

# The annexe in our garden pays our mortgage – here’s how your outdoor space could work for you

With no commute, low overheads and the potential to earn a healthy income, many are seeing their outdoor space in a new light



Wendy Scott, 54, and husband Tom, 55, run a Cornwall holiday let from their converted tool shed | CREDIT: John Lawrence

## The converted tool shed ‘The alpacas are a big pull for our guests’

Wendy Scott, 54, and husband Tom, 55, are alpaca breeders on a farm on the edge of Bodmin Moor in Cornwall. They also run a holiday let from their converted tool shed – Little Inka – which sits in their garden



Wendy and Tom with two of the 32 alpacas that live on their farm | CREDIT: John Lawrence

Tom and I had a major life plan. We agreed that when we reached 50 we would leave our corporate jobs at Sky TV, say goodbye to London and move to the countryside to work for ourselves. So in 2017, we started looking for a house with space and the opportunity for a business. We ended up in this beautiful spot with a 19th-century stone farmhouse and 20 acres of land.

Of course, we immediately realised that’s a lot of grass! And we needed some kind of animal to eat it. The decision was made when Tom sent me on a two-day alpaca husbandry course as a birthday present. Afterwards, we both loved the alpacas so much, we went straight off and bought our first herd of 10. We now have 32 which we use for breeding and their fleece, but the alpacas are also one of the main attractions with our guests in Little Inka.

We started the homestay a couple of years ago as a way of supplementing our income. We knew we wanted to offer guests a luxurious experience. Of course, that meant we needed to invest a substantial amount of money into the renovation of the original granite tool shed which was built around 1850 and was pretty rundown.



‘It’s a special place that people seem to fall in love with’: the Little Inka homestay | CREDIT: John Lawrence

We had local builders and craftspeople working with local materials to lay the slate floors, create the courtyard walls from the granite we excavated and add a zinc-clad bathroom extension. The main tool shed houses the kitchen and living area, and we bought a shepherd’s hut to act as the bedroom. This is a long-term investment for us, and it was our goal to break even within five years, which we are currently on track to do. The main financial outlay is done, so now it’s just about maintenance and the fairly low running costs. In our first full year, we were 80 per cent booked, and that provided a gross income through Unique Homestays of £75,000 before commission and costs. We’re very satisfied with that.

To be honest, when we first decided to go ahead with the homestay, we weren’t sure we would enjoy it but we really do. It’s very manageable as there are only ever two guests at a time, and almost everyone who stays here is lovely and super-interested in the alpacas.

I can also proudly say we’ve had three marriage proposals in Little Inka. It’s a special place that people seem to fall in love with.