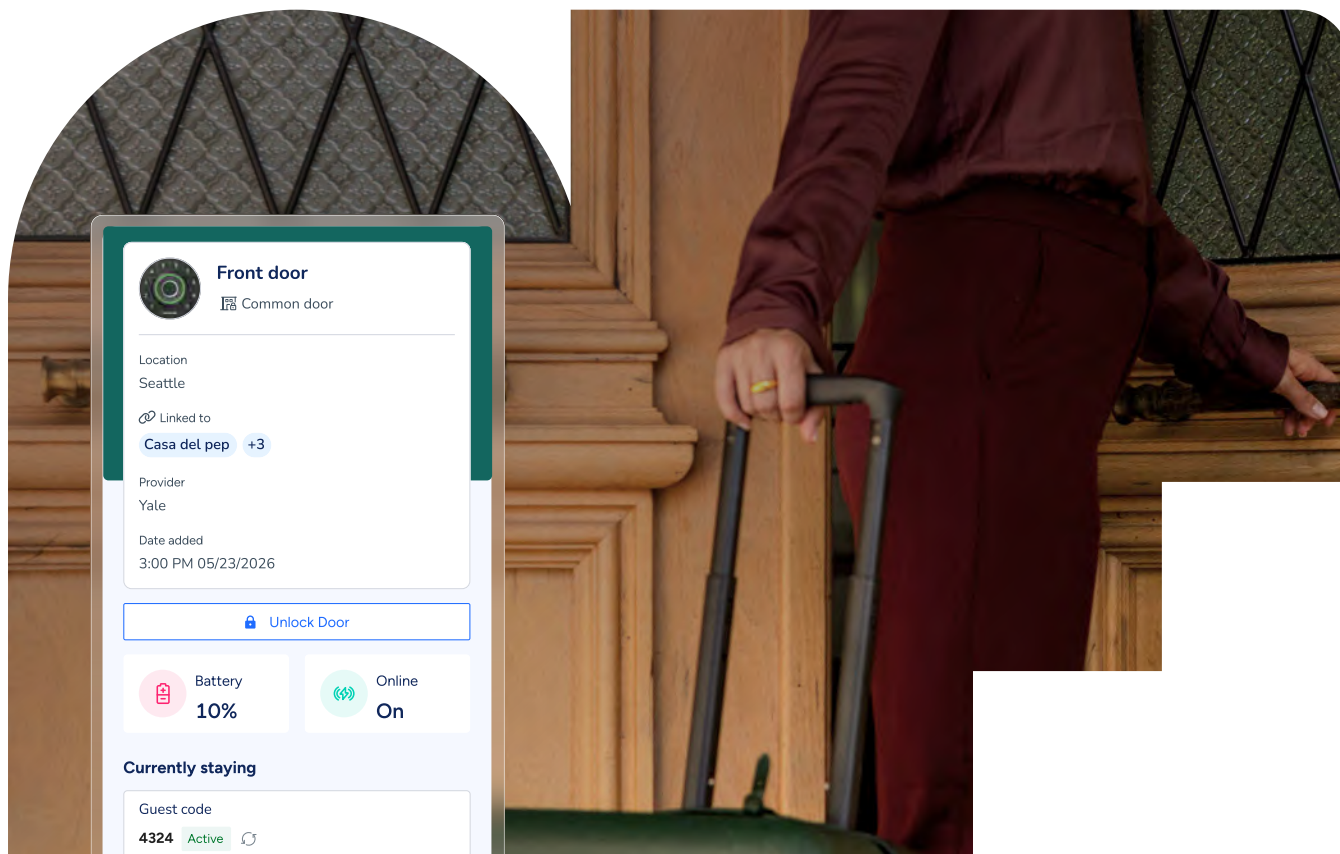
Get a reliable operations system

Guesty's **task management tools** help keep turnovers, maintenance, and inspections on track. Cleaning crews receive automated assignments; issue resolution stays documented; and operational workflows remain consistent across properties. During high-volume stay patterns, these systems prevent missed turnovers and reduce last-minute recovery work.

Automate 2AM arrivals

Match schedules mean guests will arrive at all hours, often late at night. Physical key handovers are a point of failure. **Guesty LocksManager™** eliminates this risk by generating a unique, encrypted access code for every reservation automatically.

Based on the timings you provide, the code activates at check-in and deactivates at check-out, giving you precise control. If a primary code fails, the system instantly provides a unique backup code, ensuring fans get into their beds without waking up your night shift.



Mitigate booking risks

Risk management is essential to make the most of the World Cup period. Built-in protection through Guesty's **Shield Suite** suite can help cover the increased exposure that comes with high-intent, high-volume travel.



Secure payments and payment-method verification

Guesty's **payments tools** allow operators to collect complete guest details early, verify the payment method before check-in, and ensure the card on file is valid and authorized. Built-in **ID-verification** options add another layer of certainty, and keeping communication on-platform provides a clean audit trail.

These small, structured steps prevent major failures — from mismatched names to declined cards — that can disrupt arrivals during compressed booking windows and cost you money in chargebacks, and are particularly important when dealing with a high volume of last minute bookings from international guests.



