

# HELLO FROM DISCOVERY

WE ARE THRILLED YOU ARE INTERESTED IN PARTNERING WITH DISCOVERY. THIS GUIDE WILL HELP YOU FAMILIARISE YOURSELF WITH HOLIDAY HOME LETTING, SHOWING YOU HOW THE PROCESS WORKS & HOW WE WILL JOIN FORCES WITH YOU TO ENSURE HAPPY GUESTS AND HAPPY HOME OWNERS

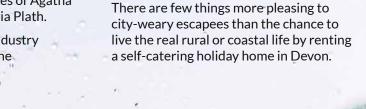
First, a little about us. We are the Devon experts. Not only are we based in South Devon ourselves – in the beautiful English Riviera town of Torquay – but the majority of our staff are Devon locals who are intimately familiar with this wonderful county.

And wonderful it truly is. Devon is a delight to behold, with an incredible diversity of landscapes. There are wild windswept moors, two dramatic coastlines, rolling hills and lush river valleys threaded with hiking trails and rich with wildlife as well as vibrant cities, charming seaside towns and thatched one-pub villages. Not to mention cream teas, artisan cheeses, Devon-made wine and cider as well as literary links to the likes of Agatha Christie, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and Sylvia Plath.

We're not alone in our love for Devon – industry authorities across the UK regularly sing the county's praises.

Country Life Magazine named Devon England's best county while TripAdvisor once singled out Torquay as the UK's third-best destination (second only to heavy hitters London and Edinburgh).

No wonder it's a choice destination for tourists from all over the globe and is particularly popular among city folk looking for self-catering breaks in the country. With handy transport links and manageable driving times from cities including London, Bristol, Birmingham and Cardiff, demand for Devon holiday homes is growing daily.





## SO WHY LET WITH DISCOVERY HOLIDAY HOMES?

NOW YOU KNOW JUST HOW DESIRABLE DEVON IS FOR HOLIDAYMAKERS, HERE ARE TEN MORE REASONS WHY DISCOVERY HOLIDAY HOMES HAS THE KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERTISE TO REPRESENT YOUR HOLIDAY HOME

#### 1. RETURNS

Holiday homes in Devon are much sought-after and can, if managed and marketed correctly, be rather lucrative. Whether your house is an investment property or simply a holiday home with the potential to pay its own way, we will make sure you get the best returns.

#### 2. SAVING YOU MONEY

Letting a holiday property independently can be a cash drain, with potential profits being quickly swallowed by expensive advertising & administrative costs. With Discovery Holiday Homes, you can save in some key areas. For one, your home is featured for free on our web network and partner sites. We offer an excellent sales commission, which includes everything from handling enquiries and booking to affiliate marketing across other popular listing websites. And we also pay great attention to professional interior photography, to show off the best aspects of your property at the lowest possible cost.

#### 3. SAVING YOU HASSLE

As the main point of contact for potential guests who come through our website, we will field enquiries, and take care of bookings, liaising with guests to guarantee they get what they are looking for and handling payment processes on behalf of owners. We also send guests detailed arrival information to ensure they can gain access as well as offering expert tips on the local area.

#### 4. USE YOUR HOME WHENEVER YOU WANT

When you team up with Discovery Holiday Homes, you don't have to give up your property. Your holiday home will still be yours, which means you are free to use it yourself or to have family and friends stay whenever you choose. Simply log onto the Owners Area on our website to make an owner booking, and find out further information about your property, including an up-to-date availability calendar and booking and payment details.

#### 5. LOCAL INSIGHT

Not only do we have unparalleled knowledge of the local market, but we also take the time to get acquainted with our owners and their homes. We make it easy for potential guests to connect and correspond with us, assisting them with information to gain their confidence and trust, before matching them with the right holiday home that fits their desired experience and location.

#### 6. MARKETING KNOW-HOW

We know the importance of marketing your holiday home which is why we employ a tailored approach to each individual property. We keep abreast of booking trends and customer profiles and make regular changes to our website to ensure all required information is readily available and easy to use.

#### 7. EYE-CATCHING PHOTOGRAPHY

In the world of online holiday home marketing, high quality photography is vital. Eye-catching imagery together with striking presentation engages the viewer pictures speak louder than words. Team up with us and we will arrange to have professional photographs taken to best showcase your home. For select properties, we will even create interactive 3D Matterport virtual reality tours, which give potential guests a realistic insight into the holiday home of their choosing.

