

FOCUS ON FALMOUTH

FOR FALMOUTH, A DYNAMIC SEASIDE TOWN LOCATED ON THE CUSP OF THE COAST IN CORNWALL, ITS NATURAL BEAUTY SHOULD BE ENOUGH TO TEMPT VISITORS TO TRAVEL. BUT HOW DO HOTELS RIDE THE WAVES OF BUSINESS THROUGHOUT THE YEAR? RICHARD WILCOX, FALMOUTH BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT (BID) MANAGER EXPLAINS HOW TOURISM LOOKS IN THE TOWN AND WE GET THE LOWDOWN FROM THE HOTELIERS ON THE FRONT LINE IN FALMOUTH.

Falmouth has been dubbed the authentic 'port with a purpose', home to a year-round, vibrant community that mixes a coastal lifestyle with a 21st century entrepreneurial spirit. It is a town, civil parish and port on the River Fal on the south coast of Cornwall, and has a resident population of 27,422.

Repeatedly listed as one of the Sunday Times' Best Places to Live and recently

FALMOUTH ALSO WELCOMES AROUND 25,000 CRUISE SHIP VISITORS A YEAR"

winning Britain's Best Coastal Community in the Great British High Street Awards, the town receives more than 750,000 regional, national and international visitors each year, many of which frequent the wide variety of niche eateries, hotels and boutique B&Bs in the

area. To get a snapshot of its hospitality, Falmouth is home to around 3,000 beds, from award-winning waterfront hotels, to guesthouses and self-catering cottages and apartments.

Falmouth is a place of comfortable contrasts, where contemporary hotels and independent vintage B&Bs sit alongside traditional, family-owned hotels that have evolved over several generations. The town attracts visitors from all walks of life, young, old, students, families, couples, water

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BECCA THOMPSON,
OWNER/MANAGER OF STAR & GARTER

Average occupancy: 2/4 pax, two double apartments



How long have you been running your hotel?

We celebrated our first birthday at the end of last year, with a swathe of accolades and awards. We went straight into the Good Food Guide, was voted 'Best Foodie Pub in the South West' by Food Magazine and won runner up for Best Sunday Roast in the Observer Food Monthly

Awards. On the back of the massive success of the pub and popularity of the great location we have refurbished the penthouse and apartment upstairs.

What's been your most successful year? Why?

The first year has been a huge success for the pub, now we are focused on the penthouse and apartment and have bookings streaming in. We have had some great reviews in national press making the top 20 new hotel openings in the Guardian and a top gourmet destination in the Telegraph.

What's been your most challenging year?

I suppose as this has been our first year it has also been our most challenging. When we reopened the doors of the Star & Garter, which has stood since 1892 and is one of

IN YEAR ONE WE WENT STRAIGHT INTO THE GOOD FOOD GUIDE"

the oldest pubs in the town, our plan was to turn the dated drinking den into one of the West Country's premier gastropub destinations.

What months are your most profitable?

We are looking at a busy summer ahead but have had a steady stream of bookings since we opened the penthouse last month; we are excited to be able to open the apartment soon too.

What is the more general business strategy for the next 12 months?

We will launch the Crow's Nest apartment and focus on building the offers throughout the year.

BEN YOUNG,
GENERAL MANAGER,
THE GREENBANK HOTEL
Average occupancy: 80%.



How long have you been running your hotel?

As GM, three years, as a company, 18.

What's been your most challenging year? Why?

I have no doubt that when the foot and mouth disease outbreak came to Cornwall in 2001 it would have been the worst year.



“ONLINE REPUTATION IS KEY”

What sort of visitors do you see?

A complete cross section of our local, national and international travellers most of who are interested in our local culture and the rich cultural heritage of the town and of the hotel.

What months are your most profitable?

The three main summer months, July – September by far.

How do you drive business through the quieter months? Online reputation is key, as is local social engagement. Our in-house marketing team do an amazing job and the PR achieved for the town and for the hotel is exceptional.

