



Fosse Farmhouse, Wiltshire

How did a four-star B&B in Wiltshire become the setting for an anime (animated cartoon) on a Japanese TV network?

It all goes back to 1989, when the owner of Fosse Farmhouse, Caron Cooper, met Japanese couple Shozo and Yasuko Mitani while selling antiques on London's Portobello Road. They were planning to set up an English-themed hotel in Japan, so Caron invited them to tea the next day to find out why. When they arrived at the 200-year-old, antique-filled farmhouse, they said it was "just like Alice in Wonderland," she recalls.

Back in Japan, the Mitanis displayed photographs from Fosse Farmhouse in the reception of their own hotel – and the floodgates opened. First, a magazine in Japan wrote about the farmhouse. Then, in 1992, Caron won a competition as part of the 'Britain Welcomes Japan' campaign. Next, the British Embassy in Japan invited her to bake scones for the Japanese royal family and, in turn, they came to Fosse Farmhouse on a private visit in 1994. Last year, Caron was contacted by the company producing *Kiniro Mosaic*, an anime about a girl on a farm in Wiltshire, based on Fosse Farmhouse.

These days, about a quarter of Caron's guests are Japanese. They are fascinated with how the English live, she says, so she serves traditional tea and scones, takes guests for rides in her Morris Minor and gives gifts of homemade damson jam when they leave. She also provides breakfast from 7am to suit her more jet-lagged visitors. Japanese guests like to take photographs on departure, so she makes time for this at the end of the stay.

"My connection with Japan has grown because I am curious," she says. "I love to know about other people's cultures; I suppose that's the secret to my success."

www.fossefarmhouse.com



Clockwise from left: Fosse Farmhouse; Caron Cooper (right) and guest, baking; Caron poses with her guests; a scene from *Kiniro Mosaic* anime; Fosse Farmhouse; English tea and scones



B&B owners, too, may find mature markets more profitable. For example, stats show that 11% of German holidaymakers to the UK stayed in B&Bs in 2012, compared with 1% of Greeks.

It might also be worth consulting your own website statistics for evidence of demand, says Brian Dennehy, who runs digital marketing agency Social Media Synergy. "Where a lot of small accommodation providers fall down is that they don't interrogate their Google Analytics," he says. "They may be attracting interest from a market without knowing it."

Overseas markets can also be useful for extending the peak season and generating business during the shoulder months, says Anke Monestel, Head of International Operations at VisitEngland. "Public holidays and school holidays vary between different countries," she says. "In Germany, school holidays start from the middle of June and run until the end of September."

Around the world

Foreign visitors to England are on the rise, so how can you tap into this lucrative market? *Chris Alden* investigates

Willkommen, welkom, yokoso, bienvenido, bienvenue: all words you could find yourself saying much more in future, as England once again starts to attract record numbers of visitors from overseas.

Some 28.6 million people visited England in 2013, official statistics show, up nearly 7% on the previous year, and the latest 2014 figures up to June show a 9% increase on the equivalent period in 2013. Although the proportion of those people visiting London has been on the rise, more than £7bn was spent in regions outside the capital. So what can small accommodation providers and attractions do to gain a share of this growing overseas market?

The first step, experts and businesses suggest, is to do your research and discover if there's an overseas market out there that could help build your business. VisitBritain, the agency that markets Britain overseas, publishes a wealth of intelligence about inbound visitors from around the world, including travellers' top reasons for visiting and the regions they visit,

at www.visitbritain.org/insightsandstatistics. If you want to target a particular overseas market, this is a good place to start.

The devil's in the data

Historic Royal Palaces looks at these statistics when marketing its attractions, such as Hampton Court and the Tower of London, to overseas visitors, explains Ann Wilson, Head of Sales and Travel Trade at the organisation. "We look at the size of the market, the trend of growth or decline, the motivation to visit, length of stay and spend, and from that we weight each market," she says. "We also put into the mix their propensity to visit our attractions and come out with a score."

While smaller businesses might not wish to crunch the numbers to the same extent, there is still key information to be found. The statistics show that visitors to England from mature markets such as France, Germany and Australia are more likely to stay outside London than visitors from emerging markets, such as Brazil or Greece – suggesting that businesses beyond the capital might be better off focusing on more mature markets.

Images: iStock. Illustration: Christian Inkpen



Clockwise from left: Penhayl Cottage exterior; a cottage bedroom; St Ives Harbour Beach; Ann and Alan Clegg



Penhayl Cottage, Cornwall

The Cornish tourism industry owes much to Rosamunde Pilcher. The Cornish-born writer's novels are televised on Sunday nights on German TV channel ZDF, helping attract the 314,000 Germans who visited the South West in 2013.

