



The CottageCorner | February 2020



A Word from Our CEO...



Welcome to The CottageCorner for February!

We have lots of great information in this month's newsletter, all centered around educating our Owners as to how we manage the homes and the rentals from an inside perspective. I hope you enjoy!

With the same intention, I would like to discuss with you our newest program that we have recently implemented, and it's called "CottageConnect." CottageConnect is designed to generate nothing more than an inordinately high number of 5-star reviews on a monthly basis. CottageConnect is guest-centered, and it requires a direct and very real human connection between one of our representatives and said guest. We create this connection by sending a CottageCrew member in person to meet each guest during their stay, and we take a

nice gift along for a warm welcome. In doing this task, we have multiple benefits:

- We are able to continue the vetting process that began over the phone for our guests. We use this moment on property to check on the home, to confirm number of guests as they specified on their booking, their intentions for their vacation, and their overall cleanliness and care of the home. The CottageCrew is trained to report back should they become aware of any discrepancies or negligence.
- We are able to ask if there are any maintenance issues directly, and address them upfront and quickly. This minimizes guest requested refunds as it promotes an open level of communication where the guest can feel satisfied that they will be heard and that their needs are addressed.
- **Lastly, it gives us the ability to ask for a 5-star review, which is paramount to the entire process.**

But why, you ask? What is so truly important about 5-star reviews? Why do we need them so badly and what do they accomplish? There are, of course, the most obvious reasons for pushing guests for 5-star reviews:

- Potential guests will make booking decisions off of reviews (it is said that 84% of shoppers will read reviews before spending money online).
- It gives potential guests confidence in their decision to book a particular home and/or a vacation rental company.
- Reviews provides detailed information from previous guests that a potential guest could find beneficial to know prior to booking.
- It builds brand and sets expectations before the guest arrives.

But what about behind the scenes? Do 5-star reviews make an even deeper impact that is not so tangential? In fact, they do, and here I would like to list the additional benefits that not everyone may be aware of:

- 5-star reviews means higher rankings on 3rd party sites and with Google, leading to greater visibility, greater booking volume and ultimately more revenue. *(i.e. Have you read in our previous newsletters about our Premier Partner status on VRBO/HomeAway? If so, you would understand that higher rated reviews greatly affects how often our listings show up in search parameters. Greater exposure = higher number of bookings.)*
- The number of 5-star reviews greatly reduces cancellation rates from "lookers" who turned into "bookers" online.
- Higher-rated reviews provides the best "first impression" of the home and guests are predisposed to having a positive opinion, even before they arrive. Therefore, guests are less likely to "nitpick" the home and amenities upon arrival, which ultimately lessens the owner's expenses associated with the guests' stay.

Reviews rank high among the top factors impacting purchasing decisions, coming in at #2, just behind price. The reason: Consumers

simply trust them. You can imagine that reviews would be more important than ever in the vacation rental industry and it only has to do with one thing: Guests who are booking from afar (online, and most of them are), do not have access to physically see or experience what they are spending money on (unlike a consumer product they can touch in a store), and therefore, reviews (other people's experiences) reign supreme. Our entire endeavor, every single day, is to ensure that we build our revenue for you as owners, and we protect and promote our listings by aggressively pursuing as many 5-star reviews as we can. Because once it all comes full circle, the impact per listing for each of your homes is significant to say the least. If you need further proof, allow us to sit down with you one day and discuss one major impact we experienced on a home that received a terrible rating, which cost tens of thousands of dollars in lost revenue over a period of 3-4 months. It was paramount that we get that review removed, and luckily, with enough negotiating with the guest, we finally were able to do so. But it cost us (and the owner) a lot over that period of time. We hope you, as a homeowner, can understand now why we push to make the guest experience as amazing as possible.

We are proud of our program, CottageConnect. We began it in October of 2019 and we have made some amazing strides. We now create what we like to call "The CottageCrew Review" and editions are updated monthly. Right now, we'd like to share with you the latest edition [here](#). You can also always access the updated editions via our website. Just click on the main menu header under "About Us" and you will see the link to "[The CottageCrew Review](#)" there. We hope you enjoy the read! Thanks for listening.



A Word from Operations...

Hello Everyone,

I hope your winter is going well as you look forward to the spring. We have been prepping for our upcoming season in the operations department as we are now at 100% occupancy! This also means that we have shifted back to "on cycle" which dictates that all arrivals are Saturday to Saturday.

