

5 Easy Steps to Starting a Glamping Business in 2024

'If you can imagine it, you can achieve it. If you can dream it, you can become it.' William Arthur Ward

INTRODUCTION:

Do you yearn for a change of lifestyle, one that lets you escape the city and all its corporate woes? Do you dream of starting a glamping business in the great outdoors, but don't have a clue where to start? Maybe you already have plans, but are struggling with taking that overwhelming first step? Fear not – here at [Tractors and Cream](#) we know that starting a glamping business from scratch can be daunting, but if we can do it, then you definitely can too! With six years' experience building and running our own geodesic glamping site we have amassed a wealth of knowledge – knowledge that we know can help save you a lot of cash during your own business set up.

Starting a glamping business, whether big, or small, can be challenging, and despite the title, it's *not* always easy. However, with a little bit of help, we hope to make it a lot less stressful.

In this blog post we'll cover the five key steps that will turn your dream, into reality. So settle in, grab a pen and paper, and let's get started.

STEP ONE: FINDING LAND



It may seem obvious, but in order to set up a glamp, camp or experiential site, you will need land of some description. If you already have a suitable space (perhaps your current property has a field, pasture or wooded area that would make the perfect spot) then feel free to skip to Step Two. If you *don't* yet have any land, here are some key considerations and top tips to help you find your very own Shangri-La:

- **Location, Location, Location** – Yes you’ve heard it before, but in this case, it refers to your market research. If you have a location in mind, it’s very important to check how many other glamping, or experiential businesses, are operating within the same area. If the area is already flooded, is there room for one more? Will yours have enough USPs to make it stand out and ultimately, give you the bookings that you need? Start by plugging ‘*glamping businesses near me*’ into Google (other search engines are available…) and see what pops up.
- **Property Finders** – There are lots of websites that advertise land for sale, such as Woodlands.co.uk or uklandandfarms.co.uk. These are based in the UK, but each country should have its own versions, such as landwatch.com, covering land for sale in the United States. A simple search of ‘*land for sale*’ should return some suitable websites.

**Top Tip* - Type ‘acres’ into a property website’s search window to find those with land attached.*

- **Purchase an Existing Business** - If the thought of starting a site completely from scratch is a bit *too* overwhelming, why not look at purchasing an established business? With any glamp or camp site there’s always the opportunity to adapt and enhance the current offering to put your own unique stamp on it. Websites such as glampingbusiness.com are a good place to start – pop your keyword, such as ‘*caravan park*’, into their search window and away you go.

STEP TWO: PLANNING PERMISSION



Do these two words fill you with dread and fear? Well, you may be surprised to learn that planning permission isn't *always* necessary. If you're based in the UK – read on. If not, most of this probably won't apply to your project, so you may wish to skip straight to Step Three.

Planning permission in the UK can be broken down into three broad levels:

1) Entry Level – The 60 Day Rule

As of 26th July 2023 a new Permitted Development Right came into force, allowing the use of land as a recreational campsite for up to 50 pitches, for 60 days a year. This means that you can operate as a 'pop-up' campsite for two months every year thereby testing the waters to see if running a camping or glamping site is actually for you.

Naturally there are constraints – the structures must be moveable (think bell tents, yurts, tipis) as must the facilities. So, no septic tanks, for example, just compost loos. You need to apply for a licence if open for more than 42 consecutive days, and provide notification to your local planning authority prior to opening.

There are a few more rules and regs to be aware of (located in a site of Special Scientific Interest? You may require full planning permission after all) but if you fancy a two month 'try before you buy' and are up for a bit of off-grid luxury, then this is certainly a very good option.

2) Mid Level – Certification

Clubs such as [Greener Camping](#) and [Freedom Camping](#) can issue planning exemption certificates to camping and glamping sites, permitting them to operate legally, with no requirement for planning permission. The site must meet the criteria set by the club, which usually follow a 'leave no trace' approach meaning, as for the 60 Day Rule, no permanent structures or facilities are allowed.

Guests must be members of the specific club before they can book and stay.

