



HELP IN FRANCE

Assistance for British people moving to or living in France

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Bed & Breakfasts and Gites in France



There are very many British people now living in France and many of them are running businesses here. Our focus in this month's newsletter is on British run B&Bs and gites. So, what does it take to run a successful B&B or gite in France? This was a question we were asked by one of our customers. It was hard for us to answer so we put it to a few British owners we know to see what their thoughts were on the subject. Here are a few of the responses we received.

Las Costes :

Building a successful gite business

Location; Decide where you want to be and what clientele you wish to attract, whether it be beach, mountain, town or countryside. Here at Las Costes we are in the middle of beautiful countryside whilst close to many places of interest, a great location for a get away from it all holiday.

Property; Choose one with plenty of character but don't forget guests want all the comforts of home as well, so pay particular attention to fitting it out with modern appliances. Our property was

originally built in the 17th century but we have made the interior very 21st century.

Advertising; you need to stand out from the crowd. A good website is essential with good photographs - then use them to advertise your holidays spreading your adverts as far as your budget will allow.

Finally; Enjoy the French way of life.

Ray and Yvonne Galpin

www.lascostes.co.uk

(North of the medieval town of Figeac, south west France)



LE GRAND CHAMP :

A successful first season

LE GRAND CHAMP was purpose built by a French building company in 2006 and opened for business Easter 2007.

It was all a bit scary but we filled 5 of our 6 Chambres the first day which was very exciting. Running a successful business in a foreign country is not easy if you don't speak the language. We have overcome many things by just being warm and friendly to our guests. We have met so many lovely people and discovered you can overcome most things with a mixture of personality and sign language.



Location :

Choose the right location before you decide on your B&B / Chambre d'hotes. Our B&B is just 10 minutes away from the famous Mont Saint Michel in Normandy and having a few restaurants nearby (if you are not providing an evening meal) is very handy for your guests.

Advertising :

Registering with your local Tourism Office and having a good web site with useful links to people like 'Help in France' is a must we've found although people were also just turning up at the door.

Food :

We serve a delightful continental breakfast with Fruit, yoghurt croissants pain and homemade preserves (the French love them).

Nina and Glynis www.legrandchamp.net
Bed and Breakfast Chambres D'Hotes
on the Normandy, Brittany border.



JEAN COSTE :

A dream come true.

Whether it's a long held dream or the result of TV travel and property shows more and more of us are determined to turn the dreams into reality and move to France. Some decide to help find their new lifestyle by running a B&B (Chambres d'hotes) utilising their spare bedrooms. The early optimism can often quickly disappear as a lack of customers and the realities of running a business kick in,

following some basic rules can help avoid such disappointments.

Location : Choice of location is the first decision to make and is crucial. Regions were rejected for reasons of weather, access or already being very well served with B&B establishments. Then I found the South Midi Pyrenees, an area largely undiscovered by tourists but with a massive potential for the future. I finally settled for a modernised farmhouse called Jean Coste situated in the west Aude.

Attractions : The region is a haven for sporty types with walking and climbing in the Pyrenees, canoeing and white water rafting. In the winter there is skiing in the French Pyrenees and Andorra.

Advertising : I finally decided on several UK newspaper and one magazine to advise the waiting world. Fortunately it paid off and the bookings slowly trickled in then settled to a steady first summer. Our own website soon followed with links to many other sites.

Catriona Bryce <http://www.jean-coste.com/>
Domaine Jean Coste in West Aude.

Advice from Help in France based on experience 😊

- When you are running a B&B or gite, do create a template signature for the emails you send with the name of the property, your email address and a link to your website if you have one. Bear in mind that clients may have written to a few B&Bs in your area to check for vacancies. If they receive a mail with only your name on it, they won't know who you are or what property you are talking about.
- Nowadays, more and more people use the internet, especially for renting holiday accommodation. The big advantage is that they can see photos of the area they plan to visit and the place where they will stay. You can decide not to have a website but you have to realise that it minimizes your chances of having customers. If a potential guest finds a list of holiday accommodation in an area, he will probably click on the link to the websites and forget about the ones who only have a phone number to ring.
- If you have your own website, you can also try to link it to other websites which will increase your chances of getting customers.
- The better the photographs are on your website, the better your chances are of attracting customers. You only get one chance to make a first impression. Choose the photos for your website very carefully.

And what about the French?

We at Help in France have done quite a lot of research into B&Bs and there was one thing we noticed that stood out like a sore thumb. The vast majority of British B&Bs were focusing on British guests.

There are many reasons in fact why the French themselves would like to stay in a British run B&B or gite too. For them it's like being abroad without having to go too far, plus the cosiness of the décor is something typically British that the French don't find anywhere else and appreciate very much. English gardens also have their own distinctive character and style which is very charming for the French. Last but not least is having the opportunity to test their command of the English language which can also be an attraction for the French as many need it for their work these days.

Help in France services include listing your business on our website, translation, creation of websites and dealing with French administration and paperwork.

Calling all Tradesmen and Professionals !

As we said, this month we are concentrating on B&Bs and gites but we know there are many other ways for the British to earn a living here in France. We are aiming to create a network of English or English speaking businesses in France to help both them and our customers. If you would like to contact us, we would be pleased to add you to our database. Also, if you would like to submit a short piece with advice on your own trade or profession we will be very pleased to receive it.

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