To help facilitate our growth and to improve on our existing operation, we have added a second guest relations coordinator to our staff and as I mentioned last month, we now have in office coverage, 7 days a week. Our guest relations coordinators will work 4 days on and 3 days off and converging their efforts on our busy Saturdays. Having an additional member in our office will give us great flexibility for both in field operations and in office. You can always call 1-800-385-1499 and dial



extension 2 for immediate assistance when staying on the island.

This can be a very intense job and it requires the individual to have extreme multi-tasking and organizational skills while possessing the ability to stay composed while dealing with adverse situations. Sundays through Tuesdays can be a little hectic dealing with guest initiated requests but by the time Wednesday rolls around, we start to turn our focus to our weekend preparation. We make sure all of our resources are properly lined up (pre-arrival inspectors, supplies are ordered, maintenance available, and ensuring our cleaning crews are focused on the upcoming task). In addition, we study our arrival report and any notes that have been meticulously made by our team of Vacation Specialists and plan accordingly. For example, the guests might be celebrating an anniversary (we'll buy flowers and send them a note), a guest might be sensitive to strong cleaning products (we'll make sure Seventh Generation products are being used), all of which require special care. All of these little details are extremely important to us and they present opportunities to truly create a "WOW" Factor - where each guest is treated as a VIP.

There are so many variables that dictate what it's like to work in our business on a Saturday during peak season. If you can imagine, we will be experiencing anywhere between 30 - 60 same day departures and arrivals with only six hours to turn over an entire house. In this business, there is an unpredictable nature which is why our preparation is key. Once each property is cleaned, we send our inspectors out. They usually arrive at each property after a guest has departed at 10am to get an idea of where it stands and to start working on the exterior. From there, any corresponding work orders to the home are sent to our Operations Hub to then be delegated to a specific member of our Maintenance Team. Once a guest arrives to one of our homes, we want them to feel as if the house was prepared just for them. We truly want everyone who enters our homes to say "we have never experienced a house this clean" or "a house this warm or inviting." Therefore, we leave the lights on, turn on the music, and set out personalized cupcakes for our guests. It's all about perfecting the experience. Even if there are issues for a guest, they know that we took tremendous care in preparing their home, and that we are extremely responsive to any of their needs. This, along with everything else we do allows us to create a strong following which gives us the ability to retain and produce repeat guests, which is essential to achieving revenue goals both in the short term and long term. This also allows us to truly vet a guest and ensure the home is going to be treated as if it were their own.

A Word from Marketing...

Happy February!

Here is the link to last month's newsletter:

I hope everyone has been enjoying the year so far. I would like to start out by introducing one of the newest members to our CottageCrew, Cade! Cade is our Revenue Optimization Specialist and he will be working very closely with our Sales & Marketing Teams. I know Barry has been teaching him a lot thus far. He is a great addition to The CottageCrew and we can't wait to watch him grow!

Something I am very excited to share with you is that we will be adding interior drone videos to our media package. The exterior drone videos will be combined with the interior videos for one seamless walk-through of the home. We have gotten great feedback from the videos we have already produced, and I think it will be a great way to let each guest pictures themselves in the home. We look forward to working with our vendor who does the videos/professional photos and seeing what else we can do to enhance the guest/owner experience.

I would like to thank Kathy Ellingson (owner of La Casa Verde/Crescent Cottage) for your wonderful suggestion regarding adding all staff contact details to the newsletter. Starting next month's, we will be adding this to each month's newsletter. As we grow, especially as rapidly as we are right now, it is very important for all of you to know who each CottageCrew member is and how you can reach them. Thanks again for this great suggestion Kathy! As always, please do not hesitate to reach out to me with any suggestions or ideas you have for future newsletters. We love new ideas and suggestions, and we love hearing from you as owners. We truly value each and everyone of you and it's great to hear things from your perspective.

Speaking of suggestions, a guest reached out to us with an idea for new properties. Thanks to that suggestion, we are going to begin sending out e-mail blasts with new property introductions within the next couple of weeks for all new properties. The great thing about this is that it doesn't have to apply to just new properties, but for any/all properties on our portfolio. I can't wait to share with you all once they start rolling out!

Lastly, we will be launching our new magazine soon, if there is anyone that would like one mailed to them, please e-mail me at amanda@thecottagesonthekey.com. Please include the best mailing address for you and I will send it to you once they are in.

Until next time, #CottageOn!



A Word from Revenue...

Happy Season!



