

## OUR B+B

### 'Running a B&B means your home is your job, which can be full on, but I love it too'

**Lucy Rogers, 40, is married to Dave, a potter. They have three young children and live in Milford on Sea, Hampshire, where they run Vinegar Hill Pottery, a B&B & pottery workshop.**

**THE IDEA** I used to work for a travel company that specialised in trips to Latin America. It was a dream job but it meant a lot of travel so once we had children it no longer suited me. My husband and I have always been risk takers. In our twenties we bought a derelict pub where we were living in Bristol that had been repossessed so cost us next to nothing. We turned it into studios housing nine artists, which we ran and received rents from. Dave's always been an amazing potter but isn't a keen salesman, so we had a lot of ceramics that weren't being sold. We'd both grown up by the sea and wanted that for our children too. We had the idea of selling up and buying a place on the coast to turn into a B&B that would supplement the income from Dave's pottery.

**WHAT HAPPENED NEXT** We looked at lots of seaside locations but eventually we found the perfect house back where we both grew up, in Hampshire. It meant a bigger mortgage but being near the sea in Milford, we knew there would be demand for a B&B. Initially, we lived off the rents from our art studio in Bristol, which wasn't easy but we made do. My

brother, a sailor, lived nearby but was at sea so he let us live in his house rent-free while we refurbished the property, which helped financially. The house was once a stables and has two outbuildings, which we turned into guest accommodation, one that sleeps four and the other two. Later we also acquired a gypsy caravan, which is very popular. Alastair Sawday's, the hotel and B&B reviewer, agreed to list us. Our first bookings came from them when we opened in May 2008. I was nervous but fortunately our first guests loved it all.

**THE BREAKTHROUGH** I put out a couple of press releases and in our second year a journalist wrote about us in the *Guardian*. It resulted in bookings over the next two years and the business became profitable. Dave also started running pottery courses, which have been a huge hit and generate a lot of our winter income.

**TESTING TIMES** Four years ago, as a result of rushing around with two children and running the business alone, I did my back in badly and had to learn to walk with a Zimmer frame. I then became pregnant with my third child and knew I needed help but fortunately we were making enough to hire two part-time ladies to help me with laundry and sheet-changing. Dave has two people working for him in the pottery now too. I still make the breakfasts, take the bookings, run the website, the pottery courses, the PR and the books.

**SUMMER IS OUR CHRISTMAS** At first it worried us how quiet the business was during the winter but we started the

pottery courses hoping it would help and now they fill the B&B throughout the winter weekends. The summer period works really well for us because while I am rushed off my feet until 11am making breakfast, after that I'm free to take the children to the beach every day. I'm always exhausted by the end of it though and am glad to move into the quieter period.

**WHERE I AM NOW** I love the fact that we all lead a healthy, outdoors lifestyle and that I can be around for the children. Dave used to look like he worked in a cave – he was always so pale. Now when he's not in the pottery he goes sailing with his friends.

**MY TIP** When your home is your job it can be very full on. We make sure that we go away on holiday for at least one week in the summer so we can completely switch off. We have someone who moves in and runs it like clockwork, which is reassuring.

#### BUSINESS IN FIGURES

**LAUNCHED:** MAY 2008  
**START-UP COSTS:** £32,500  
**TURNOVER:** £45,000  
**WEBSITE:** [vinegarhillpottery.co.uk](http://vinegarhillpottery.co.uk)



**Finishing touches:**  
Lucy created a romantic hideaway