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**GETTING STARTED**

## Booking summer beach rental a new year's decision

**By Carolyn Bigda**  
Your Money staff reporter

Posted December 31, 2006

With the new year a day away, you've no doubt started to brainstorm plans for 2007. And if festivities with friends and family are any influence, you may jubilantly commit to take a trip or rent that summer beach home together.

Property management companies and agencies that advertise rentals report that reservations spike just after the holidays.

"January is our busiest month," said Ross Twiddy, marketing director for Twiddy & Co., which has managed rental property in North Carolina's Outer Banks for 29 years. "Jan. 2 is the busiest day of the year for reservations."

A 2003 study by Yesawich, Pepperdine, Brown & Russell, a marketing company based in Orlando, shows that 80 percent of leisure travelers have taken at least one vacation with extended family, other families or friends in the past five years. And that trend is expected to grow.

That means you will have to plan ahead. Some of the largest properties, those with perhaps nine or 10 bedrooms, typically go the quickest for summer rental.

"The logistics of getting that many people, all with different schedules, to agree on one week, and the rarity of homes that size make it necessary to book early," Twiddy said.

If you don't need as much space or have some flexibility with dates, you'll find more supply.

Regardless, though, you shouldn't book hastily. Vacation homes can

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Carolyn Bigda

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"You don't have to ask people to help with the dishes, and no one ends up being the workhorse," Strohm said.

Finally, decide how you'll handle cancellations. In most cases, you won't be refunded the full amount of rent, which you generally pay in advance, if you have to bag the trip.

Consider buying travel insurance if you're worried (or if you're traveling to, say, a hurricane-prone area). For Twiddy rentals, insurance costs 6.5 percent of the rent.

*E-mail Carolyn Bigda at [yourmoney@tribune.com](mailto:yourmoney@tribune.com).*

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