I hope you all are doing well! I just wanted to speak with you guys about something that I have been noticing by looking through the calendar. This is a touchy subject, but I just want you guys to be informed about owner stays and how it affects your revenue. I create what we like to call "Owner Loss Revenue Reports" to show the income associated with each season and how owner stays can affect their bottom line. Here are some suggestions on how to make the most out of your revenue opportunities:

To begin, this is directed to the time frames that we are busy. These times include:

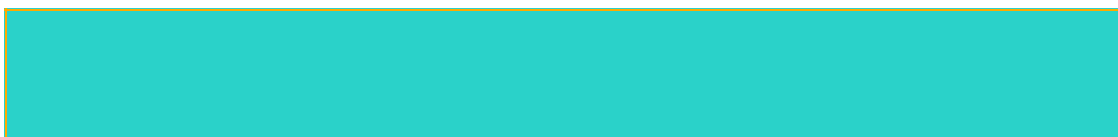
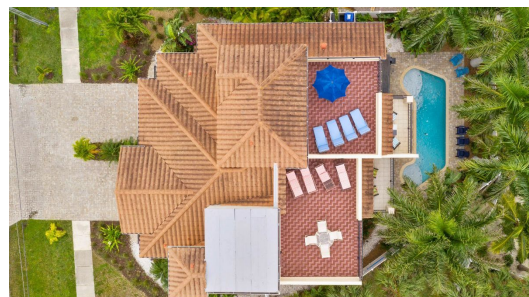
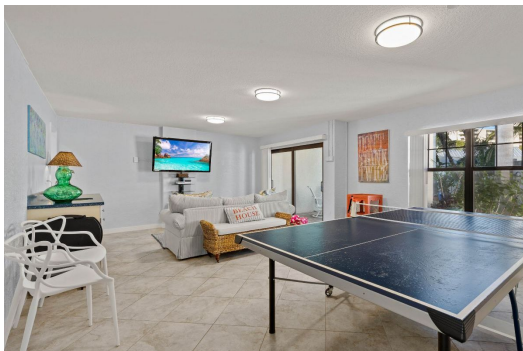
- The first Saturday of February through the Saturday after Easter week (if Feb. 1st comes after a Saturday, our busy time starts on that previous Saturday). Normally March 20th through Easter week is set at a higher price as well. (Owner blocks during Spring Break weeks are extremely detrimental to the Annual Revenue forecast for your home, so therefore we discourage owners from blocking during this time frame.)
- The middle of June (closest Saturday to June 15th) through the second Saturday in August.
- Thanksgiving (Saturday to Saturday)
- Christmas and New Years weeks (Saturday to Saturday weeks)

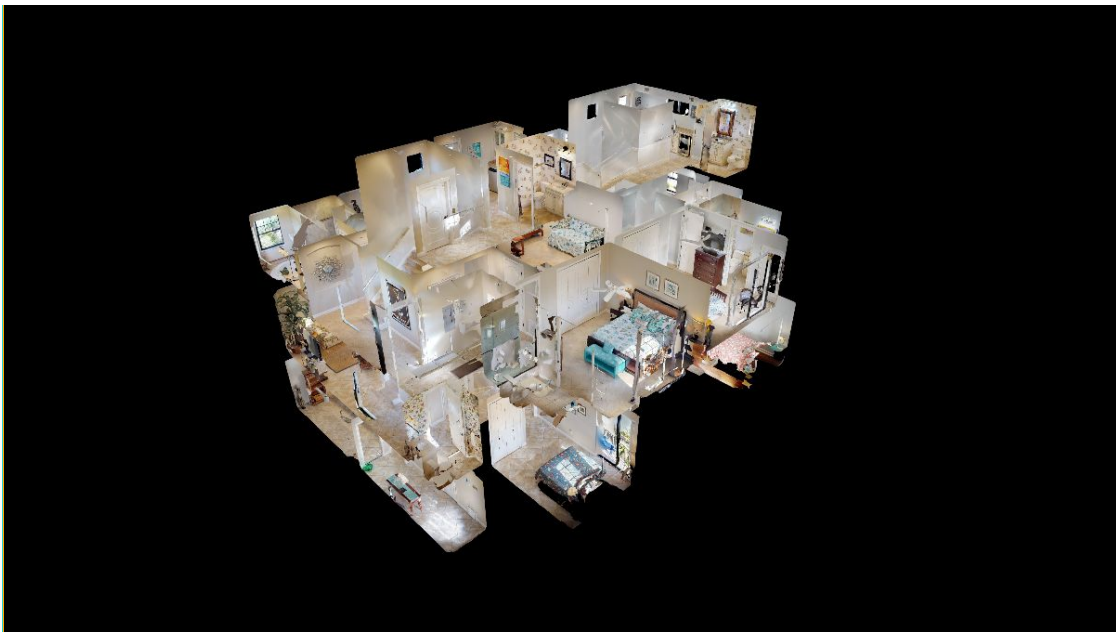
These are our busy times, so this is where we both make the most money. I would highly recommend that you do not block out time during this period. However, I do know that some of you do vacation in your homes, and I am here to help you choose dates that are better for making money for both parties. If you want to block during our shoulder seasons (opposite of what is listed above) then you can do so freely. We go "off-cycle" during shoulder seasons, meaning we do not rent Saturday to Saturday.

