

Savoir-faire

How to do all sorts of things in France...

HOME TRUTHS

How can you make extra money from your holiday home? We asked some of the leading rental companies for their top tips

Do you already own a holiday home or *gîte* in France? Or perhaps you're thinking of buying one? You may want to spend lots of time there yourself, but if you're thinking of renting it out to holidaymakers for some or all of the season, here are some ideas to help you maximise your income.

'If you're looking to buy, it's all about location,' says Sarah Cope, The Hseasons Group (THG) general manager for northern France. 'Choosing a property in a place you like visiting is fine, but if it's not somewhere that other people like to go, you can put your bookings at risk. Many people look to locations within easy reach of airports, which is great, as long as you are not relying on budget airlines. I've seen owners lose bookings when the flight route suddenly gets reduced or even cancelled, making your property extra difficult to reach. The most successful properties are in locations which have multiple access points which can be accessed year round.'

Dave and Arline Gibney are owners of Vue Tranquille in La Roquette-sur-Var, available through French Country Cottages (ref FME479), part of THG. They add: 'It's important to buy something you really love, that way you will enjoy the time you spend there and will feel more inclined to invest in the property. We'd be happy to live in our house and have found that this is the key in attracting the right kind of holidaymaker, who cares for it like we do.'

Delphine and Michaël Codron agree. 'I'd advise anyone wanting to buy and let in France to choose and design everything as if it was for you. Ask yourself if you would you like to spend your holidays in the property? What features would you want – a large bathroom, a swimming pool, even a spa? By doing this, you will always feel as if you were on vacation and your guests will appreciate and enjoy staying in your property.' The couple own and let four properties (ref F62120, F62121, F62122 and F62125) near Pas-de-Calais that are available with French Country Cottages.

When it comes to advertising the property, Owners Direct Holiday Rentals recommend that you take photographs on sunny days – an obvious point perhaps, but it's often forgotten that blue skies and golden sun are top of most people's holiday desires. They add that you don't need to show photographs of every room in your house – a beautiful view or extra shot of your pool will be far more useful than the one of your cloakroom!



Domaine du Crestet at Vaison-le-Romaine, Provence
(www.frenchconnections.co.uk, ref 484)

Another good piece of advice from Owners Direct is to put yourself in the holidaymaker's shoes and consider what would you like to see in an advertisement.

Glynis Shaw of www.frenchconnections.co.uk stresses: 'Images sell, so use the best possible photographs and when choosing thumbnail photos for websites, make sure they say something interesting about your property and have "kerb appeal".'

Villarenters and Rentalsystems general manager James Marchant adds: 'It sounds obvious, but take care to make sure photos are in focus and bright, and that the rooms you photograph are uncluttered. Use the outside shots first in your advert and make sure you include any views that the property might enjoy.'

James says that uploading a video onto a rental website is also well worth doing. 'We've noticed a marked improvement in sales if a video is added to listings,' he says.

Glynis Shaw also values video. 'Produce a short video so potential guests can really see and feel the place and imagine themselves there,' she says. 'Include clips of the local area, restaurants, markets and special events.'

In the description of your property, James Marchant recommends that you keep sentences short but let your enthusiasm show through. 'Imagine you are telling a friend why you bought the place and why you enjoy going there,' he says. Try to capture the local flavour, describe the local bakery, bar and food



Pool at a barn conversion in Montsegur, Aquitaine/Dordogne
(www.ownersdirect.co.uk, ref fr729)