

Information pack

Why use an agency to manage your bookings? What makes Stonehills different?

In an age where more and more things are becoming impersonal we want to offer both landlords and guests a very different kind of service.

Your property is a valuable asset and in this competitive market it is essential to maximise it's potential.

Stonehills will make this easier for you by taking the hassle out of renting your property. We will manage your bookings, deposits, cancellations etc, and most importantly give your property recognition on our outstanding website.

It costs you nothing to be on our website. We take a percentage of the rental as our commission. This fee can be incorporated and added to a new rental rate, which means that effectively you have all our service for no extra cost to you.

We charge 12% + VAT commission fee, which is considerably cheaper than other companies, and you are still free to advertise elsewhere and take your own bookings at all times. All we ask is that you inform us immediately via email of any bookings you take so we can update availability.

Why use Stonehills?

We are an independent, family run business and we understand the rental market having years of experience with our other company Brighton Holiday Homes, which is the biggest and most successful holiday let agency in Brighton. Brighton Holiday Homes has a turnover in excess of £2million and achieves all year round bookings for landlords just in Brighton and Hove. We want to be able to achieve similar results for you.

We have a formula that works for both landlords and guests. Please see www.brightonholidayhomes.co.uk to see how we work. Our company follows this ethos:

- Stylish and affordable accommodation.
- A very friendly and helpful staff guests can talk to and trust.
- A service which is second to none before, during and after their holiday.
- A simple method of booking and payment.
- Friendly relationships with landlords where they can call us anytime and can trust that we are passionate about promoting their property and achieving the best results.

We only accept properties that are mid range on price but high end on style. We do not allow just any property to be part of the portfolio. All our properties are selected for location, design and general "wow" factor. The mid-range price bracket is growing fast and typically most bookings are from guests in their thirties, forties and fifties. People expect a high standard but without an overly high price tag. We do not advertise villas for £5000+ a week. We want guests to come to our website and know that they will find something stylish and in the price bracket they are looking for.

With Stonehills your property will receive the high profile it deserves. On typical holiday letting sites your property can be lost amongst sub-standard ones and guests feel nervous about booking. Guests worry that the photos are inaccurate or if the landlord is dishonest; particularly when they are expected to send bank transfers to an individual's bank account. It is very time consuming for guests to look through all the properties on owners direct type websites. They see lots of awful properties as well as good ones and then they are expected to take a leap of faith when booking! We take all the stress of booking away from the guest so they can talk to someone anytime, they don't have to fill in laborious on line booking forms and they can pay by debit or credit card.

Here are a few more key points about our company:

- Internet optimization – Stonehills invest heavily in SEO to be high on Google on Google listings; the internet being the most effective marketing tool now. We use the country's leading SEO company.
- The 12% +VAT commission fee can be incorporated into a new price for your property and for this fee we advertise, take bookings personally, take payment by credit or debit cards or bank transfer, hold and return security deposits, send information and directions for the property (provided by you) and mediate should there be a dispute or complaint. Your guest will have your emergency caretaker contact number during their stay, so at no time will the guest need to have your phone number, so you can be free from all the hassles and the unexpected awkward conversations that can sometimes happen if they have a complaint.
- We do not have online booking because we want to talk to the guests who are staying in your property. We want to know who is coming so your property is protected and that it is suitable for all the guest's requirements.
- We have a sales and customer care team who are very experienced in holiday lettings and the travel industry and guests can call to make a booking from 9am to 10pm weekdays, 9am to 5pm Saturdays and 10am to 4pm Sundays. Guests can email an enquiry at any time and these are often answered out of these hours also.
- We offer a very friendly and personal service and work closely with landlords.
- We can help you achieve maximum bookings all year round and can work with you so that we can promote last minute deals or special offers out of high season.
- We can advise on interior design, décor and photos to help you showcase your property effectively. We can also advise on pricing to help you increase your profits as we are fully aware of changes in the market.
- Each property has its own page with as many photos as you want to show (at least 8), full description, local activities and restaurants you recommend, pricing, availability and good reviews it has received.
- We have a full time accounts manager who you can call at any time should you have a query about a payment. Payment to you is made one week after guest departure and we provide monthly statements to you.
- We can advise on inventories, holiday let insurance, health and safety requirements and other legal requirements. We would need to have a copy of your holiday let insurance document and gas safety certificates if applicable.
- We listen carefully to reviews guests give to us about a property and will pass on feedback to you so you can make improvements. Unfortunately we are aware some guests do try to receive compensation for what are actually quite minor inconveniences. We handle these complaints for you and have policies and terms and conditions in place so we can mediate fairly in this type of situation. We do not give compensation without authorisation from you.

And finally.....

With Stonehills you are not dealing with a faceless corporate organisation. We are a husband and wife partnership and we also have a very experienced and committed team of staff who have become like family over the years.

As Directors we are the corner-stones and are very much involved in the day to day running of the business and that will never change. We are always around if you want to talk to us directly. As a landlord you can be assured of a helpful, professional and friendly service from us and our staff.

Our relationship with you is very important to us and our main objective is to maximise your income in as hassle free a way as possible whilst providing clients with a personal service that is second to none.