#### 8. FLEXIBLE CONTRACTS

Unlike some of the very large holiday rental companies who impose strict terms and harsh penalties on owners, we offer reasonable, flexible and easy-to understand contracts. We are happy to work with owners who are already represented by other agencies and allow those on our books to make their own private bookings independent of us.

#### 4. LENDING A HELPING HAND

From holiday home insurance to public liability cover to health and safety certifications, décor and design to cleaning services, there is a lot to think about when you start renting a holiday home – and it is important you get it all right. Our advisors can help connect you to trustworthy providers in these fields.

#### 10. A PERSONAL APPROACH

We are not a large corporation obsessed with shareholder returns, but a family business – one of a select collection of regional agencies that come under the umbrella of The Original Cottage Company. We take a personalised approach to service and make use of the latest online technology to create an accessible, easy-to-use platform. We have an excellent reputation for taking care of both guests and owners. As a homeowner with Discovery, you can also enjoy a 10% discount on your own self-catering holiday with any sister brand.



## MAXIMUM EXPOSURE FOR YOUR PROPERTY

DEVON IS MUCH IN DEMAND AMONGST BRITISH AND INTERCONTINENTAL HOLIDAY GUESTS AND WE WORK HARD TO MAKE SURE WE ARE THE GO-TO AGENCY FOR TRAVELLERS LOOKING FOR HOLIDAY HOMES IN THE REGION. WE STRIVE TO KEEP OUR NAME ON THE TIP OF TRAVELLERS' TONGUES AND TO PROMOTE ALL THE QUALITY HOLIDAY RENTALS IN OUR COLLECTION

#### **WEBSITE**

Our website is our most indispensable marketing tool. It is where potential guests become customers and where bookings are made. Browsing is a breeze, whether by laptop, tablet or smartphone. Visitors to the website can narrow down holiday home options with our handy search tools and wish list function.

From our website you can find useful information about various regions of Devon, browse detailed listings featuring prominent photographic slideshows, headlines that showcase desirable features, detailed property descriptions and easy-to-scan tabs covering tariffs, guest reviews, a map and an availability calendar as well as amenities and nearby attractions.

People are also able to make bookings at any time through our seamless and speedy online booking system or, if they prefer, over the telephone.

#### SISTER SITES

We are part of a wider family of local holiday home letting brands (each a specialist in its own right), which all fall under the umbrella of The Original Cottage Company.

When you let your holiday home with us, your property is not only listed on our local Devon websites, www.discoveryholidayhomes.com and www.bluerivercottages.com but will also feature on our nationwide site, www.cottageholidays.co.uk - because we are part of a larger family we receive referrals via our sister sites.

#### STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

Our targeted email and newsletter campaigns help to foster our existing customer relationships, encourage repeat bookings by promoting seasonal offers and direct attention to new properties.

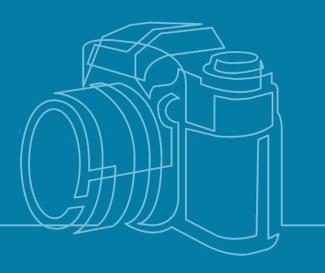
#### **SOCIAL MEDIA & SEO**

We know that experiences sell, which is why we work with a specialist Devon PR firm, who regularly submit pitches on featured properties to local and national publications.

We use social media to establish and maintain connections with travellers to raise awareness of the Discovery brand to show off Devon as a destination. Together with our informative blog content, this helps drive organic traffic to our website.

#### **COMMUNITY TIES AND AFFILIATE PARTNERS**

As a well-established local business, we have earned the trust of the local community. This brings many benefits, including; receiving referrals from fellow Devon businesses, agencies, associations and listings on affiliate websites to ensure wider exposure among our target audience.



