

## Why rent out your holiday home?

Some people buy a property overseas as a mere investment opportunity. In the main, however, you will have bought your dream holiday home for you and your family to use and enjoy and renting it out will be a way to afford your dream.

It should also be recognised that like boats and cars, houses do not react well to being left empty; they need to be used in order to function well all year round. Many an owner has flown out to their holiday home after many months only to find they have to spend most of their precious time getting things fixed rather than relaxing on the beach!

To help you get the most of your home for your family and as a way to generate rental income, we've compiled this useful guide to the process. Please [contact us](#) if you have any questions which we haven't covered here or [list your property](#) on our website today and start generating rental income.

## Getting started

### **Set your objectives**

Firstly you need to set your objectives in terms of the amount of time you intend to rent it in any one year.

This will depend obviously on the length of time and specific periods you would ideally want for your own personal use versus the income you need to generate to cover any mortgage on the property, ongoing maintenance and replacement of fixtures, fittings and furniture, local management and any tax liabilities.

Time spent on clear headed practical calculations will be time very well spent. For instance, you might want to have key school holidays for your own exclusive use but of course these are times of highest possible income generation and there will always be a balance to be struck.

### **Know your market**

A key factor in your calculations will of course be how much rent you could expect from your property. Getting the pricing right will be the difference between success and failure. Ask too much and you don't get the rental, pitch it too low and obviously you lose out.

Research, research, research. Check out the competition. Look at details of as many properties in your area as possible, arrange to actually go and see some if you can, talk to agents, talk to neighbours, talk to holiday makers and think about the sort of people who might rent your home.

### **Find the best local people to make it work**

This is an obviously vital cog in the wheel of your rental enterprise. You need people you can absolutely rely on to make sure that things go smoothly.

You will need a cleaner who comes in between guests and perhaps can be available to them for an extra charge during their stay if required. She/he must be incredibly thorough in their cleaning and able to implement all your instructions for the property (such as providing starter packs, tissues, etc. see below).

They say first impressions count and this is certainly the case with a rental property. The welcoming feeling is key and ideally you would want someone to 'meet and greet' your guests and to be on hand to deal with any problems. For consistency and ease this could be the cleaner if suitable, making her/him the house manager.

You will need a handyman who can be relied upon to react rapidly to any maintenance problems.

Depending upon the property you might also need some gardening assistance.

Again, research will be vital, online, offline and in person. Everyone has valuable insights so talk to anyone and everyone and take their comments on board.

### **Prepare your property for renting**

Obviously the type of property and the rental price you want to charge will dictate the level of luxury that you put into your home.

When you're thinking of decorating and furnishing, the key is to know your customer. For example, if your property is likely to appeal to families, you need to be very careful that your home is child friendly and safe for children and you probably wouldn't choose pure white sofas! However, a smart city apartment appealing to young professionals would have different criteria.

Always keep in mind that this is your holiday home and you personally have to feel comfortable and happy there, but you are designing for two parties, yourself and your guests.

So once again, a balance is required. Here are some good overall tips to help you:

**Keep it simple and uncluttered** – make sure that you have a cupboard to lock away any particularly personal items such as photographs or treasured, valuable items. Keeping down the clutter will also ensure that your property is easy to clean and, importantly, easy for your guests to see it is clean.

**Provide enough cupboard space** – it is very important that guests can feel at home as soon as possible by being able to unpack and store their clothes. Provide enough hangers.

**Make the decor neutral** - this doesn't mean boring; keeping the colour palette neutral will ensure wide appeal; adding colour through accessories will add interest and can be removed if the guests don't like them.

**Buy good quality furniture** - obviously a house that is rented successfully will need furniture that can take a lot of use. This means you need to find durable furniture which can stand up to the strain and still look good, which can be a challenge.

**Invest in comfortable pieces** - guests rent apartments rather than book hotels because they want to be able to relax and feel comfortable. Cheap furniture is a false economy – it needs to be replaced more often and will disappoint guests.

