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# How to get the most from a holiday home

Zoe Dare Hall offers advice on renting out your property

On the Costa del Sol, renting out a holiday home this summer is a struggle for many, with rents having fallen by up to 30 per cent in some areas due to oversupply and immense competition.

But on the euro-free Turkish Mediterranean, some lucky landlords such as Sue Flynn from Leeds are already taking bookings for 2011. "We're full up for this year, 25 per cent booked up for next year and people are already thinking about holidays beyond that," says Sue, who owns two apartments in Kalkan ([www.kalkanmagic.com](http://www.kalkanmagic.com)).

The number of Britons going on self-catering holidays has quadrupled to nearly 28 million in the past five years and DIY breaks will account for 60 per cent of our overseas holidays this

year, according to a Mintel report.

So what are the secrets to successfully letting out your holiday home? Those in the know offer their best tips.

## Flaunt your assets

As back-to-back bookings from April to November for the past seven years prove, Tansy Forster's five-bedroom house in Normandy has a strong selling point: it's one of the only properties available for rent on Utah beach, scene of the D-Day landings.

"When we started renting out seven years ago, there were four properties

available on this whole Cherbourg peninsula and two of them were ours. Now there are more than 450," says Tansy, who counts Joan Bakewell among the people

who have rented her beach house through Holiday Rentals ([www.holiday-rentals.co.uk](http://www.holiday-rentals.co.uk)).

At their large three-bedroom rural villa ([www.vistasdecabrera.com](http://www.vistasdecabrera.com)) near Mojacar in Almeria, Robert and Christine Brett have spent 10 years cultivating a four-acre tropical garden, with palm, orange, fig and pear trees set around a large salt swimming pool.

"There's a lot of competition, but the large and beautiful gardens really sell our villa," says Robert, a graphic designer.

## Be hands-on

"I don't know which one I can call my day job any more," says Nick Bond of the upmarket London accessories shops Franchetti Bond, who rents out his five-

bedroom Georgian country house in Hampshire for up to £4,000 a week ([www.countryhouserentals.co.uk](http://www.countryhouserentals.co.uk)). "I thought it would be something to tick along, but demand has been phenomenal, so I've been incredibly busy," says Bond.

Tansy Forster agrees. "I'm working harder than I ever did in London. You have to

be prepared to work hard on the marketing side if you want to earn money from it."

## Become IT-savvy

Search engine optimisation – getting as high as you can in the Google rankings – could make the difference between covering the mortgage or not. Around 80 per cent of

Nick Bond's business for his country house comes from Google searches, for which he spends £15 a day on Google's ad words, "where I bid for popular terms such as 'country house weekend for rent'," he says. "I also use referral sites, such as [lastminutecottages.com](http://lastminutecottages.com), where people can click straight through to me."

Sarah Tetley Hall, a descendant of the Tetley tea family, spent £3,000 on the website design for Chateau d'Arnac ([www.chateauarnac.co.uk](http://www.chateauarnac.co.uk)), where she rents out the gatehouse. "Good search engine optimisation is critical and agreed in the price with the web designer," says Sarah. "It's important to have your website registered with Google, MSN and Yahoo."

"You must also provide keywords such as 'holiday accommodation' which can be picked up by search engines."

## Make it personal

Living near their two-bedroom apartment in the southern Spanish hill town of Frigiliana means that Boz and Polly Cannon can "always go the extra mile for every guest", from taking

them hiking or olive harvesting to stocking up on nappies, which they did when one couple with a baby were delayed by half a day.

"We meet and greet guests and are on hand 24/7," says Boz, who advertises on Holiday Rentals (as before). "Our local knowledge is beneficial, from local fiestas to when shops are shut. If guests are arriving late and

the shops are shut the following day, we offer to get supplies for no extra charge, in addition to the welcome pack we provide."

Living nearby also makes life far easier for Jonathan Dent, a graphic designer, who rents out his two neighbouring beachfront fishermen's cottages at Gorran Haven in Cornwall through [RuralRetreats.co.uk](http://RuralRetreats.co.uk) for up to £1,300 a week each.

"I used to live in Oxfordshire and rent out these cottages, but tenants never tell you when something's wrong, so you invariably find yourself having to fix a leaking tap from a distance with four hours to go before the next people arrive," he says.

## Change the name

Given two idyllic Dorset cottages, Lark Rise and 6 Fields Barn, which would you pick? Lark Rise usually wins hands down, even though the properties are similar, says Charles Smith, of Dorset Coastal Cottages. "Cottages with pretty names that evoke the countryside,



such as Jasmine Cottage or The Old Dairy do far better than something like 3 High Street, which doesn't suggest escapism at all."



**Speculate to accumulate: Sarah Tetley Hall spent £3,000 on the website for Chateau d'Arnac**