### **FINANCIAL AFFAIRS**

THE PROMISE OF EARNING A LITTLE EXTRA CASH AND ENOUGH
RENTAL REVENUE TO COVER EXPENSES OR EVEN A MORE
SUBSTANTIAL PROFIT, IS A TEMPTING PROSPECT FOR MANY SECOND
HOME OWNERS. AT DISCOVERY, WE CAN HELP YOU GET TO GRIPS
WITH THE BOTTOM LINE OF HOLIDAY HOME LETTING

#### **GETTING GOING**

The good news for holiday home owners is that Devon is a perennially popular holiday destination for both Britons and foreign tourists. And while the location, size, amenities and style of your property will all affect its desirability, occupancy rates are generally higher across Devon than other counties, which means profits are there to be made.

You will also be able to take advantage of favourable tax breaks, providing you meet certain criteria as laid out by the HMRC. We recommend all owners consult with a professional accountant to get a better idea of the earning potential of your property before putting your holiday home up for rental.

#### PRICING YOUR PROPERTY

Establishing a reasonable rental tariff for your property is key to your success. Go too low and you risk underselling; too high and chances are it will be left empty. Being as familiar with the local market as we are, Discovery is in a good position to offer honest advice on pricing.

#### Establishing a rough estimate

If you just want a ballpark figure, take a look at similar properties in the same area of Devon using the search functions on our website. Pay attention to the location, décor, the amenities they offer and how they compare with your holiday home.

#### Finding the right price

After a Discovery representative has visited your property and seen it first-hand, we will be able to create a tailored weekly tariff proposal. Note that rental rates are variable depending on demand. Peak summer months and school holidays are more popular and thus more expensive than a week in November, out of season.

#### The art of strategic discounting

During non-peak times, you may wish to offer discounted rates to boost bookings. The owner's contract will state an agreed discount that can be offered by the Discovery booking team to guests. We will never offer prospective guests a higher discount than what has been agreed without getting the owner's approval first.

#### Keeping things simple

That being said, it is important to keep pricing simple. When proposing tariffs, we can factor in extra costs into the equation to keep the pricing simple and easy for customers to understand.

#### **PAYMENTS IN ADVANCE**

Sign up with Discovery and you can forget about processing payments, creating receipts, sending arrival instructions and synchronising with the management's cleaning schedules. Guests will pay securely through our safe online system or over the phone with our dedicated bookings staff. They can use debit or credit cards, a cheque or a direct bank transfer to make the payment. A deposit of 30% is required to secure a booking, with the full balance payment due 8 weeks before arrival, protecting owners from no-shows.

## **HOW IT WORKS**

ONCE YOU DECIDE TO LIST YOUR HOLIDAY HOME WITH DISCOVERY HOLIDAY HOMES, KEEPING TRACK OF WHAT'S HAPPENING WITH YOUR PROPERTY WILL BE SIMPLE WITH OUR DEDICATED ONLINE OWNER AREA. YOU WILL BE PROVIDED WITH YOUR OWN LOG-IN DETAILS GIVING YOU EASY, IMMEDIATE AND ROUND-THE-CLOCK ACCESS TO ALL YOUR KEY ACCOUNT INFORMATION, NO MATTER WHERE YOU HAPPEN TO BE IN THE WORLD

#### **KEEPING YOU UP TO DATE**

The Owner Area on our website is your go-to resource for all the important information you need to know regarding your property. Here, you will find all the necessary information regarding your account. You can view the latest bookings on the live calendar, which updates automatically and see what payments are pending, due or have been received.

You will also be able to make owner bookings and add information to your listing regarding new amenities or features so you can spend time in your own holiday home.

#### MANAGING AND HOUSEKEEPING

If you want to manage your property yourself, you can use our online Owner Area as a tool to help you keep track of bookings and arrange maintenance and cleaning services accordingly.

If you aren't based in Devon or do not wish to be that hands-on in the running of your property, you may need to enlist the help of a local management company who can be your eyes and ears on the ground, taking care of cleaning, maintenance and support services.

We can recommend local companies who can help ensure your property is kept in tip-top condition ready to receive guest at a moment's notice.