**Make sure the beds are comfortable** - an uncomfortable bed will blight a guest's holiday. Sleep a night in each bed yourself to check them out.

**Provide some cards, a few games and books** – remember your guests want to relax, have fun and feel at home. The more things you can provide to help them, the better they will feel about your property and the more likely they will be to book again and tell their friends.

### **Provide the essential practical items for the convenience of your guests**

**Kitchen ware** - although it is your home, try not to amass too many odds and ends of cutlery, crockery, glassware and kitchen utensils as most of us do in our primary home. Aim to supply at least 8 sets of cutlery, cereal bowls, large plates, side plates, wine glasses and water glasses. A top tip is to buy any breakable items locally of a type that is kept in stock. Any breakages can then be replaced by the guest or by you and there will be less risk of having mismatching and unattractive services. In our primary home there is the temptation to keep odd pieces, even some with chips. Don't do it in your rental property!

**Ironing board and iron** – so often necessary after clothes come out of suitcases

**Hair dryer** – buy it locally so that there is no need for plug adaptors and include this in the details of your apartment so guests know they won't have to weigh down their luggage bringing their own

**Toilet paper** - supply at least one roll of paper for each lavatory for the convenience of your guests

**Tissues** – although not strictly necessary, providing boxes of tissues is inexpensive and a very nice touch

**A starter pack** – Although not essential, a starter pack is an easy and inexpensive way to delight the guests as soon as they arrive. Obviously, the scope of the pack depends on the standard/rental price of your property; but as a minimum guests should be made welcome with some tea, coffee, sugar and milk to start them off, even if it's just for their first morning. Guests will often leave items of store cupboard food. It is important to clear these out between rentals, leaving only the most useful, perhaps jars of herbs and spices. It is however very important to provide guests with salt and pepper.

**Towels and bed linen** – Provide the best you can afford, there's nothing worse than threadbare towels or scratchy sheets. Aim to provide at least two sets of towels per person – bath towel, hand towel and face cloth, plus two sets of bed linen per bed. Also, provide extra bedding such as blankets or duvets even in a warm climate so people can feel comfortable no matter what the weather is doing.

**Fans** – depending upon the country and likelihood of uncomfortable heat, if the property is not air conditioned it will be essential to provide a fan for each bedroom

**Emergency items** – torches and First Aid kit

REMEMBER

The best customer is a repeat customer

A good customer is the best advertisement for your property

Going the extra mile, providing small extras, welcoming guests personally or leaving a personal note, a starter pack, a bowl of fruit or a bottle of wine, all make an enormous difference to whether your property will be revisited and recommended.

## How to market your home

### **Advertise**

Before you achieve a regular clientele, and even then, to assure a good stream of customers you will need to advertise.

Your choices are very wide. For little or no money you can put an ad on the notice board at your local newsagent; email your network of friends or set up your own website. Indeed all of these would be well worth doing.

However, to give you a bigger reach a little investment is required. You could put a small ad in a classified paper but the audience would be limited.

Management companies are also an option. You may decide that you would prefer to hand over all aspects of the advertising, booking and management of your property but of course this comes at a cost.

More and more owners are now plugging into the millions of potential holiday makers that look to websites such as [www.Nextaway.com](http://www.Nextaway.com). Most people now search online for their holiday essentials, so these websites are a great way to generate bookings in a cost-effective way. The way these websites work vary, from a monthly fee, an annual fee, or a commission on rental bookings so check out the options available. For example, with Nextaway, you pay a flat annual fee of 99€ and no commission making it a highly cost effective way of reaching an incredibly large audience.

Listing your property on these websites is designed to be easy to use, but it's surprising how often owners don't take full advantage of these platforms. Here are a few tips to make your property stand out on these websites:

### **An attention grabbing headline**

Make sure your headline is descriptive and enticing but not too long. Check other properties to see how they are doing it. Consider this carefully as this will be displayed in any search results and along with the photo, will dictate whether people click through to find out more.