Damage, liability, and friction-free protection

With rowdy groups, late-night arrivals, and heavier property use, damage and liability risk naturally increase. Guesty's Damage Protection covers content damage, smoking or bed-bug incidents, accidental breakage, and structural issues. Guesty Liability Coverage protects against guest injuries, accidental damage to the property structure, and neighboring assets.

The claims process is friction-free. There's no need to chase guests or negotiate deposits. Universal channel coverage ensures protection follows the reservation regardless of the booking platform, and fast claim resolution keeps properties rentable without downtime.



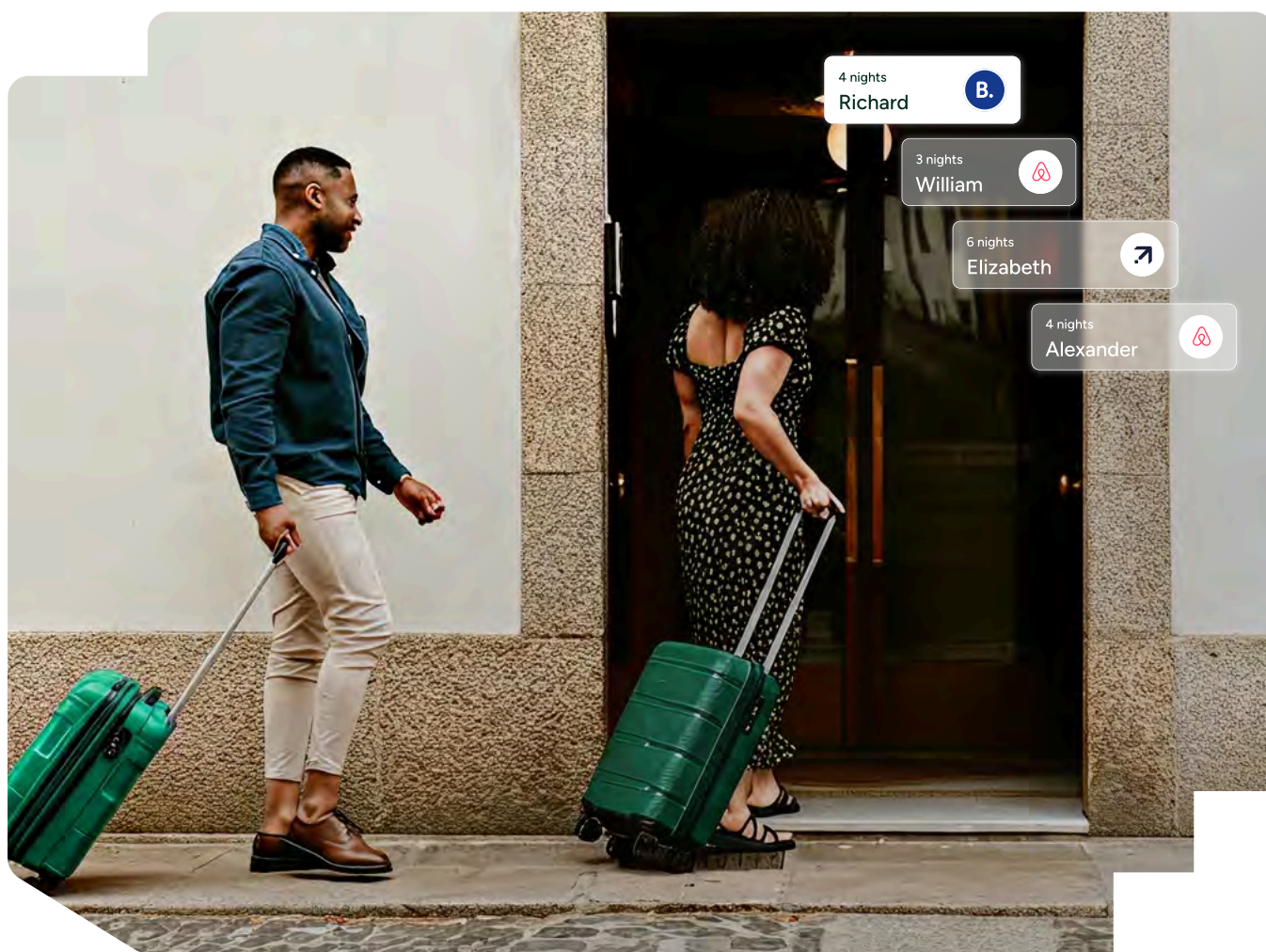
Upselling travel insurance

Many World Cup guests have complex travel plans and face last minute changes for a variety of reasons.. Guesty lets you upsell travel insurance directly through the booking flow, providing guests with added security while generating incremental revenue.

Why this matters for the World Cup

Tournament travel is fast, volatile, and demanding. Real-time availability, centralized communication, and reliable operations are incredibly important to keep calendars full and prevent costly mistakes.

With the World Cup around the corner, now is the time to put the right systems in place to set yourself up for success. Guesty's platform gives you the infrastructure you need to manage the volume, protect your calendars, and deliver the best results across every match window.



Set up your business for World Cup success

Find out more about all the tools available to get your properties ready for the World Cup this summer. [Book a free consultation](#) with a Guesty expert.