

Your Holiday Home

Full of ideas to keep those bookings rolling in

Making it work page 7

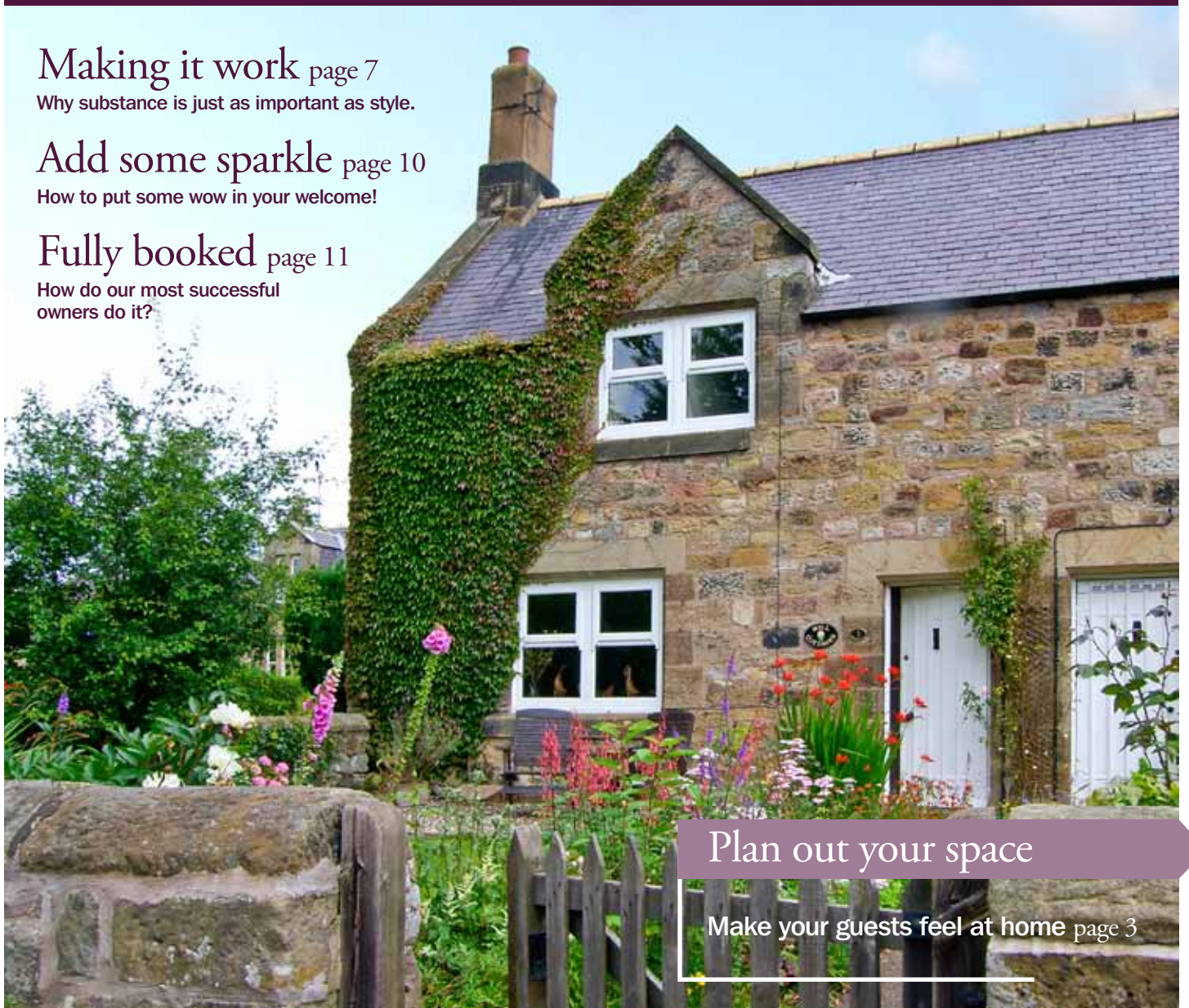
Why substance is just as important as style.

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How do our most successful owners do it?



Plan out your space

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Making the most of your holiday home

How successful owners keep those bookings coming back

We've been asked the secret to successful holiday letting so many times over the last 25 years, we thought it was about time to put it all down on paper. Not that it's rocket science. We just know what works and what doesn't – and we're happy to share that knowledge with you in this guide to making the most of your property.

