



# THE GLAMPING BUSINESS GUIDE

An Introduction to Glamping Models



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# Introduction

For a few years now, tourism reports and statistics have shown an increase in UK 'staycation' and short break holidays; we are taking more frequent, shorter breaks, and more of us are staying in the UK for our longer summer holidays. Due to Brexit and exchange rates, there's speculation in the tourism industry that even more people will now take their breaks and holidays in the UK rather than travel abroad. So, with the current increase in 'staycations', the back-to-nature leisure movement, and a weak pound, the growth and popularity of glamping is not surprising and future prospects for this sector are strong.

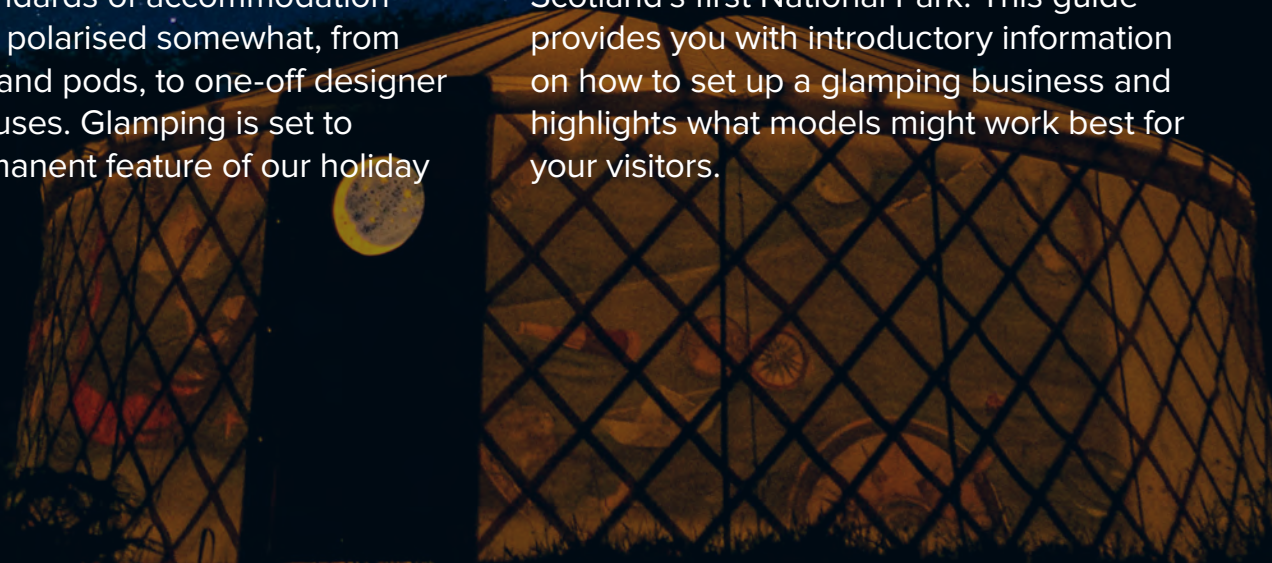
Glamping is subsequently going through an exciting era of development, and although there are pockets of, for want of a better word, saturation, there remains a lot of untapped potential. Glamping can make good use of marginal or unproductive spaces, expand a catchment area, attract new customers, upscale events, and increase ancillary revenues. So, ideally, the revenue that glamping generates needs to be considered holistically – it's not necessarily just about the nightly rental fee.

As the number of sites have increased over the years, standards of accommodation have become polarised somewhat, from rows of tents and pods, to one-off designer luxury treehouses. Glamping is set to remain a permanent feature of our holiday

accommodation mix, because these holidays can weave together aspects of hotel, B&B, self-catering cottage and camping – yet are totally different to all of them. Glamping, done well, creates something unique. Logistics, business plans and financials aside, it's all about the experience that we create for our guests and there's arguably no better destination for creating these experiences than Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park.