### **Great photographs**

When you have chosen where you will advertise your property and know that the right people are going to be looking at it, photographs are the number 1 selling tool in your kit. Photographs are make or break. You want your property to leap off the page. Here are a few tips:

- If you are not a good photographer, find someone who is, perhaps a friend or relative who you know takes really good pictures
- Make sure you have time to be able to wait for the right day to take the shots – a slightly overcast day is not going to make the viewer long to be there

- Take time to style your shots. For example, lay the table on the terrace and try it with wine, bread, a bowl of salad, olive oil. Try several variations, with and without food or change the elements, keep taking pictures until you have a shot which shouts that your property is where the visitor wants to be, at that table, under that blue sky. Likewise, don't just take a picture of your kitchen, prop it with coffee pot, croissants, etc; put flowers and magazines in the sitting room; fold a colourful towel and put it over the arm of a garden chair....
- Avoid having people in the shots – guests want to imagine themselves there and no one else.

### What should be included in the listing

Once you have a great headline and a good selection of photographs which show off your property in the best possible way, you need to consider what your guests need to know.

This is a big purchase to make online and holiday makers want it to be right, so will carefully consider any listing. You should try to include as much information about your property as possible so that people feel comfortable to make a commitment without coming to see the property.

The main listing should include:

- **A short description** with an overview of the property if this is required
- **A full description of the property** – When writing this, think about your property's key selling points and make sure they stand out. This should be a descriptive, well-written piece which really encapsulates why the property is great and makes people want to be there. Include information about number of bedrooms, bathrooms, terraces etc. even though this will be included elsewhere, as it is important to paint a picture of the property. If you can offer something special such as a free welcome pack or a special offer off-season, people will pick your property over the others on the site so consider how you sell it.
- **List of amenities** – Usually there will be a tick list of amenities which you need to select from e.g. washing machine, air conditioning, garden, swimming pool, parking etc. Make sure that all the key elements of your property are listed there, if they haven't included something you consider important in the list, ask the website if it can be added.
- **Prices** – Normally there will be different prices through the year to match the popularity of the season. Try to keep your pricing clear and easy to understand as confusing pricing can really put people off.
- **Availability calendar** – If the website offers an availability calendar, take full use of it to make sure you can use your property when you want to. Add bookings into the calendar as they come through (if this is not automatic) to make sure guests who enquire aren't disappointed.

Remember, your property listing is your main sales tool, so make it the best representation of your property it can be. Check your ideas with friends and family, make sure there are no errors and try to think like your guests so the listing really grabs them and encourages them to make a booking.

## The rental process

### STEP ONE

#### **Responding to enquiries**

The essential words here are Professional and Timely.

You need to keep on top of any enquiries and respond as quickly as possible, certainly within 24 hours, otherwise the booking might turn to another property.

Be friendly yet professional in your tone, answer their questions clearly and succinctly and make it clear that you are happy to help with whatever queries they might have. If you don't check emails regularly, suggest they call you, or offer to call them at a convenient time. This can be a great way to form a relationship and make a good first impression.

Make sure that anyone you use to promote the property or manage bookings can help you handle the enquiry process efficiently and advise you on the best way to approach it. For example at Nextaway, we know that not everyone checks emails all the time, so we offer the option to send booking enquiries as a text message to your mobile so you can deal with it quickly and professionally.

Ideally, you want to limit enquiries to only those people who are really serious about renting the property. By ensuring that all your property details are on the site, and you have answered the most important questions for them, the enquirer will study the information online and only need to contact you with special requests so enquiries are easy for you and minimal.

### STEP TWO

#### **Send out your booking contract and ask for a booking deposit.**

A booking deposit holds the property for the guest, ensuring it is not subsequently rented out to another customer. This amount is then taken off the final rental total. The amount you ask for is up to you but it is normal to ask for between 10% and 25%. Some owners make this sum totally non refundable, some opt to return if cancellation occurs during a specific period before the rental was due to take place. Whichever you choose you must make it very clear in the contract.