What are you expecting this year in business to look like? I think that tourism in Cornwall, and Falmouth being a key destination will continue to enjoy increasing numbers of visitors. Foreign due to exchange rate benefits, and national due to fear of threats to security abroad. In these changing times, we provide a safe haven and an escape from whatever the latest turmoil may be.

Do you have any plans for investment this year?

We are harmonising our public areas, extending our Working Boat pub and refining our remaining bedrooms.

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VANESSA CLARK,
OWNER, HIGHCLIFFE CONTEMPORARY B&B

Average occupancy: 82% PA

How long have you been running your hotel?

9 years (July 2008)

What's been your most successful year?

We have a very simple formula: a business format of eight rooms offering a bed and a breakfast. Considering the very diverse offerings of accommodation in this millennium we are on paper 'a traditional B&B'. However, the real experience is so much more than that. We use those lower expectations to our advantage.

IN JULY AND AUGUST WE RUN AT 99% CAPACITY ON FULL RATECARD"

In 2012 we won a TripAdvisor Travellers Choice Award in the B&B category. Post 2012 we've had lots of great things happen: in 2015/16 we won silver in the Best B&B small accommodation provider category in the South West Tourism Awards

and in 2016 we achieved our highest turnover yet and our second TripAdvisor Travellers Choice Award.

What's been your most challenging year?

Definitely 2008. Highcliffe was selling rooms to large contractors for £25 per night B&B (we are now £99 - £160) and we had to honour those contracts when we moved in. Simon (co-owner) continued to work full time in London for 18 months as the crash of 2008 meant that the bank was not as willing to lend. We agreed for Simon to stay in his job as publisher and I ran Highcliffe. As most bad times always prove, the experience was in fact invaluable.

What sort of visitors do you see?

We have a huge student population bringing a high proportion of ABC1 profile parents to Falmouth as it's usually a five-hour journey.

What months are your most profitable?

July and August. We run at 99% capacity on full, peak season ratecard.



How do you drive business through the quieter months?

Reputation. Repeat guests are our bread and butter in off season. In fact they like off season. It's cheaper, quieter and they take a sense of ownership out of being more faithful to us and to Falmouth. The most important marketing is verbal. Next to that it's all about being top of TripAdvisor. You can be top of the search engines but in general if your TripAdvisor ranking is poor then they'll just go to the hotel at the top of the TripAdvisor list. We also make a song and dance about redecorating during December. We've found the word refurbishment to be very powerful.

HOW DOES FALMOUTH BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT PLAY ITS PART?

Falmouth Business Improvement District (BID) is a not-for-profit organisation which in partnership with Falmouth Town Council forms part of a dynamic 'Town Team'. The only such model operating in the south west, the Town Team is responsible for delivering a number of projects that aim to continually attract visitors and improve the trading environment of Falmouth. Falmouth BID is business-led, with more than 400 businesses being a part of it, including

many hotels, B&Bs, attractions, galleries, pubs, bars and restaurants.

WHAT ROLES DO THESE ASSOCIATIONS PLAY?

The Falmouth Town Team has supported local businesses through innovative destination marketing and ongoing profile-raising PR, year-round festivals and wide-ranging business support programme. Its influence can be seen through bright and effective visitor signage and branding around the town, and the provision of compelling marketing materials that hoteliers can use,

including visitor maps and guides, the town website and Falmouth app, social media channels and promotional videos.

The Town Team also supports and helps fund all the main events and festivals held throughout the year and offers business support through lobbying, upskilling courses and apprenticeship schemes.

For more information on the work the Falmouth BID does to support and promote Falmouth visit www.falmouth.co.uk/media.

sports enthusiasts and walkers and the variation of types of accommodation in Falmouth reflects this.

Summer is the peak time, but a packed itinerary of annual events such as the Sea Shanty Festival and Oyster

Festival helps to level the peaks and troughs of tourism throughout the year. Falmouth also welcomes around 25,000 cruise ship visitors a year from cruise ships that disembark from Falmouth's harbour. The town has been

shaped and influenced by its strong connection to the sea. Combining a maritime heritage and modern creativity, Falmouth is building a name for itself as one of the South West's leading cultural destinations. **B&B**