



# House clinic

ASK THE EXPERTS

## STANDING OUT FROM THE CROWD

Last year my wife and I bought a property in France and intend to move there permanently when we retire in three years' time. Until then we will be using it as a holiday home for ourselves. We have now decided to rent it out to holiday-makers at times when we know we won't be there, and were wondering what we could do to help our property stand out from the crowd. Also, we're not particularly au fait with computers beyond a rather basic understanding but realise that the internet will be an invaluable tool when it comes to marketing our house. What would be the best way to go about doing this?

Graham Edwards

**Glynis Shaw of French Connections ([www.frenchconnections.co.uk](http://www.frenchconnections.co.uk)) replies:**

The place to get your property noticed by holidaymakers is indeed the internet. Assuming that you can handle Microsoft Word and email, the process of listing your home on a French holiday property website is really quite simple. I suggest that you first produce a write-up of your property with all the points and information that you want to get across and put it into a Word



document. It will make completing an online sign-up easier as you will be able to pick up the various points to add as you go along. Choose a company with whom you can speak on the

phone as well as communicating by email.

When it comes to making your property stand out, the single most important selling point on your page is photographs. Attractive, clear, well-composed images are essential, especially for the 'thumbnail', which should really entice browsers. Tell the story of your property in pictures – and use as many photos as possible. Holidaymakers want to see what they can expect, imagine themselves there and feel confident to book. Video also helps you stand out while giving exciting information in a fun way.

Give your property a name and write an eye-catching title for your page, then make your property description informative and articulate. Wax lyrical about the history, atmosphere or special qualities of your home and describe things to see and do in the local area. To stand out even more, become a 'featured property' within your listing site. This will ensure that your thumbnail photo and brief description are highlighted – often on the home page or in an email newsletter to holidaymakers. Special offers also grab attention, as they are highlighted on the page and listed in a special section of the site. Offers are useful for early bookings and late availability.

As you plan to use the property yourselves, be meticulous in updating your availability and keeping records to avoid double bookings. Check emails regularly, sign up for SMS text alerts and respond quickly to enquiries.

## GET IN TOUCH!

With your questions about French property or life in France...

Email: [vicky.leigh@archant.co.uk](mailto:vicky.leigh@archant.co.uk) or post to Vicky Leigh, FPN, Archant House, Oriel Road, Cheltenham GL50 1BB

## WHERE TO START?

We have recently purchased a property in France that requires renovation work to bring it up to scratch before we move in. We would like to make the property as energy efficient as possible and wondered what work should be prioritised to achieve this? Our budget is limited so is there a most cost-effective energy efficiency measure? We're looking forward to taking on the challenge but are a bit overwhelmed as to where we should start!

George and Claudia Lloyd

**Chartered surveyor Mary Hall replies:**

Without seeing the state of the house it's difficult to say what the priorities must be. Be sure you know what your plans are for the whole house before you start any work, otherwise you may find yourselves spending more to change things further down the line. Normally the rule is to get the house watertight first, so if the roof needs work start with that. Also heat loss through the roof is generally more significant than through the windows. Put in as much thermal insulation as

possible, and solar panels if you're going down that road. Roof insulation is generally the best and most cost-effective place to start, and the more insulation you can install there the better the result. Make sure that you check there is sufficient ventilation when you insulate your loft to prevent condensation occurring, which could cause dampness and decay to the roof timbers. If you're planning to capture rainfall from the roof, don't forget the gutters and downpipes, and decide where you're going to store the water. Water butts can only take so much, so you'll need to think about bigger storage tanks or a means of running excess water away. If you decide to replace the windows but money is tight then change them as you tackle each room but go for the best you can afford. Aside from energy-efficiency matters, remember that if you're not on mains drainage, your private foul system will need to comply with the *normes* within a year, so make sure to budget for that as well.

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