## PREPARING YOUR HOME FOR HOLIDAY RENTALS

WE PRIDE OURSELVES ON HAVING A WELL-MAINTAINED AND WELL-CARED-FOR SELECTION OF HOMES AND QUIRKY BOLTHOLES IN OUR PORTFOLIO. WE EXPECT OUR HOME OWNERS TO ADHERE TO HIGH STANDARDS AND TO ENSURE THAT GUESTS WHO STAY IN THEIR HOLIDAY HOMES HAVE EVERY LITTLE THING THEY COULD POSSIBLY NEED. FOR A LITTLE INSPIRATION ON HOW BEST TO IMPRESS, WE'VE GOT A FEW POINTERS ON HOW TO PREPARE YOUR PROPERTY BOTH FOR MARKETING PURPOSES AND FOR GUESTS

#### STANDING OUT FROM THE CROWD

Once you decide to let your property, it is no longer just your holiday home but also a product and you need to start thinking of it as one. We will help you discover and promote the USPs (unique selling points) of your holiday home. Think about what you love most about your property. It might be the deck that is perfect for al fresco lunches or the whirlpool bath, or the fact that it is located right next to one of the county's most stunning beaches or even a great little coffee shop. Whatever it is, we will help you find it and make sure your guests know about it too.



#### **SHOWING OFF YOUR PROPERTY**

Online holiday home listings are no place for being modest. You need to make sure your photographs do your property justice and that the accompanying text highlights all the best parts of your property.

Focusing on experiences can make all the difference. Dressing a fireside coffee table with two wine glasses and a cheese board will tempt guests more than an empty table top ever could. Instead of listing the ample appliances included in your kitchen, we will want to sell potential guests on the idea of using them. We'll work with you to ensure both the photographs and the accompanying description are doing the job they are meant to.



#### A GOOD FIRST IMPRESSION

A good first impression lasts. And since repeat bookings and guest reviews are both vital to holiday home success, it is a good idea to ensure you make them time and time again with each new guest. We will make sure guests initial contact is positive by promptly and politely answering all enquiries and dealing with booking and payment.

Once guests arrive at the property, it's up to you to impress. Check that the driveway, front garden, porch or reception area of your property is clean, tidy and welcoming.

Inside, it is the little touches that can make or break a first impression. A personalised welcome note, having the house pre-warmed on a wintery day or offering a welcoming gesture can have an immediate effect on guests, and ensure their stay gets off to a good start.

#### THE LITTLE TOUCHES

Don't underestimate the power of little things to please. Even small, inexpensive additions such as freshly baked scones or a bottle of local Devon bubbly in the fridge, can make all the difference.



## HOW TO INCREASE YOUR PROPERTY'S APPEAL

THERE ARE CERTAIN HOLIDAY HOME FEATURES THAT ARE SURE TO BUMP UP BOOKINGS. ALLOWING PETS IN YOUR PROPERTY, FOR INSTANCE, WILL DRAW MORE INTEREST FROM FAMILIES, WHILE AN OPEN FIRE OR A LOG BURNER IS LIKELY TO BRING IN ADDITIONAL GUESTS IN THE AUTUMN AND WINTER MONTHS. NOT EVERY CROWD-PLEASING FEATURE HAS TO COST YOU A FORTUNE EITHER

#### PET-FRIENDLY SUGGESTIONS

In recent years, we have noticed that more and more families are keen to take their four-legged friend on holidays with them; 52% of customers who are searching for specific property attributes on our website, search for a pet-friendly property.

People want to enjoy the company of their beloved furry family members and save themselves the often-prohibitive cost of putting them in kennels. And it's not just British families either, with a trend for more relaxed pet travel regulations making it possible for travellers to venture to foreign countries with relative ease. If you are willing to accept pets in your holiday home, you are widening the pool of potential guests you will accept and can expect to see increased enquiries.

Technically speaking, all you need to be 'pet-friendly' is to be willing to allow guests with dogs. That said, there are some things you may want to do to make dogs and their accompanying owners feel as welcome as possible:

Check that your insurance provides cover for guests with dogs. Assess the dog-friendliness of the interior and make simple alterations. Remove any fragile items kept at ground level as well as any cleaning products or objects that may be ingested. Keep dogs in mind when taking care of the garden. Certain chemicals, including pesticides and slug bait, can be poisonous.

Other doggy bits and bobs, such as treats, a water bowl, a pooper scooper, dog waste disposal bags and a small toy, will be very much appreciated by dog-owning guests. Leave tips on the nearest dog-friendly destinations, be it a pub that welcomes pooches, ideal walks, or a beach that allows dogs.

#### A WELL-KEPT GARDEN

Providing a place for kids to play, animals to run about and adults to dine al fresco, gardens are a winning holiday home feature. If you've got a garden in your second property, it may be a good idea to erect a fence or wall as enclosed gardens offer extra peace of mind to guests with young children and dogs.