During our busier time, we rent "on-cycle" meaning Saturday to Saturday. It is important that you as an owner try to follow this as well. Let's say you block a Friday to the next Saturday, (8 nights) then what happens is in our system, it still shows a 7 night minimum, Saturday to Saturday. It is impossible to rent 7 nights Saturday to Saturday with only 6 nights available. These weeks will no longer show up on our website, or third party sites such as VRBO, HomeAway, Airbnb, etc. So not only did you use your 1 week, but by taking Friday, you lost another week of revenue as well. Just keep this in mind when you block your home for your own personal use. If you do block "off-cycle" during our busy times, please let me know so I can try and get the other time frame rented. Just send me an email at barry@thecottagesonthekey.com.

If you ever want help with which dates to block, or if you are interesting in receiving your own personal Owner Lost Revenue Report, please feel free to call or email. The Vacation Rental Industry is always changing, and I can let you know which weeks are doing better than others, what I would suggest, etc.

New Property Introduction: The Blue Serenity





Virtual Tour

CottageCalendar | Local and Upcoming Events



02.19: [Phillippi Farmhouse Market](#): 9AM - 2PM - Phillippi Estate Park

02.22: [Downtown Sarasota Farmers Market](#): 7AM - 1PM - Downtown Sarasota

02.23: [Siesta Key Farmer's Market](#): 8AM - 12PM - Siesta Key Village

02.23: [Siesta Key Drum Circle](#): 1 Hour before Sunset - Siesta Key Beach

02.25: [Brunch & Bubbly](#): - 10AM - 12PM - The Cottages on the Key, Inc.

02.29: [Beach Cleanup & Lunch](#): - 10AM - 2PM - Siesta Key Beach + The Hub Baja Grill

02.29: [Downtown Sarasota Farmers Market](#): 7AM - 1PM - Downtown Sarasota

03.01: [Siesta Key Farmer's Market](#): 8AM - 12PM - Siesta Key Village

03.01: [Siesta Key Drum Circle](#): 1 Hour before Sunset - Siesta Key Beach

03.03: [Brunch & Bubbly](#): - 10AM - 12PM - The Cottages on the Key, Inc.

03.04: [Phillippi Farmhouse Market](#): 9AM - 2PM - Phillippi Estate Park

03.07: [Downtown Sarasota Farmers Market](#): 7AM - 1PM - Downtown Sarasota

03.08: [Siesta Key Farmer's Market](#): 8AM - 12PM - Siesta Key Village

03.08: [Siesta Key Drum Circle](#): 1 Hour before Sunset - Siesta Key Beach

03.10: [Brunch & Bubbly](#): - 10AM - 12PM - The Cottages on the Key, Inc.

03.11: [Phillippi Farmhouse Market](#): 9AM - 2PM - Phillippi Estate Park

03.13: [Sarasota County Fair](#): 2PM - 11PM - Sarasota County Fairgrounds

03.14: [Downtown Sarasota Farmers Market](#): 7AM - 1PM - Downtown Sarasota

03.14: [Sarasota County Fair](#): 12PM - 11PM - Sarasota County Fairgrounds

03.15: [Siesta Key Farmer's Market](#): 8AM - 12PM - Siesta Key Village

03.15: [Sarasota County Fair](#): 12PM - 10PM - Sarasota County Fairgrounds

03.15: [Siesta Key Drum Circle](#): 1 Hour before Sunset - Siesta Key Beach

03.17: [Brunch & Bubbly](#): - 10AM - 12PM - The Cottages on the Key, Inc.

03.18: [Phillippi Farmhouse Market](#): 9AM - 2PM - Phillippi Estate Park

Until next time, #CottageOn!



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