

Five ideas to fill your vacant off-peak rooms

 By [Phindiwe Nkosi](#)

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Tired of paying staff to twiddle their thumbs during off-peak seasons when guest occupancy levels are low? Well here are five ideas that you probably didn't think off.



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Be seen on TV

Offer your room to casting and production agencies to conduct their interviews, movie scenes or to merely stay there when they are recording in the area. You can have a contract specifying that this is a once-off deal or for a particular time you are comfortable with.

You can also have a contract specifying that you will open up your facilities in exchange for publicity credit such as "accommodation proudly sponsored by [your establishment]" at the end of the show or that you get a mention in conference/event invites and/or brochures, or even have your establishment logo or branding incorporated into the scene.

Offer your venue to modelling agencies and publishing houses

Magazines shoot covers and content all the time. Offer your venue for free or at a big discount to media and industry professionals who want to shoot their magazine covers or have top models shooting ads and campaigns.

One of the things you can contractually agree to upfront is that you must be credited in print. Perhaps, if you are a good negotiator, you may be able to sneak in your establishment name, website and phone number or just the branding in the background.

Stop covering your nakedness

Stop trying to hide your empty walls. There is perhaps no better time than now to invite a travel writer (and their partner) over for a night or two. As industry professionals, we know off-peak probably means ghost town has struck.

Yet, travel writers love it because we can actually enjoy a bit of a working holiday and see more than we would when it is busy. You may even be able to score publicity, features, social media posts, blog posts and get your establishment's name

out there. There is always a need for fresh venues and establishments and opening up your home to a travel blogger/writer is one of those win-win scenarios you need to strongly consider.

Target a market you have never targeted before

A fellow colleague who runs a country lodge in Pretoria tried out something "weird". The establishment was known for attracting an older, matured family clientele, but during the empty room off-peak season, he devised an ingenious plan.

Seeing that it was fairly empty anyways, he invited a couple of DJs and used social media to invite all his friends who in turn invited theirs. They made money from selling drinks and food at their restaurant and opened it up for a young adult market who would have otherwise never gone in... That event - which is now an annual sought after event - opened the lodge up to a younger clientele. I have since frequented it to go eat at the restaurant, slept there for a girl's night out and advise friends and family to consider it as a conference and wedding venue.

Open it up to someone who can't afford it

When reading the papers, one often comes across business owners who read a story and are deeply moved. What often happens is that the person will go back to the press and, in turn, it results in a follow-up story of how a fellow good Samaritan responded.

Next time while reading your community or national newspaper or a magazine you may come across a story of a young family, couple or individual in your neighbourhood who survived hardships and could desperately do with a holiday. Call the paper without delay, ask for their details and invite them over. One always wins by doing good and you never know where that good deed could get you.

ABOUT PHINDIWE NKOSI

Phindiwe Nkosi has a decade of experience coupled by a Masters Degree in Communication Management from the University of Pretoria, South Africa. Her experience ranges from working as a journalist, international news anchor, travel writer, speech writer, marketing and communications manager, editor, blogger, foodie and ghostwriter. She is also the founder of Travel Anthem and freelances for clients across South Africa, UK, Australia, Canada, Germany, India, Zimbabwe and more. Email her at phindiwe@communicationanthem.co.za for your writing and blogging needs.

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