



The Ultimate Guide to

Choosing the Right Smart Lock for Vacation Rentals



When opportunity knocks, smart access help you answer

If you work in one of over 140,000 mid to large-sized professional vacation rental management companies around the world, the continued growth of this industry comes as no surprise. Even during an unprecedented pandemic when lockdowns ensued and cancellations wreaked havoc within your industry, a silver lining gradually appeared.

Unlike hotels with lots of common spaces, short-term rentals became the more popular choice for vacationers once restrictions lifted. What's more, a new trend in travel emerged thanks to a significant rise in remote working. Untethered to an office, today's traveler has more flexibility and seeks to combine living, working and playing by staying in short-term rentals for longer stays. That leaves you, the vacation rental management professional, in an enviable position of opportunity. With some strategic planning and investment, you can take advantage of this new landscape. Undoubtedly, access control software paired with smart locks will become one of your savviest moves.

Smart locks are an obvious upgrade over traditional, mechanical-key locks which require a physical hand-off, can get lost and lead to the hassle of rekeying doors. But invest carefully. Most smart locks on the market are designed for homeowners, not vacation rental properties. This guide outlines the unique challenges common to short-term rentals when it comes to smart locks.



Top Smart Lock Features for Vacation Rentals



Integrate with Guesty, Airbnb and more.



Monitor everything from a centralized dashboard.



Manage all lock brands and technologies from one app.



Customize guest email and text notifications.



Get rid of the need for keys and rekeying doors.



Create access schedules for guests and housekeepers.

Smart locks vs. traditional locks

Smart locks offer a host of benefits over traditional locks. Aside from being a more secure way to manage rental access, smart locks give you greater control of your property from anywhere.

✓ **No key handoffs or lockboxes**

Use a unique, self-expiring PIN code for each guest that only works for the duration of his or her stay. Improve your rental's security while preventing accidental lock outs.

✓ **No more lost keys, no more rekeying doors**

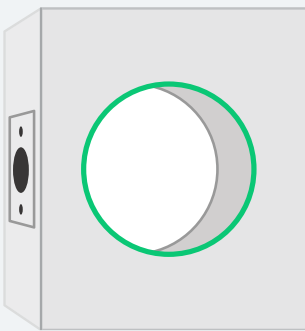
Without physical keys to get lost you won't have to worry about them falling into the wrong hands or having to rekey doors.

✓ **Easy access control from anywhere**

Smart locks give you control of your access from anywhere via your smartphone or laptop. You're empowered to be responsive when guests cancel or extend their stay.

Hardware considerations

When it comes to selecting a smart lock, there is no lack of hardware options. Choosing the right model comes with practical considerations and some easy-to-overlook specifics. Many of the features that are great for a smart home are not quite right for a vacation rental.

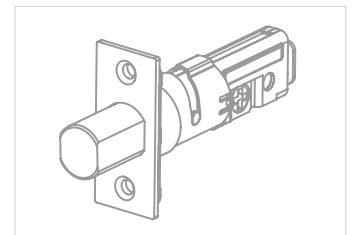


Door preparation

Understanding your existing door prep and latch type is important in choosing a smart lock that works with your door. If you are replacing an existing lock, your door already has been drilled to accommodate this lock and its latch. Fitting the lock on the door requires a **face bore-hole**, which is usually a 2½-inch, circular hole through the face of the door. The new lock you select may not fit this exact same template, but additional drilling can be done to accommodate it.

Latch type

There are two main form factors for latches—tubular and mortise. Tubular latches include a separate latch mechanism for the deadbolt and spring latch, while a mortise latch incorporates both within the same mechanism. You can easily identify which style you have by looking at the side of the door. Tubular latches have smaller latch faces measuring about 2¼ inch in height, while mortise latches have an 8-inch latch face.

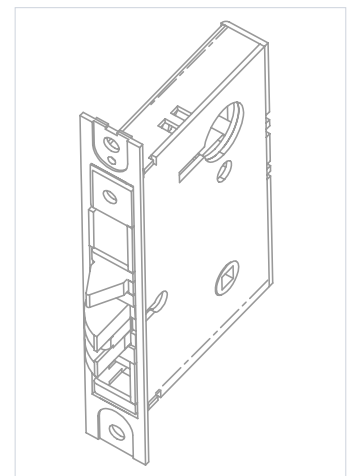


Example of a tubular latch.

Lever vs. deadbolt locks

Whether you choose to use a deadbolt or lever smart lock depends on personal preference and the use case for each rental property. Deadbolts require a more precise installation to ensure that the extending deadbolt aligns perfectly with the door's strike plate.

Levers use a spring latch and are typically more forgiving with minor strike plate alignment issues. Most often, your decision between a smart deadbolt or lever is determined by the existing lock you are replacing. If your existing door has a separate lever and deadbolt, the easiest change is to upgrade the deadbolt lock and leave the existing lever lock in place.



Example of a mortise latch.