Send your booking contract by email or post, or both. If by post you can include a stamped addressed envelope which will make it easier for your customer to send the deposit and therefore you should receive it earlier and more conveniently. If you do not receive the deposit in good time you should contact to remind. Of course failure to send the booking deposit within the time you set results in the booking being null and void.

MAITELAND – CAN YOU OFFER ANY ADVICE ON PRODUCING A RENTAL CONTRACT OR PROVIDE A TEMPLATE? THIS WOULD BE GOOD TO MENTION HERE IF POSSIBLE

### STEP THREE

#### **Arrange to get the security deposit**

When the booking deposit payment has cleared, send out a receipt and let them know when you will require the balance of the full amount along with the security deposit (normally between 6 and 10 weeks before the rental period).

A security deposit is an amount charged up front to the guest in case of damage. This is paid back to the guest after departure, once the property has been checked to ensure that all is in order. The amount charged will vary according to the standard of your property and the value of items within your home. A typical sum would be around £250 and is charged at the point you request the balance of payment.

You must remember that use of your property will always cause some wear and tear and, as in all homes, sometimes things will break. Providing crockery and glassware from a local source with continuity of stock gives you the ability to ask your guests to replace any small breakages. A security deposit is an insurance against damage above and beyond such normal occurrences.

If your housekeeper/property manager feels that the damage is out of the ordinary he/she should take pictures and keep a careful record of any expenses paid out to rectify the damage. If you do have to deduct money from a security deposit, make an itemised bill and send copies of those receipts to the guests.

If all is in order the deposit should be returned in a timely manner as outlined in your contract.

#### STEP FOUR

##### **Collect the balance of payment 6 to 10 weeks before the date of arrival**

When you have received full, cleared payment, you should send your guests full address details and detailed directions to your property. It is vital that all instructions are foolproof; there is nothing worse than not being able to find your holiday home after hours of tiring travelling. A bad start such as this sours a relationship and very often leads to a guest finding fault with many things! Test out your instructions scrupulously. Ask friends to stay with you to trial the instructions (and in fact all aspects of your holiday home – a friendly but objective view is invaluable). At this point also explain about the parking situation.

Along with directions you must carefully explain how they will obtain the keys. Again, you must work out a foolproof system. This will depend on the staff you have in place and timing of guests' arrival.

You should also reinforce at this point any conditions you have put in the contract re check-in and check-out times. If you have back to back bookings it is vital that these conditions are observed so that thorough cleaning and inspection can be achieved between guests.

#### STEP FIVE

##### **Ask for feedback**

At the end of the stay, it's a good idea to email your tenants to check how everything went, ask for feedback on the property and thank them for choosing your property. Maintaining relationships is vital for repeat bookings and is worth taking the time to do things like this.

Log all the details of your past guests into a spreadsheet and consider sending out an email to them a few months before your peak holiday periods – Easter, Summer and Christmas to

let them know about your availability and also any special offers. If you can offer past guests something special it will make them feel valued and more likely to book again, which is what you should be aiming for.

A nice touch is to also send an electronic Christmas card or something similar, anything you can do to remind them about you will help!

### **Start generating rental income today**

We hope that you have found this rental guide useful. If you're now ready to take the next step and starting renting your property, [click here](#) to list your property on Nextaway.

Our website gives you access to thousands of potential customers. The website is comprehensive, attractive and exceptionally user friendly and we constantly update and improve it to maintain our competitive edge. In addition we optimise for all major search engines so holiday makers searching for accommodation in your area will find you, harness the power of social media to maximise exposure and even offer the option to include your property in our monthly newsletter.

A year's listing with Nextaway is just 99€, which can easily be made back with just one booking, so what are you waiting for? [Sign-up now](#)