#### **PARKING**

Private on-site parking is a big bonus for travellers arriving by car. Though it might not sell your property in the same way as a pool or a gorgeous sea view would, it's a highly practical feature and is often requested.

#### **OPEN FIRE OR LOG BURNER**

Not only do log burners and open fires keep rooms toasty during colder weather, but they also add an air of rustic cosiness that can't be replicated by an electric fireplace. While they are not cheap to install, they do have the power to transform a living space.

#### **A LITTLE LUXURY**

There are multiple ways to inject a little luxury into a holiday rental. It might be a swimming pool, a hot tub or barbecue, outdoor furniture, a garden swing set - or even something as extravagant as a quality pillow selection.

#### **CHILD-FRIENDLY SUGGESTIONS**

With families comprising a pretty significant chunk of the self-catering market, making your holiday rental child-friendly is a great way to bring in extra business.

There are many ways to make your property more child-suitable, for example, install safety gates on stairs, purchase a foldaway cot, a high chair, a changing mat, a toilet booster seat or a step-up toilet stool and not forgetting a microwave oven (in case guests need to heat up milk or baby meals).

Provide plastic tableware and some basic toys, such as building blocks, puzzles and books.

Put breakable ornaments and cleaning products out of kids' reach, consider removing any sharp-edged low furniture and put kid-proof covers on plug sockets.

#### **HOW TO ATTRACT EXTRA BOOKINGS**

The key to attracting extra bookings is to find what is special about your property and promote it. Maybe there is a reading nook or a quiet corner of the garden – whatever it is, don't let it go unnoticed. If you want advice on how a few simple décor touches can up the wow-factor of your property, we are always willing to offer some hints and tips.



## JUST STARTING OUT? THE NEED-TO-KNOWS FOR NEWCOMERS

IF YOU ARE NEW TO THE WORLD OF HOLIDAY RENTALS, YOU PROBABLY HAVE A LOT OF QUESTIONS? AND WHILE WE DON'T HAVE THE SPACE TO ANSWER EVERY POSSIBLE ENQUIRY HERE, WE HAVE PUT TOGETHER A RUNDOWN OF THE PRINCIPAL POINTS TO KEEP IN MIND

#### **HOLIDAY HOME HUNTING**

If you are thinking of purchasing a holiday home in Devon and plan on renting it out to interested travellers, it pays to be savvy during the house hunt. Try and choose a property with desirable rental features (see page 9) so you can appeal to wider swaths of the self-catering market. If the house you pick needs updating, bear in mind the high standards expected by holiday guests these days – scrimping on the renovation won't do you any favours in the long run.

#### **LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION**

Where a property is located can be a make or break factor for a holiday rental home. Anywhere with proximity to the coast or river-front is usually a safe bet, and having a town, village or pub within easy walking distance is a bonus, though guests are often happy to stay further out if the property itself has some inviting amenities, such as a swimming pool or a hot tub, to keep them entertained. It is worth visiting the property more than once to get a good feel for the setting itself as well as the surrounding area.

#### **BUILDING OR CONVERTING**

For anyone planning on building or converting a holiday home in Devon, we would be delighted to share our expertise with you. We can help you set objectives for your property, as well as providing tips on refurbishment and décor.

#### **NAVIGATING LEGISLATION**

Renting a holiday home is considered a trade and as such, is subject to various rules and regulations. There are tax and insurance issues that need to be considered as well as health and safety regulations that must be adhered to. We can help you navigate the laws and legislation and connect you to reputable professionals who can offer expert advice.

#### HELPING YOU WITH YOUR NEW HOLIDAY HOME

We are seasoned experts with our finger on the pulse of the industry, and we are glad to share our discoveries, observations and insights with home owners in the Devon area.



## DON'T JUST TAKE OUR WORD FOR IT

WE COULD SPEND ALL DAY CONVINCING YOU OF THE BENEFITS OF LISTING YOUR HOME WITH DISCOVERY, BUT WE THINK IT MAY BE EASIER TO LET OTHER OWNERS DO THE TALKING ON OUR BEHALF. AS THEY SAY, THE PROOF IS IN THE CLOTTED CREAM TOPPED PUDDING!