We have the knowledge, expertise and client base to make your property a profitable venture and we hope this gives you some indication of how we can work together.

Any other questions please call us!

Neil and Michelle Stonehill

Property Inventory

If this is the first time you have let your property as a holiday home here is a helpful inventory of what you need to provide. Please feel free to contact us anytime you need advice or help.

If your home is already a holiday home it is still worthwhile to check through to make sure you have all the required items and to use it as a checklist.

Holiday Let Insurance – this is something you must have so that you are covered for public liability as well as contents etc. Please ask us for advice if you need some assistance. You do not need home contents insurance as this becomes void once you rent out your home as a holiday let.

It is also important you carry out health and safety checks on your property. Gas appliances should be tested annually, there should be adequate fire safety including smoke alarms, fire blankets and extinguishers. If you have a pool you need to ensure it can be safely enclosed for toddlers or specify in the description that it is unsuitable for toddlers. If you have a trampoline that doesn't have a safety net this needs to be specified or preferably you should buy a safety net around it. It is your responsibility as the landlord and owner of the property to ensure all local laws regarding holiday letting, pool safety and other health and safety laws are adhered to. We need to have copies of your current holiday let / public liability insurance documents.

Property Inventory

We pride ourselves on the quality of all of our properties, ensuring that our renters enjoy a comfortable and pleasurable and safe stay. For this reason we have put together a useful guide and check list for you to ensure that your property is equipped to the expecting standard of our renters.

General

- First aid kit
- Broom
- Clothes airer
- Dustpan & brush
- Duster
- Cleaning agents
- Paper bin each room
- Any cots or bunks to be of British Standard
- Welcome pack/tourist info/takeaway menus/bus time tables/emergency numbers
- As a guide, 1 set of keys per double bed/sofa bed

Lounge/Dining Area

- Sofas/chairs to seat max number of guests for property
- Place mats/table protectors/table cloth
- Selection of books & games
- Modern television, dvd player
- Dining table & chairs to seat max number of guests for property
- Waste paper basket

The lounge should be welcoming with cushions, lamps and accessories to make it feel like a home from home.

Kitchen

All kitchen appliances must be in good working order, clean and in good physical appearance. All appliances including the fridge, freezer should be cleaned at the end of each stay. Clean tea towels, dish cloth and scourer left for each stay. Cleaning products available for guests to use during their stay.

- Electric iron & board
- Bread board & knife
- Water jug
- Tea towels
- Pedal/swing bin
- Washing up sponge and brush
- Fire blanket
- Bin liners
- Washing up bowl and rack
- Fire extinguisher suitable for oil based fires
- Electric kettle
- Oven gloves
- Vegetable dishes
- Microwavable bowl
- Selection plastic storage containers
- Tea pot
- Spare light bulbs
- Milk jug
- Electric toaster
- Sieve
- Cafetiere
- Tray
- Casserole dish
- Sugar bowl/container
- Colander
- Butter dish
- Measuring jug
- Mixing bowl
- Baking trays
- Condiment set
- Frying pan: large & small
- Bread Bin
- Saucepan set – assorted sizes
- Salad bowl and server
- Microwave
- China, Glass, Cutlery & Utensils

All items marked with * should have enough to cover the maximum number of guests plus extra for visiting guests.

- Wine glasses* Water glasses* Side plates*
- Dinner plates* Cereal/soup bowls* Coffee mugs*
- Tea cups & saucers* Egg cups* Tea spoons*
- Table knives, fork & spoons*
- Several serving spoons
- Cutlery box/divider
- Potato masher
- Bottle/tin opener
- Cheese grater
- Fish slice
- Set of kitchen knives
- Wooden spoons
- Potato peeler
- Garlic press
- Carving knife & fork
- Kitchen scissors
- Rolling pin
- Spatula
- Corkscrew
- Whisk
- Ladle

Bedrooms

All beds and pillows should be good quality, firm and with protective mattress and pillow protectors. Mattresses should be turned regularly. All rooms should ideally have a dressing table with mirror, chair, full-length mirror, wardrobe and chest of drawers.

Adequate clothes storage for the number of guests staying in the property.

- 1 Mattress cover per bed, 1 duvet, 2 pillows per person 2 pillow cases per person
- (with duvets and pillows it is best to buy non-feather or at least to have spare hypo-allergenic ones) available in case guests have allergies)
- Additional blankets
- Hairdryer (per property)
- Bedside table & lamp
- 5 matching coat hangers per person... no wire hangers.

Bathroom

- Lavatory brush
- 2 rolls of lavatory paper
- Bathroom cleaning agents
- Hand wash
- Bath mat
- Towel rail
- Bin with a lid
- Electric razor point

Outside areas

Outside areas should be clean, safe and secure with adequate lighting. If you have a pool you need to ensure it can safely enclosed for toddlers or specify in the description that it is unsuitable for toddlers. If you have a trampoline that doesn't have a safety net this needs to be specified or preferably you should buy a safety net around it. Any play equipment should be safe for use and checked regularly, having passed safety standards.