



GLYNIS SHAW is joint managing director of French Connections online holiday rentals and property sales at www.frenchconnections.co.uk

Pull in the crowds

Glynis Shaw helps a reader who is keen to maximise the rental potential of his ski property by renting it all year round

Q I have a ski property that is only rented out in the winter skiing season. How can I market it as a year-round holiday let?

Ben Proudfoot
Lincolnshire

A It certainly makes sense to aim for year-round business and income for your ski property rather than have it lying empty outside the skiing season. To make a marketing plan, I suggest that you focus on four topics – what the region has to offer in summer and the ‘shoulder’ periods, who would be attracted to those features, how to reach that market and how to ensure that your property meets summer holiday-makers’ needs.

Some people only equate mountains with skiing but when most of the snow has melted, this landscape can offer an exhilarating holiday far from the crowds of Dordogne and the Med. Attractions are clean air with a pleasant, cooling breeze, a chance to get close to nature and explore specific flora and fauna, stunning mountain views, beautiful lakes and rivers to refresh the soul, interesting local culture, delicious regional food and

drink and a whole range of activities.

Holiday-makers to France are increasingly searching for fresh experiences and unusual things to do – so encourage them to use your property as an opportunity to explore something new. Outside the ski season, your area may offer walking, trekking and climbing, mountain biking, paragliding, pony riding, karting, golf and other outdoor activities. Lakes and rivers provide boating, whitewater rafting and swimming, as at the eco-lake at Combloux in Haute-Savoie.

In most ski regions, communications are good. From the Alps, visitors could take day trips to Italy or Switzerland and from the Pyrenees they could cross into Spain to explore. In general, do your homework on every type of attraction. Is there a local spa with thalassotherapy? A local cheesemaker to visit and buy from? A local hide for keen twitchers?

Who might enjoy this type of holiday? Obviously those who like the great outdoors and getting close to nature. So target these people and add to your ‘green’ credentials by

emphasising rail travel, as most ski resorts either have a railway station or are easily accessible from car-train destinations. One of the great advantages of self-catering activity breaks is that couples, families and groups can enjoy doing different things on a mix-and-match basis, so spell out that advantage as well.

Others who might like your region are people with asthma or other health considerations who want clean air and those who might enjoy the inspiring environment for yoga, tai chi and meditation. You could reach all these markets by approaching specialist groups through an internet search.

I also suggest that you follow the example of some of our property owners at French Connections and create a separate summer listing to accompany your ski property online details, with automatic links between the two listings. Use it to show photographs of the property, views and area in spring, summer and autumn and to elaborate on all the activities and attractions. You could also put a printout of this information inside your property during the skiing season in a folder entitled

‘Why not come back in summer?’

Your main income is in winter so to build up your summer trade you might start by setting keen prices or making special offers that will flag up your property and make it stand out. Think in terms of your potential overall annual return.

Finally, take a look around your property and consider both its advantages and extra needs for the summer market. You might need to add extra outdoor furniture and a barbecue for the balcony or garden and perhaps decorate with plants in pots or window boxes. Also consider providing binoculars, bikes, picnic gear or other outdoor equipment for your guests to use.

Ski accommodation is usually equipped to a high standard indoors so capitalise on such features as dishwasher, DVD player, computer and games console. If you’re in a ski village, then point out proximity to restaurants, bars and other facilities. Put yourself in the place of your summer visitors, make the effort to go that extra mile in the service you offer and soon your property could be providing a year-round income. ❖