

# Rental homes give travelers white-glove treatment

## Concierge service spreads to vacation villas

By Gene Sloan  
USA TODAY

Thinking of renting a luxury home this summer? Luxury leader Abercrombie & Kent is betting you'll pay extra for one that comes with a helper on call.

The company is the first to go nationwide with the concept of "concierge villas" — luxury rental homes that come with a private concierge who will handle everything from buying groceries to picking up ski lift tickets to arranging an in-house massage.

"Going on vacation in a private residence always felt like a do-it-yourself vacation," says Larry Andreini, president of Abercrombie & Kent Concierge Villas, which launched this week in 21 destinations including Aspen, Colo., Naples, Fla., and Maui. "Somebody had to buy the groceries, clean the house and



By Sam Ward, USA TODAY

run errands, (which means) one of the people on vacation never got to do the vacation."

Abercrombie is following a growing number of local and regional rental companies that have begun offering luxury homes with concierges on call. Pioneers of the emerging trend:

► **Moving Mountains Lodging.** The Colorado-based company promises to "move mountains" for vacationers who rent one of its chalets in Steamboat Springs, Colo., or Big Sky, Mont., which come with a "chalet host," daily housekeeping and private chef. Prices for a chalet that sleeps 16, including most meals, start around \$1,000 a night. Information: 877-624-2538; movingmountains.com.

► **Whistler Executive Accommodations.** The Canadian company specializes in rental homes around Whistler, B.C., that come with staff to arrange activities. Three-bedroom homes start at around \$365 a night. Information: 877-325-1177; whistlerexecutive.com.

► **The San Sophia Inn, Condominiums and Private Homes.** The Telluride, Colo.-based property management company offers three- to six-bedroom homes in southwestern Colorado that come with concierge service, daily housekeeping and private chefs on call. Prices run \$250 to \$300 a

bedroom a night. Information: 800-537-4781; sansophia.com.

"So many property management companies are nothing more than a check-in desk," says San Sophia owner Keith Hampton. "We wanted a standard more akin to a four-star hotel."

The move toward concierges for rental homes is part of a broader trend. Top hotels have always offered concierges in the lobby, but a growing number are adding entire concierge floors with extra services. Mass-market cruise lines such as Norwegian have begun assigning personal concierges for passengers in top cabins. And now there's a company in Los Angeles, Mint Lifestyle, that offers around-the-clock, year-round concierge service that you call from home — or on the road.

Of course, having a concierge on call doesn't come cheap. Mint Lifestyle's service costs \$12,000 a year. Abercrombie & Kent's three- to seven-bedroom homes (888-499-5745; akconciergevillas.com) start at around \$1,000 a night during the off season.