Scenery and landscapes continue to be the primary motivators for visitors to the National Park. This area of outstanding beauty is a haven for outdoor enthusiasts and there is a wide variety of nature-based activities and experiences on offer. While there is a large amount of areas to explore, the majority of visitors to the National Park are day visitors and there is significant scope to increase overnight accommodation, particularly related to camping, which currently accounts for only 17% of overnight stays.

Due to its increasing popularity and nature-based ethos, there is ample opportunity for developing sustainable glamping businesses that complement a visitor's experience and encourages them to explore more of Scotland's first National Park. This guide provides you with introductory information on how to set up a glamping business and highlights what models might work best for your visitors.





# Creating a Glamping Business

## Location

**Location:** if the site and accommodation is in a well-established tourist area, interest and letting will obviously be easier. In less popular areas we have to work much harder to entice guests to visit (or have something amazing on offer).

If you already own land check it over for areas that might be utilised for a glamping site, are there any great views, water features, or a naturally attractive space, or maybe you have some quirky outbuildings that could be converted into something unique?

Consider the approach to the site itself - if guests have to drive past an unattractive feature such as electricity

pylons, it is not going to set the right tone for a relaxing, 'back to nature' holiday - even if the site and accommodation are beautifully presented.

The location can also influence the choice of structure, woodland settings are great for log cabins etc. In certain parts of the country a certain structure might prove more popular, research and market knowledge will help to decide what might work best.

Check what the local competition is doing and what is already available in the area. This could tell you what potential gaps there are in the market.



## U.S.P.

A strong 'USP' – 'unique selling point' is going to be increasingly important as more alternative accommodation sites appear. The U.S.P. could be a picturesque location, stunning views, a particularly quirky structure, its theme, top quality facilities, services provided, attractions, activities etc. Do not underestimate the positive impact that a strong USP can make to an accommodation business.

Unusual accommodations, or amazing locations not only stand out above the competition and are more appealing to guests, but they are also more likely to get press coverage.

Some of the best properties and glamping abodes are those that have a great personal story behind them – the owners have taken a hobby, local theme, purpose of the building or site (former or otherwise) and woven it into the property's character. In a commercially driven society where homogenised holidays and products are the norm there are those who seek and crave something with its own story.



# Know Your Market

Each tourist area has its own attractions and therefore its own demographics in terms of holiday-makers. For a better chance of success, it will help to know what that pull is and who it is attracting. Ideally you will know your area and the kind of people that it attracts but if not, tourism reports and related information will outline the visitor demographics and what they are doing and spending whilst visiting.

Once you have established who visits your area, you'll be able to decide whether to aim for the couples, family market, or groups market, all have different requirements and make different demands on you and your site.

The family market is usually catered for with a spacious accommodation, good kitchen facilities and something for children to do. The couple's market is focussed around privacy, comfort and pampering. Families are less likely to mind a shared space but couples will usually want privacy, an overlooked plot is going to be less appealing to them, at least use screening. Hot-tubs, king sized beds and convenience are good selling points for the couples market.





## Some Types Of Accommodation Structures



**Safari Tents** – large colonial style tents with inner rooms, kitchens and integral bathrooms. They are popular with parks and independents alike. With a veranda of some sort providing even more space outdoors they suit family needs well.



**Shepherds Huts / Gypsy Wagons** – these can be originals that have been restored or brand new reproductions, either way they are ideal for couples breaks. Usually booked out for short breaks from spring to autumn.



**Log Cabins** – these are becoming really popular because, if heated, they offer all year-round rental potential. Depending on size they can be suitable for couples or families.



**Eco-pods** – small pods, usually with an arched shape are the go-to choice for campsites, and holiday parks. Most new designs have integral kitchenettes, and bathroom facilities. **Ideal for couples and small families.**



**Geodesic Domes** – space age looking structures with an open spacious interior, usually furnished in a contemporary decor and style which creates an interesting contrast to their natural setting.



**Yurts** – Very popular and one of the earliest forms of glamping, these portable and round traditional tents originated on the steppes of Central Asia. Fun to decorate in creating a magical circular space for your guests.



