

Home



STAR IN STRIPES One of the six stylishly luxurious bedrooms at The 25



Could you turn your home into a B&B?

Using spare rooms as guest accommodation can be a money-spinner - meet the smart homeowners cashing in on converting their homes to mini-hotels

Whether you're desperate to give up the nine to five grind and find a new way to earn a living, or you just want to make a little extra cash, running a B&B from your home could be an option worth considering.

There are around 25,000 bed and breakfast properties in the UK, many with just one or two rooms to rent out, and business looks good, with bookings for summer 2018 up by 10% on last year. Prerequisites for a decent B&B obviously include offering a warm welcome and a great breakfast, but it also helps if your home is unusual or memorable.

The 25, a boutique B&B in Torquay (the25.uk), is certainly memorable, its six luxurious rooms decorated in an idiosyncratic way: one has dazzling yellow and black decor, another has sparkly purple walls, for example. And Nespresso machines, iPads, fluffy bathrobes and free movies on demand come as standard. Opened by Andy and Julian Banner-Price three years ago, it's among the top five B&Bs in the UK on TripAdvisor

and has just been named Unique B&B Of The Year at the annual AA Awards.

'We try to put ourselves in guests' shoes,' says Andy, 'and think about the little touches we'd enjoy. We offer them a complimentary drink and a piece of homemade cake when they arrive. I put a treat in each room every day, too - people tell us they look forward to coming back at the end of the day to see what I've left for them!'

A delightful experience

He adds: 'We try to quickly build up a rapport with our guests. As we get a huge number of repeat bookings I try to remember as much as possible about their likes for the next time, which makes people feel special.'

In York, Liz Henley has been running a B&B at her elegant townhouse, five minutes from the Minster, for the past year. She advertises through Airbnb (airbnb.co.uk) and has been booked up from day one. 'It all started when

I was made redundant and the house flooded at around the same time,' Liz says. 'I'd always had the idea of running a B&B, and as part of the renovations after the flood I reconfigured the layout.'

'So now, what makes my house stand out is that the accommodation is so flexible. Guests have private use of the top floor where there are two bedrooms, and there's a bedroom on the floor below. So I can sleep a total of five, or a group of friends can have a room each. There aren't many other properties where you can do that. There's a lot more competition than there was even just year ago, but I still get plenty of bookings.'

'I've had guests from about 20 different countries so far. Last week, a group of Americans looked out over the rooftops from one of my windows and exclaimed that it was just like



PHONE BOOK B&B owners use Airbnb to reach potential guests

How to make it a success

- Do research so you know what you're letting yourself in for. There's lots to do behind the scenes and when guests go out after breakfast, your working day really begins.
- Do your sums. The little extra finishing touches are vital to make your B&B stand out from the crowd, but remember that the cost of improvements can quickly add up.
- Make the most of social media, and post regularly - it's great free advertising and a good way of telling your story to prospective guests.
- You need to like people! 'I love meeting interesting people from around the world. When you chat to them and get to know them, they feel more like friends than guests,' says Andy from The 25.
- A good location is vital. Are there good places, ideally within walking distance, for people to eat in the evening? Is there a lot for people to do locally?



Mary Poppins! On the whole having a B&B is a delightful experience. People are usually very respectful and considerate, and appreciate that they're in my home.'

Yet having attractive decor and anticipating your guests' every need is only part of the story. Registered B&Bs are subject to legislation concerning fire, health and safety, data protection and discrimination. You may also need 'change of use' planning permission. Talk to your mortgage provider to make sure the agreement allows you to use your property as a B&B. If you're serving cooked breakfasts, you may have to register with the local authority's environmental health department.

So just how much could you earn by running a B&B? On average, a double room is normally between £40 and £90 per night, including breakfast for two people - though that can rise considerably in very popular locations. If you now think a B&B makes sound business sense for your home, visit bandbassociation.org for information on getting started.

Photography: Alamy, Getty Images