Gateway or Wi-Fi network connection

Some smart locks connect directly to your Wi-Fi network while others require a gateway. Z-Wave locks, for instance, usually come with a hub that works as a bridge from the smart lock to your Wi-Fi network. Make sure to check whether your lock works on a 2.4GHz or 5GHz Wi-Fi network.

Number of PIN codes

As a rental owner, you manage a lot of guests and want a lock that can store a reasonable amount of codes. Some locks have limited storage for access codes, as low as 10 PINs, while others store thousands at a time. If you purchase a lock with limited PIN storage, you need to be more diligent about removing old guest codes, unless you are using a software platform like RemoteLock which can queue the codes until just before each reservation.

Support for keycards and other credentials

While most smart locks use PIN codes, some locks offer other options for access such as keycards, prox cards or even a smartphone.



Proximity cards, or prox cards, are physical cards which the user waves near the lock to unlock the door. These can be helpful for providing quick, reliable access to multifamily properties, but are generally not needed for residential vacation rentals.



Mobile credentials allow your guests to use their phone's Bluetooth for access. They simply hold up their phones to unlock doors. Note that this solution may also require users to download an app and have Bluetooth enabled on their smartphones.



Fully offline options: In some rare cases, your property may not have a Wi-Fi network. This is most common for isolated mountain lodges or remote bungalows. If you have properties like this, a lock with algorithmic PIN codes may be the right access solution for you.

Algorithmic locks like those enabled with ReadyPIN have limited software capabilities but allow you to provide a PIN code from anywhere which only works for a specified duration. The lock recognizes the guest's PIN without any need to connect to the internet.

Weather rating and fire rating

Consider where you intend to install each lock. For example, if you manage a remote ski lodge that is exposed to the elements, you need a lock with the appropriate weather resistance rating. Additionally, if you're installing a lock within a building with certain fire codes or standards, you may need to conform to a lock grade or fire rating. Check with your HOA or COA if you're unsure about these specifics.

Look and feel

The final consideration is obvious but important: Do you like the style of the lock? In the end, you want your rentals to look good so selecting hardware that matches the style of your property is important. The good news is there are many smart locks on the market to choose from.

Software Features: How smart is your lock, really?

Smart locks are “smart” because they connect to the cloud, which is where their true value is realized. Without cloud-based software, a smart lock is no better than a traditional lock. This is why it is vital to evaluate the software features that will power your locks.

Many software solutions for smart locks work with one specific brand of smart lock. This can be very limiting as you try to grow your rental business. Thankfully, cloud-based platforms like RemoteLock allow you to manage your choice from the most popular smart lock brands on a single, centralized dashboard.

When you invest in new smart locks, choose a software platform that can support your business as it grows. Purchasing the wrong software can lead to wasted time managing finicky apps and even having to replace your smart locks, which may be better suited for applications other than vacation rentals.



Put simply, the cloud is just a metaphor for the internet. Smart locks require an internet connection to be smart, because the software that manages them is hosted in the cloud. For this reason, the features of your smart lock's software can be as important, if not more important, than the specs of the hardware.

Key software features to consider:

Integrations with your preferred rental booking software

It's easy to automate much of your process by using software that integrates with vacation rental booking software like Airbnb, Guesty and others.

Automatic email and text notifications

Rather than rely on a flawless memory and endless free time, simply set up templates for emails and text notifications that are delivered automatically when guests create their bookings. Provide them with self-expiring credentials that work only when and where they should.

Scalability

A major limitation of most of the software available is that it can't scale to allow management of multiple properties. While this isn't a major issue if you have one or two properties, it's absolutely crippling when managing many rentals. The best software for short-term rentals is designed to scale with your business.

Custom schedules for guests, housekeeping and maintenance

Creating access schedules makes it incredibly easy to manage exactly when a guest, housekeeper or maintenance crew has access to the property. RemoteLock allows you to apply schedules across many properties. For instance, you can give the same housekeeping crew access to multiple properties. Since their credentials are unique, you can also track their access and confirm that your rentals are ready for the next guest.



Remote**LOCK**



Kwikset



Support for many lock brands

Most software only supports one lock brand. This is incredibly limiting and leaves you stuck with the same hardware options for every one of your properties. It's vital to choose a software platform that can support a variety of lock brands.

Platforms like RemoteLock let you combine different lock models and brands from companies like Yale, Schlage and August. You can even manage wired access control systems that control main entrances, elevators, garages and more.

Complete management from a single, centralized dashboard

There's no reason that managing your smart locks should be difficult. Choose software that puts all of the locks across all of your properties in a single, centralized app.

RemoteLock lets you choose from managing your locks via your laptop or smartphone.

The easy-to-use dashboard gives you a high-level view of all of your rentals.

Whether you manage one short-term rental or hundreds, smart locks can be a time-saving upgrade for your business. But remember, your lock hardware is only as smart as the software that runs it.

Looking to upgrade today?

RemoteLock's rental access experts are standing by to help.

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