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REPORT: Airbnb price gouging could cost NCAA college basketball fans and parents thousands
San Antonio Airbnb hosts increase prices by as much as $3,200 per night

SAN ANTONIO, TX – As the NCAA college basketball tournament kicks off today, AirbnbWATCH, an affordable housing advocate and consumer watchdog group, released a report today showing significant price gouging by San Antonio Airbnb hosts, many of whom are commercial operators running multiple listings, for rentals during the College Basketball Final Four weekend.

The report reveals rates for many Airbnb rentals increasing by thousands of dollars per night during the College Basketball Final Four weekend. These are similar to the findings in previously released reports during the Super Bowl and Mardi Gras. Now, during the College Basketball Final Four weekend, an apartment in downtown San Antonio, which is normally rented for $222 per night, was being advertised for $3,278 per night for the weekend. A typical four-night stay at that apartment would cost a total of $888, but the same length of stay during the College Basketball Final Four weekend would cost more than $13,112.

“Airbnb’s price gouging was a dream killer for many football fans during the Super Bowl and a buzz kill to party goers during Mardi Gras. Airbnb is continuing that practice with folks looking to enjoy one of America’s truly great sporting events, the College Basketball Final Four,” stated Lauren Windsor, AirbnbWATCH’s spokesperson. “Permitting their ‘hosts’ – who many times – let’s be honest – are real estate professionals – to raise rent by these astronomical rates is a very worrisome precedent that Airbnb is setting at widely attended events.”

In a San Diego Union-Tribune article, Chris Lehane, Airbnb’s Head of Global Policy and Public Affairs said, “It’s pretty clear that our hosts don’t engage in gouging. When demand for Airbnb increases, supply also tends to increase. When you look at big events, like for a Super Bowl weekend, there’s maybe a $20 increase.”

Windsor points out the reports exposing Airbnb hosts gouging guests at major events, like the Super Bowl, Mardi Gras and now at the College Basketball Final Four, tell a very different story.

“While many basketball fans hoped to see their favorite teams cut down the nets in San Antonio, they were certainly not expecting to have their dreams be ‘stuffed’ by extremely pricey stays,” stated Windsor. “Commercial Airbnb hosts will be testing the limits of college basketball fans goodwill with high lodging prices, while driving thousands of complete strangers into the streets of San Antonio neighborhoods.”

The College Basketball Final Four is scheduled for March 31 through April 2 of this year.

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AirbnbWATCH is a project of American Family Voices, bringing together a coalition of organizations and concerned citizens dedicated to a common goal: protecting communities and travelers by exposing commercial hosts who use sites like Airbnb to run illegal hotels in residential properties under the radar and by making sure all hotel businesses play by the same rules.