High Wray: Standing out from the crowd
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“We have definitely attracted additional business by being able to cater for a wider audience” says Alexine and Warren Crawford, owners of High Wray. Their highly accessible self-contained flat has forged such a strong reputation that some customers book more than 18 months in advance!

Strong demand

The property was upgraded in the 1990’s and developed to cater for guests with physical access needs.

“We people regularly tell me that they have looked and looked and not been able to find anything else in the area that is suitable for them. Not only are we different because we have the facilities and experience to ensure disabled people really enjoy their stay, but we are attractive to the growing market of older travellers. They want to continue enjoying domestic breaks despite being less mobile and if we are providing quality accommodation that helps make life easier for them it can only help us as a business”, says Alexine

Providing key facilities

From arrival, with parking close to the level, covered entrances, right through to all aspects of the flat, wheelchair users’ needs are at the forefront. When the property was upgraded key facilities were included: grab rails, wheel-in shower; low level kitchen facilities including sink, hob, kitchen and work surfaces; pull out cupboards; sliding doors (to give more space) large clear area in the rooms for easy wheelchair movement; and low level hanging rails in bedroom cupboards.
While the business does not specifically cater for hearing or visually impaired guests, every effort is made to meet their requirements. “We have had some hearing impaired guests and if they are lip-reading, we know the importance of looking at people directly and speaking in a normal way. We take the time to write out information if they find that easier too.”

Meeting individual needs

Flexibility and good customer service are as important as the initial capital investment in facilities, according to Alexine. “It’s important to ask people whether they have any specific requirements, just as part of how you look after all of your customers. We can remove furniture to give even more space and a larger turning circle for wheelchairs, provide an extra deep seat in the shower or a toilet seat raiser.” Additional items such as a commode have been hired on request.

The flat is rated as suitable for part-time wheelchair users under the National Accessible Scheme.
Effective marketing
Targeted marketing has been important for High Wray, as many people with accessibility needs make extensive use of the internet and specialist organisations to find accommodation.

“We advertise online with Disability World and the excellent www.disabledholidayinfo.org.uk, and in specialist media like Mobilise, the disabled drivers’ magazine, which brings in a lot of enquiries.”

Making a difference
Previous High Wray customers with accessibility requirements include business guests, such as a long-term let for a businessman with spinal injuries; elderly couples with impaired mobility; independent wheelchair users; and people with significant physical disabilities who travel with a carer.

Alexine has voluntary and professional experience of working with disabled people and has always been a champion for inclusivity and giving people equal opportunities to enjoy the same quality of facilities and services. “It is all about understanding and treating people as individuals. Everyone has a right to be treated equally and we in the tourism industry can really make a difference to people’s lives,” she says.

Visit www.highwray73.co.uk/
For guidance on how to improve accessibility please visit www.visitengland.org/access