Remember, location is important, but not always paramount. A good property can still sell well, wherever it might be, if it has what Holiday Makers are looking for.

And those expectations are getting higher all the time. Holiday Makers want their holiday home to be at least as comfortable as their own home. But what they are really looking for is a bit of a treat! That doesn't necessarily mean 5 star luxury but it does mean a little thoughtfulness and attention to detail.

As you'll discover in this guide, a really good room configuration helps – one that is designed around the people your property will attract, be they couples, families or larger groups.

We also explore why a clear, consistent style for your property helps to keep those bookings coming. It can be any style – modern, simple, luxurious or traditional – so long as customers can clearly see 'that's my kind of place'.

And because the best way to get more bookings is to look after the people who already stay with you, it's worth looking on page 10 for ideas on how to wow your guests.

Just a few thoughtful touches can woo them into coming back or giving your property such a great review that future bookings take care of themselves.

Finally, we let you in on a few trade secrets by showing you a few of our most interesting booking facts and figures. Did you know for instance, that accepting pets can seriously boost your bookings?

We hope our guide gives you lots of inspiration for your property, and gets your bookings off to a flying start. But please, ask your Local Manager for expert advice on your holiday property. They really are the fount of all knowledge about how to make the most of your property.



Clive Sykes

A little thoughtfulness and attention to detail goes a long way



Wow your guests and woo them into coming back



Ask your Local Manager for help and advice on your property.

Plan out your space

Investing in a holiday property is a big commitment. So before you spend time and money decorating, furnishing and equipping your holiday property, it's well worth taking a step back and really thinking about how to get the best return.

The way you plan out your space; the facilities, furniture and equipment you put in place can be key to getting regular bookings. The most successful owners think about who might stay at their property and create rooms to attract them.

Families need a property that really thinks about how kids eat, sleep and play. Couples want a nice cosy place and large groups need a property that has enough space and privacy for everyone!

So let's look at your property room by room, and make sure your accommodation is as good as you can make it.



Property Ref: 695 – School House – Peak District and Derbyshire Dales.

First impressions count

After a long journey, the first impression your property makes sets the tone for the whole holiday. Get it right with a neat, tidy garden and a freshly painted front door and you can get your guests excited about your home right from the start. Remember, they've been looking forward to their holiday for weeks – fill them with anticipation as they finally turn the key!

Don't forget!

- Make sure there is hot water for their arrival.
- If they are arriving in the dark then leave a light on.
- If it's cold then warm the house through – pop the heating on and light the fire a few hours before your guests arrive.



Help your guests wake up happy

We all love our bed. And when we're on our holidays we want to wake up refreshed and ready to go, so it's worth making sure yours is wider and comfier than the one at home. We know a good bed is vital and so should you.

A mixture of double and twin beds works well. You might like to consider zip and link beds, so that guests can choose the best option for them. That way you can attract couples and families alike!

Beware of bunks, by the way. They tend to limit your appeal to young families, putting off those older guests who are more likely to book out of season.

Make sure the bed linen is simple, crisp and matches or coordinates well with the curtains. Provide bedside tables, lamps, some wardrobe space, hangers (matching is always nice) and if possible, a dressing table and mirror.

Don't forget!

- Two pillows each is a must. Let your guests choose how many to use.
- A throw or rug is always a nice touch. A couple of cushions don't go amiss.
- Leave extra blankets or quilts available in case it gets chilly.



Property Ref: 2657 – The Old Vicarage - Cumbria & The Lake District

Give them a relaxing bath



The number of bathrooms to bedrooms you have is a really big consideration, especially in bigger properties. Second bathrooms, or better still, an en-suite, are always popular. But when you have three or more bedrooms it becomes even more important. No one likes waiting for a shower in their PJs.

While everyone appreciates the convenience of a shower, don't underestimate the indulgence of a long soak in the bath after a long day out. And if your bath can be freestanding, spa-style or simply a characterful shape, then so much the better. Finally, make sure your boiler is up to the job of bathing a whole household of people. Running out of hot water isn't fun for anyone.

Don't forget!

- Soft towels are as much a luxury as fancy soap. Provide the best you can.
- Make sure there are plenty of towels. At least a bath sheet and hand towel per person.
- Power showers, good mirrors and heated towel rails go down well.



Property Ref: 3674 – Abbey Dore Court – Herefordshire.

