

7-point plan to help people have a COVID-safe 5 day Christmas bubble in rented accommodation

Submitted by: OneOnOne communications

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With new Government guidelines published on what people can and cannot do in December and over Christmas, the UK Short Term Accommodation Association (STAA) has deciphered them and come up with a 7-point plan that will help people have a special Christmas with their friends and families in a safe and secure way.

Over the 5 days of Christmas (23-27 December), the guidelines have been relaxed which makes it is even more important to understand the new rules and stay safe. To help people understand the guidelines better, the STAA has offered more details on some of the key aspects:

- You can book a home or stay with family in your 'Christmas bubble'. Whether it's a private home or rented accommodation, up to three households can stay together as a 'Christmas bubble' in the same property, regardless of the total number of people in that bubble.
- Individual households can book rented accommodation or a hotel to stay nearby family, whereas mixed households can't book into a hotel even if they are part of a 'Christmas bubble'. You'll only be able to book into a hotel as one individual or with a member of your immediate household. But, there is no such restriction on booking a short term or holiday rental property as they are private residences.
- You will only be able to visit the local pub as a single household. It doesn't matter if you are in a bubble; you will have to sit at separate tables with only those in your household at your table.
- You are free to travel across the UK. As long as you observe the guidelines governing 'Christmas bubbles', you can travel to visit or stay with family or rent a home to stay in anywhere in the UK, even to a higher tier area.
- From 16 December, international visitors will be able to 'Test and release' after 5 days of quarantine with a negative test. People travelling from countries not on the UK's travel corridor list can still enter the country and self-isolate for five days before taking a COVID test. A negative result will enable them to leave self-isolation and join their 'Christmas bubble'.

More people than ever are expected to rent a property near to their families this Christmas as they look to make the most of the relaxed guidelines and see their loved ones that they may not have seen all year.

The STAA has created a 7-point plan to show how private rented accommodation can help people make the most of their 'Christmas in a bubble':

1. Rent out a private home or do a house swap – renting out a whole property that can accommodate up to three households will enable many families and friends to get together in their usual groups. Renting near to family could allow everyone to meet up over the five days of Christmas even if there isn't enough room for everyone to stay overnight in one house.

2. Stay near family who don't live close to you – with no travel restrictions across the UK, rather than stay at home, rent a flat or house and visit friends and family you have been wanting all year to spend time with. You can form a bubble and see them over the whole period without the burden of them having to put you up.

3. Take the pub home – because you'll only be able to go the pub in one household group, regardless of whether or not you are in your Christmas bubble, why not order the food and drinks from the pub and take them home. Fix up a dartboard, crank up Spotify and you can create your very own home pub atmosphere at home. Without the worry of last orders!

4. Let the locals deliver your Christmas treats – the massive growth in home deliveries is not restricted to the likes of Deliveroo and Just Eat. Many local bakeries, markets, wine shops and restaurants offering pre-prepared meals will be delighted to deliver your treats to your rented accommodation, to make it a very special Christmas. There are also some national food and drink delivery options that are offering special festive packages such as Wine at Home and the Mindful Chef.

5. Make every day special – with the focus on the 5 day 'Christmas bubble' why not try and make every day special? Make Wednesday 23rd your Welcome Night and open a few bottles of champagne to get the festive period off to a bang. After Christmas Eve and Christmas Day why not have a Boxing Day BBQ or Ski Sunday lunch (on Sunday 27 Dec) and invite friends from outside your bubble to meet outdoors (and socially distanced of course).

6. Welcome your international bubble members – if you have friends or family who want to join you for Christmas but live abroad in a country not on the UK's travel corridor, they can enter the country and self-isolate in a private rented property for five days. If they then have a negative test they will be free to join you subject to the guidelines.

7. Non-bubble household outdoor meets - if your normal Christmas group is more than three households you'll still be able to meet in groups of 6 outdoors. So, if you are a family of 4, two of you can remain in your rented property and have 4 more people from outside your 'Christmas bubble' over to meet outside whilst the two other members visit others outside in a park or garden.

Merilee Karr, Chair of the STAA and CEO of UnderTheDoormat, said: "This year has been a year like no other. But, thanks to the new Government guidelines, it looks like we'll be able to get together with family and loved ones at Christmas even if it won't quite be the same as normal.

"Private rented accommodation has been acknowledged as being a safe and secure option for people staying away from home so it's no surprise that we are seeing demand for this type of accommodation go through the roof. Government guidelines allow for private rented accommodation to be used by up to three different households recognising that the industry-wide cleaning and safety standards that the sector has adopted provide COVID-secure conditions that will minimise the ability for the virus to be transmitted."

"The rules governing accommodation have changed so many times this year that we felt it was important to establish clarity on what is permitted and to provide people with some tips to make this a Christmas

to remember.

“Renting a property near, or with, their loved ones will give people the flexibility they need to be with their friends and family this Christmas in a safe and compliant way. Either whole families can rent a property together and get away for a special Christmas or they can rent properties close to their family members’ homes to enable them to stay overnight in accordance with Government guidelines during the core period 23-27 December and be able to visit outdoors during the build-up and aftermath.

“The short-term rentals sector plays a significant role in contributing to the local economies where the accommodation is located, and this Christmas could bring a greater demand for local services as more people look to rent accommodation away from their homes and decide to make use of the proliferation of local shops and delivery services in the vicinity. You never know, it might just be the start of a new family Christmas tradition!”

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Merilee Karr is available for interview so please get in touch to arrange:

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Editor's notes

The UK Short Term Accommodation Association (STAA) was founded in March 2017 to support the development of short-term accommodation in the UK, ensure greater co-operation in tackling common industry challenges and seize shared opportunities. It seeks to work with all stakeholders towards a stable and supportive regulatory environment that promotes the UK as a global leader in the provision of short-term accommodation.