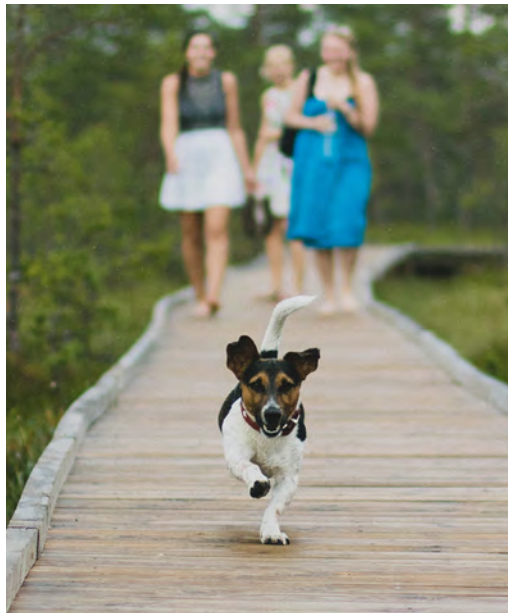
**Treehouses** – demand is still outstripping supply in the UK. They deliver high occupancy rates and rentals fees but also represent a much higher investment than tents, pods and cabins.



**Former Transport** – Lorries, airplanes, double decker buses, helicopters, train carriages and anything you can imagine can, and has, been converted into a glamping accommodation. **Provides a strong unique selling point.**

**Bespoke**

More start up glamping sites are looking to commissioning an original design to carve out their unique selling point. Cabins lend themselves well to bespoke designs. Most treehouses have to be bespoke due to the individual nature of each location.



## Types of Glamping Business Models

### Resort Developments

These involve a high numbers of units, with the same (or very similar) design scheme throughout. Features such as club houses, restaurants, pools, activities, gyms and spa facilities, are essential to this model. Given the multi-million £ level of investment in these developments, a high unit count + strong ancillary revenues are the only way to ensure viability and deliver a sufficient return.

### Private SME

The majority of dedicated glampsites in the UK are privately owned by individuals, couples or families who had land and decided to diversify, or have purposely bought land to start a glampsite. This is the original small-scale, grass-roots glamping format, and represents a 'lifestyle' business where guests are immersed in an experience that is unique to that site, and the owners themselves play a big part of this.

### Supplementary Accommodation

Where an existing hospitality business diversifies their accommodation mix by adding glamping. i.e. campsites, holiday parks, public houses, B&Bs, hotels, resorts. Glamping can provide permanent or 'pop up' accommodation for peak season. They can accommodate more guests for events, increase the catchment area, and attract guests who wouldn't otherwise have stayed.

### Attractions: Historic Properties, Theme Parks, Nature Parks

Glamping is a natural addition to these attractions, creating an enriched experience for visitors, encouraging longer stays, wider catchment areas and boosting revenue. The glamping should ideally have a design connection with the nature of the attraction and add interest – rather than be an unsympathetic a 'bolt-on'.

### Pop-Up Sites

This is pre-ordered glamping, usually bell tents, erected at regular campsites by a third-party operator for guests, taken down at the end of their stay, and sometimes re-erected at another site for them. Popular with event glamping, where a village of glamping is erected for hire at events.

Most of the above can also include the following to further carve out a unique selling point:

**Events.** Festivals and wedding receptions are ever popular, some sites are also obtaining licenses to conduct the wedding ceremony itself.

**Wellness.** Health and wellbeing is a fast-growing leisure sector. From yoga to raw food workshops, it's the perfect partner to glamping.

**Sports & Activities.** Another growing leisure sector providing ample opportunity to add a U.S.P. or additional revenue streams to the business.

**Learning & Education.** The rural location of glampsites lend themselves perfectly to hosting and running courses and workshops on a variety of related subjects.

**Corporate Hospitality.** Offering team building and stress management courses. Standards need to be high, and each delegate will usually want private accommodation and facilities.