Get them cooking on gas

After sleeping well, eating well is probably the next most essential part of any holiday! So it's no surprise that kitchens are the room that many guests care about the most. No one wants to feel they are going to be stuck slaving over a hot stove, while the wine is flowing elsewhere. Open the kitchen up and let everyone in on the fun, if you can. Even just a comfy chair or a simple stool will welcome in the other guests and keep the cook happy.

Range cookers are very appealing in traditional homes, as are double cookers in larger properties where there may be a crowd to feed. Dishwashers, washing machines, tumble dryers, and microwaves always score well. Who wants to do chores on holiday, after all?



Property Ref: 7424 – Spens Farm – Yorkshire Dales.

Don't forget!

- Provide enough crockery, glasses and cutlery for all the guests.
- Leave instructions on how all your appliances work.
- Check our Equipment Checklist on pages 12 and 13, to see what you ought to include.



Property Ref: 1239 – The Retreat – Cornwall.

Don't forget!

- Dinner may be more of an occasion on holiday, where everyone recalls today's and plans tomorrow's adventures
- So why not allow your guests to make it special with a tablecloth, table mats, matching crockery etc?
- Make it welcoming – take a look at the picture above... it's perfect!



Make space at the table

One of the great pleasures of a cottage holiday is sitting round the table with everyone. Make sure all your guests can eat together. Choose a table that allows plenty of space for each setting – and room for all the dishes in the middle. Make it easy to linger over a bottle or two. Low lights would be lovely.

Help them get comfy

After dinner your guests might want to retire to the lounge. So make sure there's enough room for everyone and no one is too squashed up on the sofa or forced onto the floor. Cushions they can cuddle up to, or rugs by an open fire are what makes a house feel like a home. And some lamps or soft lighting, inspiring pictures on the wall and a roaring fire will have everyone gathering round for an evening of fun and games.



Property Ref: 1794 – Sweetpea – Cornwall.

Don't forget!

- Some instructions for the fire always help, whether it's open, a stove or gas.
- A great TV, DVD player or extra channels are appreciated by kids and grown ups alike.



Top technology...

These days guests arrive with a whole lot of technology. Including WiFi is a really popular service too. It's not just so parents can check their emails, it's so kids can get the most out of their iPads and mobile phones too. So a fast, reliable connection that comes with easy instructions on how to join, is an easy win.

Rainy days and winter nights mean a good TV is a must, but the more channels and set-top box options it comes with, the better. And don't forget a docking station or CD player – lots of people like their holidays to go with a swing!

Don't forget!

- Today's technology.
- WiFi.
- Docking station.



Property Ref: 4566 – Bwthyn Awel – Anglesey.

Open up the great outdoors

Watching the sun go down on a long June evening is one of the, admittedly rare, pleasures of a British summer. So why not help make sure your guests make the most of it, with opening doors, a deck or patio, good quality garden furniture or even a hot tub? Make the most of the space you have, even a back yard can be transformed with a bistro table and a few pot plants.

Don't forget!

- Some customers look for an enclosed garden – great for pets and children alike.
- Low maintenance is the key to a successful holiday garden. Don't let it get out of control!



Property Ref: 2043 - Briarcliffe Cottage - Cumbria & The Lake District

Making it work



When property owners come to us for advice on how to improve their holiday property, one of the things we always say is that substance is just as important as style...

It honestly doesn't matter if you have a country cottage, a modern apartment, a grand country pile, a rustic log cabin or a luxury pad. There's no one style that does better than others.



As you can see from these examples of our best-selling properties, we get regular bookings for all styles of homes. There's no right answer. So go with what you think suits your property. After all, it's your holiday home too!



The key is consistency – having a room that seems out of place, or not up to the same standard as the others,

often disappoints – but also substance. You need to make sure all your rooms are laid out well and anticipate what your guests' expectations are.



To show you what we mean, you might want to take a closer look at Craster Reach, the first property in our portfolio to be owned, managed and designed by the Sykes family themselves.

Take a look at some of our best selling properties online at www.SykesCottages.co.uk

Top Left: Property Ref: 5243 – Gorrans Down Cottage – Devon. **Top Right:** Property Ref: 1794 – Sweetpea – Cornwall.
Middle Left: Property Ref: 16229 – Rushmore Lodge – Kent. **Middle Right:** Property Ref: 1562 – The Red Barn – Northumberland.
Bottom Left: Property Ref: 4566 – Bwthyn Awel – Anglesey. **Bottom Right:** Property Ref: 1146 – The Granary – Shropshire.