For Ann Clegg, owner of Penhayl Cottage, a five-star self-catering business in Lelant (the village where Pilcher was born), there's an opportunity to promote her business to a mature market that's keen to know more about Cornish history, culture and things to see and do.

"We provide an information sheet about places to see that are used in the films," she says. "This week I've written to all the Germans who've stayed with us over the past four years, with a link to the latest programme filmed at Godolphin and the Isles of Scilly."

Ann says her German guests particularly value precise information about the cottage and area before they arrive, on subjects ranging from the safety of local beaches and car parking to activities such as cycling and canoeing. When it comes to bedding preferences, the typical German king-size bed has two separate mattresses, so Ann's German guests sometimes ask for two single duvets.

Ann also translates emails, supplementing her basic German with translation tools to make sure she's found the right turn of phrase. She has also had help from her guests in perfecting English-German translations, including information on signs around the house. "We had two teenagers who kindly went round and translated some of my German into better German. They were smashing people. It's lovely to have that sort of camaraderie."

"It's so important that we're able to produce things in other languages," she says. "It makes foreign guests feel more welcome."

www.penhayl-cottage-cornwall.co.uk

> Reaching the right audience

Once you've identified an overseas market, how do you target it? A tried and tested way is to develop relationships with partners who have international reach – whether that means tour operators, consortia or your local destination organisation.

Lizzie Rohan runs No 54, a five-star B&B in Helmsley, North Yorkshire. She is an accommodation provider for Scoot Cycling Holidays, a cycle tour operator based in York which recently organised a press trip for a German journalist and photographer. As a result, No 54 was mentioned in German magazine *Brigitte* and received an influx of German guests.

"Scoot paid for the photographer and journalist to stay at No 54," says Lizzie. "I think Scoot chose us as we have a close working relationship with them; they have a premium product and want to offer the best available to their clients."

Lizzie also attracts American walkers through her relationships with tour operators. "The Americans we get here come through Macs Adventure up in Glasgow; they come to do the Cleveland Way or the Inn Way," she says. In both cases, it was the tour operators who contacted her and came to do a recce of No 54. "I imagine our reputation is what helped them to choose us," Lizzie says.

If you're in self-catering, marketing your business through a big brand such as Premier Cottages or Cottages4you may also give you international reach – especially if you can manage to tap into their promotional activity.

"For Premier Cottages, we worked with the director of marketing to pull together a press trip from Germany to one particular cottage with sustainability as its unique selling point," says Anke.

Review websites are an increasingly important way to attract an international clientele. "TripAdvisor has 24 separate



No 54 exterior; owner, Lizzie Rohan; a spacious bedroom at No 54 (below)



language websites including the English one," says Brian. "If you have, say, guests who leave a review in Finnish, that will appear first [above other reviews] on the Finnish website." The site also allows potential guests to automatically translate any foreign-language review into the relevant language.

Speaking the lingo

If you want to attract overseas visitors, it can be useful to have foreign-language content on your website – which should also help with your search engine optimisation (SEO) for foreign-language search terms.

But be careful using automated tools such as Google Translate; while superficially attractive, they can sometimes be detrimental. "While that's possibly better than nothing," says Anke, "poorly translated information doesn't fill potential visitors with confidence. I would encourage people to have their website checked by a native speaker if they have a go at it themselves."

Historic Royal Palaces has a website in five languages – French, German, Spanish, Italian and Brazilian Portuguese – but its audio guides are in many more languages, which is attractive to both tour operators and independent travellers. "They're in all those languages on the website," explains Ann, "plus Russian, Korean, Mandarin, Japanese and Dutch."

For small accommodation businesses, an alternative might be to have foreign-language information about your business and local attractions, as self-catering owner Ann Clegg does (see panel, opposite) – or even just a foreign word of welcome when guests arrive.

"Surprise your guests by welcoming them to your B&B in their own language," suggests Tim Richardson of foreign-language specialists QR Languages. "Don't be embarrassed: they will appreciate the effort." ■

Attracting international markets

- Research international visitors at www.visitbritain.org/insightsandstatistics/markets.
- Check your website statistics to see if there is demand you haven't explored. VisitEngland's Online Marketing Toolkit has guidance on using Google Analytics at www.visitengland.com/onlinemarketing.
- Tap into the marketing efforts of tour operators who have international reach; they organise familiarisation trips for journalists who can give you a mention in international media.
- Use social media and encourage international reviews if possible.
- Consider translating your website and email marketing but don't publish automated translations without getting them checked by a native speaker.