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***The Christmas of Togetherness* – how short term and holiday rentals are bringing families together for Christmas 2021**

This Christmas is being dubbed the ‘Christmas of Togetherness’ as Brits prepare to make up for the festive period they lost last year to COVID-19 travel restrictions. And it appears that the short term and holiday rental sector is going to help them do this. That’s because more families than previously are looking to either book a property close to their relatives and loved ones or book a big property for a large group to stay together.

According to industry body, the UK Short Term Accommodation Association (STAA), more people than ever are predicted to rent a property near to their families and friends over the Christmas period. Specialist property management company, UnderTheDoormat, has seen a significant uplift in London Christmas bookings this year, returning to levels last seen in 2019.

People have been booking short term rentals, for two main reasons. The first is that they cannot always stay with their loved ones for the whole of Christmas so have decided to rent somewhere close by where they can base themselves for a few days rather than cramming everyone into one house. The second is that people are renting larger properties so that they can accommodate all of their family or friends under one roof.

The STAA believes that the things that most people missed last Christmas are the ‘family traditions’ they normally do together. According to a Christmas poll, 10 of the most popular family traditions that people look forward to doing together include:

1. Decorating the Christmas tree
2. Making the Christmas dinner
3. Playing family games such as charades
4. Playing board games
5. Watching a Christmas film
6. Singing carols
7. Listening to Christmas music
8. Taking part in a Secret Santa
9. Wearing Christmas jumpers
10. Doing the Christmas food and drink shop

Source: M&S Bank survey of 2,000 adults, December 2020

Short-term rentals can also help make Christmas as stress-free as possible. For instance, families can book a place in the countryside or near the coast if they like a traditional long country or coastal walk or even take a dip in the sea for the most adventurous. Or they can book somewhere near a local town to minimise travel if they want to do some of favourite Christmas or Boxing day activities such as going to a football or rugby match or the races.

Merilee Karr, chair of the STAA and CEO of UnderTheDoormat, said: “There is no doubt that the British public is looking forward to this Christmas where they can get together with family and friends for the first time since Christmas 2019. Many people want to make up for missing out last year on being with their loved ones by making a special effort this year to be together for longer. Some of the ‘family traditions’ that they only do at Christmas are the ones that have been missed the most so making sure they happen this year is very important.

“Short term and holiday rentals offer people the chance to partake in some of their favourite traditions whether that’s taking long walks, visiting a local pub on Christmas Eve or even braving the sea for a swim! Whatever tradition people love, a short term or holiday rental property offers guests a ‘home-from-home’ experience that will make this the Christmas of Togetherness.”

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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.