Whatever style of property you own...
There are ideas you can borrow from Craster Reach.

Regular bookings are within reach

With local family connections, beautiful family beaches, superb surfing, spectacular local landmarks and walking trails, not to mention the world-famous Craster Kippers, it's easy to see why Clive Sykes and his family love this Northumberland harbour village so much.

Sure, the holiday cottage they decided to invest in needed a lot of work, but Clive saw an opportunity to put everything he's learned from 25 years in the holiday letting business, into practice. As he explains...

“...by going for a simple, neutral colour scheme, high quality furniture and fittings, plus a room layout that appeals to both families and adult groups, we've given Craster Reach the broadest possible appeal, without compromising on rates.”

And already it seems to be paying off. In its very first year on the market Craster Reach (Ref: 10782) achieved 47 bookings, achieved 100% positive guest feedback and even allowed a few weeks and long weekends away for the Sykes family and friends.



- Neutral colours and wooden floors.
- A consistent decorative theme in every room.
- Family friendly with two doubles and a twin. Cot, highchair and stairgate available.
- Couple friendly with three double rooms and two baths.
- Off road parking for easy unpacking.
- Multi-fuel stove, on cold days lit for guests on arrival.
- Towels included in rent.





2



3

“First-class cottage, highly recommended – the cottage has been done up to a high spec. Everything is new and super clean”



1 - LIVING ROOM

Multi-fuel stove lit for our guests' arrival on cold days!

Entertainment and technology
TV with Freeview, DVD, CD/iPod dock, WiFi, even a selection of books, games and DVDs.

Candles and lamps for cosy, soft evening light.

Two sofas cosy and comfy, even for 6 grown ups.

Wooden floors look great and so easy to clean and maintain.

A sociable space thanks to this coffee table.

2 - KITCHEN

An island focal point drawing in other guests to help out the chef!

Everything matches from the cooker right down to the herb pots!

Holidays shouldn't be a chore
a microwave, washer/dryer and dishwasher were a must! Tiled floors, scratch-resistant tops and no clutter so it's easy to maintain.

3 - DINING ROOM

Comfortable chairs make this a table all six guests want to linger at.

Candles for dinner now every meal can be a special occasion.

Outdoor living in the summer the French doors and deck allows dinner to easily move outdoors, in winter they bring the outside in.

4 - BEDROOMS

Amazing sea views holidays are truly memorable thanks to this Velux window. It really is stunning to wake up to!

Flexible layout this bedroom can be a twin for kids or zip together for another couple.

King-size beds the 3 bed-rooms are all big enough to offer this not so little luxury.

Plush luxury quality bedding, throws and fluffy towels help make guests feel welcome.

5 - BATHROOM

Two bathrooms really essential when you have more than two bedrooms.

A generous bath never underestimate the joy of a good soak!

En-suite gives the master bedroom a touch of luxury and leaves the other bathroom free for other guests.



4



4



4



5



5

Add some sparkle

A little thoughtfulness goes a long way to securing extra bookings

It doesn't take much to make someone feel special; to make them feel welcome, to make them want to tell others about how great your property is. All it needs is a little thoughtfulness, a little care, little touches like these, all of which could help to earn your property a fantastic review, and a reliable stream of bookings to come.



“Smelling of roses.”

Isn't it funny how certain smells bring back happy memories? A few flowers on the table can be just as welcoming as the way your property looks.

“I knew you were coming so I baked a cake.”

It's late. You've had a long drive to get here. You're tired and hungry. Wouldn't it be nice to find some milk in the fridge, tea and coffee on a tray? Maybe some biscuits or a cake on the side – a local speciality is even better, scones in Devon, Bara Brith in Wales or Eccles Cakes in Lancashire. It's amazing how a warm welcome can get a holiday off to the best possible start.

“Aaaaaaaah, now that's cosy”

It's one thing having a fire. It's another making sure the wood pile is fully stacked, the coal bucket is full and if it's cold that it's been gently glowing for an hour or two before your guests arrive. Many guests are unsure about open fires and stoves, so make sure you leave them some helpful tips.



“At no extra cost...?”

Everyone likes something for free. Whether it's letting pets stay with their owners, providing towels for your guests, or making no extra charge for fuel. Properties that include more in the price get more bookings.



“Hey kids, look what I've found!”