Certification offers another excellent option to quickly and legally set up a site, but do check out the constraints and limitations before deciding if this is right for you.

3) Top Level – Full Planning Permission

The stuff of nightmares! Or maybe not. Back in 2016 we decided to apply for full planning permission for our glamp site. We submitted the application ourselves, and received permission within 8 weeks at a cost of a few hundred pounds. Of course this is not always the case and applying for full planning *can* be an enormously stressful, lengthy and extraordinarily expensive process. But once you have it? Hurrah, the world is your metaphorical oyster. Sort of.

I put in this caveat because there are different types available. When we applied, we decided on a 'Fixed Tent' application, meaning we're now limited to structures made of canvas. We started with yurts and tipis, but after a couple of seasons, decided that they were not the best choice for us in the long term. However, because our planning permission restricted us to canvas, we had limited options for change. Fortunately we then discovered glamping domes which provide a fabulous guest experience with far less of the annual storage and maintenance issues that we suffered before!

Applications for full planning permission will depend on your local authority, so if you want to go down this route then make sure you talk to them first and find out exactly what you need to do.

**Top Tip* - Talk to your planning authority and explain to them how your site will benefit the local community. How will it generate tourism into the area? Perhaps your site could become the local tourist attraction? Are there local businesses that will benefit from increased traffic in the form of your guests – the farm shop, pub or restaurants; bicycle, paddle-board or kayak hire? All of these connections can be selling points to your local authority. Approach them with a killer business plan and show them how your glamp site will benefit everyone, not just your guests.*

And don't forget, there are always planning consultants who, for a fee, will take on the task of writing and submitting the planning application for you. Alternatively, why not join our Mentoring Program for one to one advice and help to get you started – see below for more details or click here: **LINK TO/WITHIN WEBSITE**

STEP THREE: STRUCTURES



When applying for planning, you need to have an idea of what type of structure, or structures, you want to install. If you're looking at the 60 Day Rule or certification route, then you'll most likely be looking at canvas structures that are easy to move and dismantle.

Whilst yurts and tipis are cheaper and may offer a quicker return on investment, they do require storage over winter, which can be time consuming and requires a suitable storage space. Safari tents and domes are more expensive, but we have found they offer much

greater wind-resistance (an important consideration with the changing climate) and can be left up all year round – a huge bonus when it comes to the end of an exhausting season!

If applying for full planning permission it is better to have an exact idea of your dream structure, or structures, before submitting your application. If we were to do it all over again, we would definitely apply for full planning as I now quite fancy quirky wooden cabins, treehouses or bespoke pods!

Did I say quirky and bespoke? When it comes to glamping, the options really are unlimited. Converted buses, fire engines and even helicopters are available to rent these days! There really are too many to list here, but if you're looking for inspiration, [The Glamping Show UK](#) and [The Glamping Show Americas](#) are well worth attending.

**Top Tip* - If you can't get to either, we have been regular visitors to the UK show for the last seven years, and attended the Colorado show in 2023. Grab a coffee and watch our full tour video on our [YouTube channel right here](#).*

STEP FOUR: IDENTIFY YOUR TARGET DEMOGRAPHIC

(Insert beautiful Tractors and Cream image here)

If you have identified a particular type of structure, or location, that you love, then this may automatically filter the type of guest you are trying to attract. A romantic [shepherd hut retreat](#) for example, may not be suitable for more than two, whereas a site like [Tractors and Cream](#), with a children's play area, and domes that sleep five plus a travel cot, are ideally suited to families.

It is incredibly important to identify your target demographic, so you can aim your marketing specifically at them. Try to picture your ideal guest and if you can, create a pseudo-persona, or avatar, for them.

For example, I know exactly what age my ideal guest is, where she works, how many children she has, what their ages are, and what she's looking for in her ideal holiday. By really knowing and understanding your customers' pain points, then it is much easier to market their perfect solution – ie your glamping getaway!

Each type of market has different requirements and different considerations. Whereas couples may be an easier prospect (only one set of bedding to change over for a start) we have decided to cater for the family market. The downside to *this* is that bookings during the week term time are hard to come by. Consequently we need to look at alternative demographics to fill the booking gaps, such as the baby and toddler market.

