



GLYNIS SHAW is joint MD of French Connections holiday rentals and property sales online

Crowd pleaser

Glynis Shaw helps a reader who wants to make their rental property stand out from the competition

Q There seem to be a lot of gîtes and houses on the holiday rental market. What can I do to get my property noticed and give it an edge?
Mrs K Richards

A It's true that the holiday letting market in France is competitive, with many more properties on offer than a few years ago. Also, more owners now run their property lettings as a professional business rather than just a source of pin money. But don't let this overwhelm you. Check out the competition and then make use of that research to help focus on your own presentation, pricing and unique selling points.

The place to get your property noticed is, of course, the internet. Independent holiday-makers definitely expect to browse and book online – and the single most important selling point on your page is photographs.

Good quality images are essential. Aim for clarity and pleasing composition to tell the story of your property in pictures. Take external shots in the best light for its position and architecture and don't show pylons, washing lines, cars or people. Make sure the interior is free from clutter and again, pay attention to light. Keep trying until you get photographs that are clear, bright and well composed. If all your guests exclaim: 'This is really nice, your advert didn't do the place justice,' then your presentation is failing, so you'll need to act to make it better.

Quantity of photographs is also important. Remember

that holiday-makers want to see what to expect, imagine themselves already there and feel safe to book without risk of disappointment. That's what prompted us to display large-format photographs and up to thirty images for each property. You could also include a professionally edited two-minute video tour of your holiday home. Not everyone is using video so you'll stand out from the crowd while giving your potential guests useful information in a fun way.

Make your property description informative and articulate, giving your page an eye-catching title and using colourful adjectives to draw the reader in. Then wax lyrical about the history, atmosphere or special qualities of your house or gîte and describe the holiday experience. Finally explain accurately the practical details of what's on offer, both at the property and in the local area.

Browsers love suggestions of what to do and where to go, so to give yourself an edge, add a month-by-month calendar of 'what's on in my area' to encourage guests to book specific dates according to their interest. Say when your village has its annual fête and include a photograph. Give examples of routes and places for one-day and half-day outings and say that other ideas are available on request on arrival.

If you run multiple properties and are present on

site, then arrange a themed evening such as wine tasting or a barbecue as a get-together one night a week for those guests who like to socialise. Also look at special activities that you can offer – classes, therapies or sports. If you don't have appropriate skills yourself, then bring in a teacher or therapist and make bookings for local sports facilities on behalf of your guests. You can then target specific markets by sending information to specialist groups, journals and websites. Spell out all the local activity options in your property listing and make sure you can deliver exactly what you promise.

We all love a bargain or offer. Usability tests have shown that many browsers search special offer properties first – and some will look only at these listings. Consider seasonal or early booking discounts, a free extra night, meal or gift such as wine.

Finally, remember that you must keep managing your property presentation. Look at your competitors, comparing like with like to make sure your prices are commensurate; review your advertisement regularly to keep up to date with changes and improvements; add extra photographs of the property and local area. Once you start getting noticed, then use feedback from your customers to generate even more success. Good luck! ♦

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Fact file

www.frenchconnections.co.uk