Parents will thank you for any help you can give them to keep the kids amused, whether it's leaving a football or cricket bats in the garden shed, some board games in a drawer for rainy days, or a range of books for bedtime.

“Don't miss this...!”



A little local knowledge goes a long, long way on holiday. So please make sure you provide a guest book full of helpful tips and advice on what to do, where to eat, drink and how to call a taxi home. It's always nice when you let guests make their own recommendations too. And don't forget to leave the drawer full of leaflets from local attractions.

Five easy ways

to get more bookings

Properties with 4 or 5 ticks get Extra bookings

Today's Holiday Makers expect a high standard of holiday accommodation and are often looking for that special property that will wow them. If you are renovating your property or looking to make improvements, it can be really worthwhile aiming for a 4 or 5 tick standard. Properties with these ratings are the most popular, and get booked earlier and more frequently than lower quality properties.



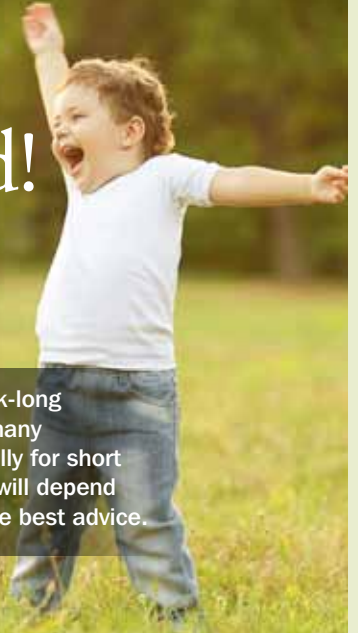
**WHY
DON'T
YOU**
WiFi?

These days many customers won't go to a property unless it has WiFi – make it free and easy to use and your property will get booked up first.

HURRAH! it's the weekend!

Choose your changeover day carefully

Traditionally customers always started their week-long holidays on a Saturday. Whilst this is still true, many customers are looking for a Friday start, especially for short breaks. Which is the best day for your property, will depend on its size and location – please talk to us for the best advice.



3... 4... 5... nights

Short breaks earn extra revenue

More and more people are taking long weekends and midweek breaks at all times of the year. At Sykes we tailor our short break season to make sure your property is filled to maximum occupancy, with short breaks in peak periods bookable at short notice only. Accepting out of season short breaks can really boost your income so we recommend you consider them. Our newly introduced 5 night breaks at Christmas and New Year are a must too.



**WOOF!!
WOOF!!**

**PETS WIN PRIZES
WHEN IT COMES
TO EXTRA
BOOKINGS**

There's no doubt that properties that accept pets do better than those that don't. And properties that accept more than one four-legged friend, do even better.



Equipment Checklist

Would you like to stay in the cottage yourself?

Holiday Makers expectations are getting higher all the time and receiving a good review is becoming more important in a competitive self-catering market. It can be disappointing for travellers to go on holiday and end up not having household conveniences to use in their holiday home.

All it needs is a little thought when equipping your holiday home.

Sitting room

- Occasional table with coasters
- Comfortable seating for each person (including children) stated as per occupancy
- LCD TVs and DVDs
- Books, maps of the area, puzzles, playing cards and DVDs
- Visitors book
- Heating, woodburner, gas, electric or open fire
- If an open fire is available, you will need tools to go with it, plus a spark guard, coal bucket and ash bucket
- Log basket if used

Dining room

- Table and chairs for each person, stated as per occupancy in the brochure. Two tablecloths or place mats for each person, plus extra for hot dishes

Bathroom

- Bath or shower, or better still both
- A heated towel rail. Failing this a good quality wooden towel rail is better than the cheap plastic ones (plastic tends to break easily costing more over a period of time)
- Hooks on the backs of doors, for dressing gowns, etc
- Basin
- Shaver point
- Toilet
- Toilet paper holder
- Toilet brush and holder
- Plastic beaker for brushes
- Covered bin

Bedrooms

- Good quality beds
- Two pillows per person as stated in brochure (non-feather)
- One under pillowcase per pillow and one mattress cover per mattress
- Two duvet covers per duvet and two matching pillowcases per pillow
- Manmade fibre duvets (some people are allergic to feathers) with a 12 or 13.5 Tog rating
- Two sheets per bed. It always looks so much better if all the bedding and curtains, where possible can be co-ordinated
- Hooks on door backs
- Dressing table where possible, or chest of drawers
- Attractive bed throws help with first impressions
- Wardrobe
- Coat hangers (6 per person)
- Mirror
- Table lights or over bed lights
- Small bedroom chair, whenever possible
- Metal wastepaper bin

Technology

- In addition to a TV & DVD you may wish to add WiFi, CD player/radio, docking station

Kitchen

After sleeping well, eating well is probably the next most essential part of any holiday! So it's no surprise that kitchens are the room that many guests care about the most. When purchasing your main kitchen equipment buy the best quality you can and keep it simple so that it is easy to use and clean.