#### NICKY & PHIL | BRIXHAM

"The lovely people at Discovery always go the extra mile to make sure our home is booked out when we need it to be. The communication with the cleaning company is seamless and we recommend them wholeheartedly."

#### CHRIS & SUE STOKE GABRIEL

"Thank you for all the help & enthusiasm we have been given in marketing our new holiday home - returning numerous times to offer further guidance when asked for and for shooting a brilliant set of professional interior photographs as well. Excellent job, well done Discovery Holiday Homes."

#### MARK & BEV | SHALDON

"Discovery Holiday Homes provided us with the inspiration to upgrade our cottage to meet the needs and expectations of potential clients.

As a result we have increased the number of bookings which have been managed professionally by the friendly team in Torquay."

#### LIZ | COMBE RALEIGH

"Discovery has been fantastic for me. They support you every step of the way when starting to let your property, and for me their excellent commission rate and easy going approach to me using my property when I choose, works for me."

#### **ANGIE** | ESTATE MANAGER

"We trust Discovery's passionate team to bring the right guests to our large family home. This means we can focus on the management and guest experience ensuring repeat bookings again & again."

### THE NEXT STEP

KEEN TO FURTHER EXPLORE THE IDEA OF LETTING A HOLIDAY HOME IN DEVON? THE NEXT STEP IS TO GET IN TOUCH

#### **REACH OUT BY PHONE OR EMAIL**

Want to put out feelers to see if a holiday home rental is feasible for you? Curious about the earning potential of your second home in Devon? We can answer any preliminary questions you may have over the phone or by email to:

hello@discoveryholidayhomes.com

#### **ARRANGE A FACE-TO-FACE VISIT**

Because we are located on-site here in Devon, we are available for face-to-face meetings. We can call out to your property to meet you and properly assess your home's rental potential. We can help identify and refine your goals and objectives for your holiday home and advise on what you need to do next to get the ball rolling and the first guests through the door.

We can point you in the direction of accountants and insurance services who can offer professional advice. We can further assist on outfitting your home with all the necessary supplies. Bear in mind all our visits are entirely obligation-free.



## PARTNERS IN LETTING

DEVON'S HOLIDAY HOME OWNERS ARE THE KEY TO OUR SUCCESS. WITHOUT THEM, WE WOULD NOT BE WHERE WE ARE TODAY. WE VALUE AND RESPECT ALL THE OWNERS WE WORK WITH AND RECOGNISE THE CRUCIAL ROLE PLAYED BY THEM IN OUR BUSINESS. WHICH IS WHY WE DO OUR BEST TO ASSIST THEM EVERY STEP OF THE WAY BY PROVIDING UNPARALLELED AND PERSONALISED SERVICE AND SUPPORT, TAILORED INTERNET MARKETING AND BOOKING SOLUTIONS

#### PART OF YOUR TEAM

If you decide to list your property with Discovery Holiday Homes, we promise we will do everything that we can to help make your home as appealing to holidaymakers as possible and to offer support behind the scenes. Our friendly and approachable staff are on hand to help out whenever you or your guests have questions. We regularly keep in touch with our holiday home owners by delivering news updates outlining industry shifts, legislation changes, or through much more informal chats. And should you need some emergency help or last-minute maintenance work undertaken on your property, just pick up the phone and dial Discovery – we will be happy to refer you to someone who can help.

#### **DEDICATED TO DEVON**

Here at Discovery, we are truly passionate about Devon. It is our home and a place we hold very dear. And we know our holiday home owners are very fond of it too – why else would they have chosen to purchase a second property here?

We believe that together, we can help reveal to travellers just how spectacular the county of Devon really is.

As your partner in letting, we will:

- Promote your property to holiday guests
- Manage all enquiries and field bookings
- Protect you from no-shows
- Look after all payment processes
- Ensure you never miss a booking
- Arrange for professional photographs to be taken
- Together, we will craft the perfect description for your property
- Provide detailed access instructions to visitors
- Connect you to reputable, local management companies
- Help you style and prepare your property for guests
- Offer tips on how to boost your property's profitability
- Assist you in pricing your property
- Be your go-to guide for the Devon self-catering market
- Give you 10% off your next self-catering holiday booked through one of our sister sites