**Service.** This type of glamping takes hospitality to another level, providing a service-focused offer usually only found in exclusive hotels.

**Boutique.** This glamping model can include some of the above, but it's primary focus is to provide a highly individual and specialised offer to its guests.

Wedding venues, where a glamping structure can provide both the wedding venue itself (such as a Kata tipi), and accommodations.

# Ancillary Revenues

## Consumables

The most common consumable that glampsites charge for is firewood for log-burners, campfires and hot-tubs. Most sites will provide an initial supply inclusively, and once that's used up, charge for logs and kindling thereafter. The type of wood provided should depend on what it's being used for, stoves and hot-tubs need dry, seasoned wood to get a good heat, campfires aren't so fussy. It's not unreasonable to charge for logs, glamping may have developed beyond its grass roots but there's still opportunity to educate, with some places still encouraging respect for our natural resources.

Depending on the size of the site and level of accommodation, other consumables could include: foodstuffs (homegrown or locally sourced), hampers, BBQ and breakfast packs, (locally sourced if possible). Selling consumables on-site provides a convenient facility for guests as well as making a little extra profit, although obviously if there are just a couple of accommodation units, a fully stocked shop isn't going to be viable so keep it simple. Also, on-site shops can be time consuming to upkeep, and not so profitable when we misjudge products and volumes.

## Extra's

Some sites also charge for things like towels, duvets / covers, wifi, hot showers and gas for camping stoves etc. This kind of charging for extras is more akin to regular campsite set-up, so it depends where the accommodation sits on the glamping scale. If rental fees are low and the offer is basic, then some of these could be considered upgrades. At the mid to high end however, they should all be inclusive.

## Branded Products

Personalised, branded merchandise and accessories in some form or another suit some glampsites, especially strongly branded resorts.

## Value the Experience

Other ancillary incomes can be generated directly from the experience that you're offering, giving guests a chance to take home products that they used whilst there. For example if you offer spa therapies - sell the spa products, if you provide courses - sell the materials / equipment. Local artists drawings, or prints and cards. There are many more - what experience souvenir might your guests buy and take home?

## Sports Equipment Hire

Sites that possess, or are within reach of outdoor activities have potential to hire out sports equipment such as bicycles, canoes, surf boards and wetsuits. Choose good quality, reliable equipment so guests are safe and the equipment is always available – especially if guests can reserve the hire in advance.

## Health & Therapies

Another growth and profitable tourism genre is 'wellness'. Things like yoga classes, alternative therapies, spas and treatments. Large yurts are a great space for some of these. If your site is suitable, maybe consider marketing it as a retreat venue for therapists and teachers looking for unique places to run their courses.

## Hot Tubs

Hot tubs are an effective way to boost an occupancy rate and revenue, and not just for glamping, for any holiday accommodation. If you charge for use (and logs for wood-fired models) they also provide a good ancillary income, although costs are often worked into rental fees and higher occupancy is the trade off.

## Courses & Workshops

Sport activities could include surfing lessons, mountain biking, rock climbing and 4x4 driving. Foraging, bush-crafts and cookery classes are also popular. There are many interesting courses, workshops or short masterclasses we could create. They don't have to be on-site, collaborate with other companies.

## Pet Friendly

For a lot of guests the whole point of a staycation is that they can take their pets with them, and they are happy to pay a little extra to do so. Some places charge a flat fee, others per dog, or it's worked into the rental price. Even though there might be occasional issues, accepting pets increases occupancy.



## Conclusion

This document covers some of the key points to consider when setting up a successful glamping accommodation business. However, it's important to bear in mind that whichever guest profile you decide on, structure you use, or business model you adopt, your focus should always be on creating a welcoming and hospitable break for your guests. More people are looking for more meaningful experiences from their leisure time. If you get it all right, the result is loyal customers, repeat bookings, great reviews, personal recommendations, reduced marketing spend, better profits. In short, a successful business.



*The conservation and heritage charity for the Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park.*

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