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Gas or electric cooker, with oven and grill, all clean and functional | <input type="checkbox"/> Sharp vegetable/cooking knife |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fridge/Freezer (separate or together) | <input type="checkbox"/> Can opener (good quality) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dishwasher (increasingly important selling point!) | <input type="checkbox"/> Bottle opener or corkscrew |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Microwave oven (simple operation essential) | <input type="checkbox"/> Carving knife and fork |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Toaster | <input type="checkbox"/> Potato peeler |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Coffee percolator | <input type="checkbox"/> Whisk |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Washer/Dryer | <input type="checkbox"/> Grater |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Electric kettle | <input type="checkbox"/> Ladle |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cafetiere | <input type="checkbox"/> Potato masher |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pie Dish | <input type="checkbox"/> Wooden cooking spoon |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Vacuum cleaner | <input type="checkbox"/> Oven roasting tin |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Storage space for crockery | <input type="checkbox"/> Water jug |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cutlery box or divided drawer | <input type="checkbox"/> Rolling pin |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Storage space for other kitchen and cleaning equipment | <input type="checkbox"/> Baking tin |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Easy to clean hygienic work tops | <input type="checkbox"/> Measuring jug |
| <input type="checkbox"/> At least three pans with lids, small, medium and large, for up to 5 people. Extra and/or larger pans as needed for more than 5 people | <input type="checkbox"/> Tray |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Frying pan | <input type="checkbox"/> Two tablecloths or one place mat per person |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Tea pot | <input type="checkbox"/> Heat resistant mats for placing under hot dishes on the table |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Milk jug | <input type="checkbox"/> Washing up bowl |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sugar bowl | <input type="checkbox"/> Dust pan and brush |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Butter dish | <input type="checkbox"/> Sweeping brush |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Two vegetable dishes | <input type="checkbox"/> Biscuit/cake tin |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mixing bowl | <input type="checkbox"/> Kitchen scissors |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fruit bowl | <input type="checkbox"/> Clothes pegs – Clothes airer |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Colander | <input type="checkbox"/> Mop and bucket |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bread bin | <input type="checkbox"/> Plastic storage box with basic cleaning materials |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Toast rack | <input type="checkbox"/> Simple laminated instructions for appliances – prominently displayed |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Condiment set | <input type="checkbox"/> Appropriate level of lighting |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bread knife | <input type="checkbox"/> Waste bin with a lid |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bread chopping board | <input type="checkbox"/> A fire blanket or fire extinguisher, suitable for kitchen fires |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Dustbin |

One each per maximum advertised guest

In matching sets of pleasant appearance and in good condition - it is also a good idea to have a few spares in case of breakages.

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cup and saucer | <input type="checkbox"/> Dessert spoon |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mug | <input type="checkbox"/> Soup spoon |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Side plate | <input type="checkbox"/> Tea spoon |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dinner plate | <input type="checkbox"/> Table spoon |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dessert plate | <input type="checkbox"/> Egg cup |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Soup/cereal bowl | <input type="checkbox"/> Large glass tumbler |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Large and small knife | <input type="checkbox"/> Small glass tumbler |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Large and small fork | <input type="checkbox"/> Wine glass |

Local Manager Notes

Ask your Local Manager
for expert advice on your
holiday property

A series of horizontal dotted lines providing a space for handwritten notes.

For advice and guidance, feel free to consult your Local Manager.

What could you do with your holiday home?

“Sykes have a lovely, human touch, and they really know you and your cottage. Because they’re a family business, they understand what we’re going through and provide the help we need.”

Lisa Nield, Anglesey



 | SYKES | cottages
More bookings, less hassle

Lime Tree House, Hoole Lane, Chester, CH2 3EG
01244 352 298 | www.SykesCottages.co.uk

For advice and guidance, feel free to consult your Local Manager.