



TRAINING COURSE LAUNCHES FOR B&B FIRST TIMERS

All too regularly people seem to enter the hospitality trade with little or no experience and even less idea of what a commitment they're taking on. How often have you heard your guests say they're thinking of "retiring to a B&B", or comment, "I suppose you have the day to yourself after breakfast?"

There was a time when that wasn't too much of an issue: you picked things up as you went along and learnt by your mistakes and eventually the hope was that you'd end up with a pretty decent understanding of what you're doing, and you'd do it to a level that keeps your customers satisfied.

Nowadays however it's no longer good enough to learn on the job, due to the love-hate relationship we have with review websites such as TripAdvisor. Get a few bad reviews, or even average reviews during your "bedding in" period, and it could affect your business forever. TripAdvisor doesn't currently delete its reviews at all, and although they apparently don't count as much towards your ranking as time passes, they are still there for all to see.

What you need to do is hit the ground running, confident in what you're doing and knowing the tricks of the trade before you even start. There is the renowned publication *How to Start & Run a Bed and Breakfast* from howtorunabandb.com, but practical

help is also now at hand in the form of a training course aimed at budding B&Bers, recently set up by multi-national award-winning hotelier Andy Banner-Price.

His two-day course takes place at luxury The 25 Boutique B&B in Torquay, which he runs with husband Julian.

Day one concentrates on the purchase. Despite probably being the largest one you'll ever make, it's an often-overlooked subject. Andy told *Luxury Bed & Breakfast*: "Too many purchasers look at their dream property with the eyes of a domestic home purchaser, placing weight on looks and their own needs rather than the needs of the business and how the space works for a B&B. Even a running B&B may need updating and, for instance, if there's not the room to make ensembles bigger, will it be a success in the long run?"

Andy aims to give a warts-and-all view of the industry, not to put people off but just to open their eyes so they know what they should expect. He said, "Once you've bought your business, it's too late to realise you don't like cleaning toilets or getting up early, or that you don't have the skills required to make it a success. You also don't want to end up in a property that was ideal on paper but attracts no guests due to its location or circumstances. By then you could have spent tens of thousands in stamp duty,

solicitors, moving costs and even given up a good career. It's better to walk away before the purchase if it's not for you than to buy blindly then regret it later."

The rest of day one is about the B&B set-up: Should you be star-rated, and if so at what level? Have you thought about being licenced? What will your market be and how to attract it?

Day two moves more into the day-to-day operations and how to make sure you start out confident in what your plan of action entails. Andy discusses review websites and customer satisfaction – he and Julian have earned a TripAdvisor Travellers' Choice Award two years in a row, now placing them as fourth best B&B in the UK, and ninth best in the World, so he knows what he's talking about. He also covers many other areas like working with online travel agents, marketing, websites, setting prices and customer service.

He admits that over the twelve years he's been in the business they've made many mistakes, whether that be by buying things they don't need, buying cheap and therefore buying twice, or by simply spending too much money in the wrong areas.

Andy's next course will be held the weekend of 10-11 November. If you are new to B&B you can view the course content in more detail and get in touch with Andy via his website at training.the25.uk