**Top Tip* - Try not to be all things to all people, rather, identify your ideal guest and work towards building their ideal getaway!*

STEP FIVE: MARKETING



It's never too soon to start marketing your site! If I knew back when we started what I know now, I would have started marketing Tractors and Cream way back in 2012. If you already have the land, or even just the idea in your head, get onto social media and start building your followers.

- **How** – People love to follow other peoples' journeys, so set up your [Facebook/Instagram](#)/Tik Tok accounts and start posting content.
- **What** – Photos of your land, drawings of the finished dream, AI-generated images or ideas of the structures that you're thinking about. Vertical videos (those taken on your phone) are super popular right now and people *love* authenticity, so film a few silly, or serious, shorts as you go about your build and pop them on your socials.
- **Why** – Building a following and letting people know what, and when you are opening, helps when it comes to driving guests to your own website for direct bookings. Online Travel Agents (OTAs) such as AirBnB and Booking.com are great in the beginning, but they take a hefty commission out of every stay. Ideally you want that extra 20% in your own pocket, not theirs. Don't get me wrong, OTAs are great when you first get started, but ideally you want people to come direct – as an incentive, we offered our guests a 15% off voucher if they booked direct with us the following year.

Ultimately, if you start your marketing early, people get the chance to jump on board your journey with you, and you get the chance to really sell your brand ethos to them:

- What are your ethics?
- What does your business stand for?
- What are your thoughts on sustainability and how will you implement your ideas into the finished build?

And perhaps most importantly...

- What problems can you solve for them?

Everyone has a pain point that they need a solution for. Perhaps the kids are desperate to go camping but their parents have never been and are worried about keeping the kids entertained and where the nearest flushing loo is. If you can show them how your site will give the kids a fantastic outdoor experience that they'll never forget, whilst their parents still get to relax and unwind with all of the luxuries they'd like in a holiday, then you have solved their problem and they will be invested in you, and your glamping site.

**Top Tip* - I am in touch with many marketing specialists within the industry. If you have any marketing questions – pop them in the comments below and I will do my best to answer them for you.*

CONCLUSION:

So, there you have it - an overview of five of the key steps in the path to launching your very own glamp, camp or experiential site. If you are looking to start, or have already begun your journey, but are feeling like it's a bit of a minefield, then I am always here to help you figure it all out.



MENTORSHIP PROGRAM:

We launched Tractors and Cream in 2015. Along the way we have come across numerous issues and problems, and have dealt with, or found solutions for all of them, building up a wealth of knowledge along the way. We have also travelled to lots of other glamp sites in several different countries, to interview the owners and find out about their own journeys and what worked, or didn't, for them.

I am now launching a Mentorship Program, so that I can help others with their own glamp site builds. I am *not* a consultant – I can't advise on, or submit planning applications - but I can offer one to one consultations on any aspect of your build. So if you're:

- Struggling with how to plan the space;
- Wondering how on earth to physically build the site;
- Unsure how off-grid works – are composting toilets are good idea? How do you install solar? Should you invest in a septic tank or sewage treatment plant;
- Interested in the pros and cons of various different structures and locations;
- Worried about any aspect, at all, of your new project...

Then we have, literally, done it all! If you don't want a consultant, but do want a 'best mate' who knows everything there is to know about the field, then consider signing up. It costs £25 per month for YouTube subscribers which includes a monthly one-to-one call with myself, Vicki, or hubby Bryan.

Take a look at the **JOIN** section on our membership area on YouTube and see what you think – and remember, I love to chat and am always happy to answer questions, so do pop any that you might have in the comments section below.

FINAL THOUGHTS:

I hope you've enjoyed this overview of 5 Easy Steps to Starting a Glamping Business in 2024. If you really want a sneak peak of the daily ins and outs of running a glamp site, then check out our video **here**, and if you're just after some friendly help, advice and top tips, then subscribe to our YouTube channel and sign up to our new mentorship program today.

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