



# B&B's crowning achievement shows bay is a world away from Fawlty Towers farce

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**T**HE 25 Boutique in Torquay was only open for five months when it was virtually torn down from the inside – and now it has been named as the best B&B in the world.

The guest house in Avenue Road has finally laid the Fawlty Towers ghost to rest by proving standards on the English Riviera are world class.

The 25 Boutique is not Devon's only winner in the 2019 TripAdvisor Travellers' Choice awards – although it is the only UK establishment to win in the world rankings, which rate the world's outstanding hotels, B&Bs and inns.

The 25 owners Julian and Andy Banner-Price said they were "ecstatic" to see they had risen up the TripAdvisor rankings from 9th best in the world last year to top spot.

Julian said: "It's quite unbelievable. We are so proud that all our hard work is recognised by the world's largest travel site. We do everything on our own with no staff and you can't help thinking 'little old me – best in the world?'"

And despite winning the award, since taking on the B&B it hasn't all been plain sailing for the couple.

A routine plumbing inspection

saw a more serious issue of lead piping which needed removing. Floorboards were ripped up and walls were knocked down in every room as the owners tried to find the source.

It was a repair way beyond the scale the owners expected, but it presented an opportunity to refurbish the B&B.

"Hindsight is a wonderful thing," says Andy. "After the first season of trading we'd always had plans to replace the water system and get a new boiler and electrics as we felt it was important to get the services right."

"Next thing you know, the place was like a shell. It was like we'd completely destroyed what was a perfectly good building. Before we took over it was a four-star, silver-graded venue."

"Then we panicked a bit about how we were going to put it all back together and it cost a lot more money than we'd imagined but it gave us an opportunity to do things properly."

"We went on to transform it really. We replaced ceilings and bathrooms and made the bedrooms bigger."

The finer details often make the difference at the highest level, and it's played a key role at The 25 Boutique B&B.

Andy said: "We've tried to produce



» Owners Julian and Andy Banner-Price (seated), with Carolyn Custeron and Tim Godfrey

Picture: ANDY STYLES

a good product and the perfect place that we would want to stay at ourselves.

"I'm definitely taken aback by the attention and at how highly we've ranked because there are just so many venues across the world."

"We've travelled to a number of B&Bs around the world and done our research and we've tried to differentiate ourselves from others. If you look at this area for example, there wasn't really anyone else offering a boutique, from the decor to leading the way design-wise and being tech heavy."

"The key thing is getting the basics right: A comfy bed, tasty breakfast and that it's spotless. The style won't matter if those things aren't done properly."

"We're always friendly and outgoing so visitors can get that balance between the homely and personal service, but if visitors want separation and privacy then they can get that as well."

For all of the venue's innovation, there are some elements of vintage too, including the chandelier in the drawing room which was found at the bottom of a box in one of their previous houses.

As it hangs proudly from the centre of the ceiling, it provides a visual representation as to how far the pair have come.

Andy bought his first flat aged 19 before running a number of other houses while working his day job in a call centre.

But everything changed 11 years

ago during the pair's time in North Wales.

"I'd just been promoted at work and I was at a crossroads really," Andy said. "I typed in businesses for sale and it brought me to Torquay and we took it all from there. We had already owned a 10-bed country house in Caernarfon which was very successful – in fact it was the ninth best in the UK and 17th best in the world."

"But it was time to move down south, and after looking at 50 physical locations we chose this one."

"We wanted a place with good footfall and a good tourist location. It also worked well with our ambitions to downsize, so we wanted a place that was close to restaurants as we don't provide evening food."

