

Stephen Darrer – Thanet Tourism Superstar information

What's your name?

Stephen Darrer

Tell us about yourself, your family, and where you live

Hi, I'm Stephen, originally from Ireland and a recent convert to sunny Margate life after spending many years in Hertfordshire. With a successful background in learning development and learning design, I have worked on large scale hospitality projects, most notably I consulted at the London 2012 Olympics and at British Airways. Outside of the B&B I'm the Secretary of GRASS, our local community street scheme, and I play an active role in running community events, our most recent being the Cliftonville Games and Cliftonville in Bloom

Your business/where do you work?

I am the owner of the Cliftonville Townhouse, which is contemporary boutique bed & breakfast establishment. Cliftonville Townhouse is a must for anyone wanting a modern and stylish seaside break. Our Rooms are light, airy and inspiring – all boasting original features, ever-changing local art, and stunning unique mid-century-modern furniture. You can even opt for a room with a must-lie-in four-poster bed and cast-iron roll-top bath, or our converted loft room with exposed brickwork and its own sun terrace. We're situated in the up-and-coming Cliftonville, with eclectic coffee shops, bars and record shops popping up all the time. We're also minutes away from the mysterious Shell Grotto, the Walpole Bay tidal pool, and some stunning Kent coastal walks.

How did you get started?

I have always worked in hospitality and customer service roles, when I was five years old I would help my father in his shop and by eight years of age I was serving customers from behind the counter whilst standing on a chair. All my siblings worked in the family business from an early age. My parent's passion for putting customer first embedded strong service values in us all, hence why so many of my siblings still work in the hospitality industry.

What do you love about your job?

Creating memories for every guest – from the first interaction, whether it is online or by phone, I want them to feel they have made the right choice in visiting Thanet. I love sharing my inside knowledge on the area and telling them where to visit, where's good to eat and what food is in season. Creating memories for our guests is paramount, I totally understand the constraints and time limits that people have in their day-to-day lives and when they come to stay with us I want them to have the best experience possible.

What is the most important thing you do?

When I open the door to welcome my guests on arrival.

Creating that positive first impression and ensuring that it continues during their stay!

I know everyone says it, but making each guest feel extra special with a warm welcome, is absolutely key to the experience and helps build that initial rapport.

How do you feel about being shortlisted for Thanet Tourism Superstar?

Honestly? I'm completely overwhelmed. I am so thankful to all our guests for even nominating me in the first place, I was completely taken aback when I was contacted. And I know a lot of people will say this. The thing is, I NEVER imagined this in a million years. To get recognised for something you love doing is really the icing on the cake!

What makes you proud of Thanet?

Without a doubt the people. Having come to the area as a tourist five years ago prior to relocating, it is the friendly and engaging folk of Thanet that make the difference. I still love to visit the towns and villages around Thanet and always feel that each one has unique characteristics that help to create a welcoming vibe, and this always comes across in the people with their sense of pride in where they live.

Give an example of how you have made a real difference to a customer's experience promoting Thanet as a destination to come back to.

Guests love to live like a local! Last year I had guests that were on a cycling holiday around the Kent coast, with Margate being the last destination of their trip. I spoke with them on the telephone prior to arrival and they explained to me that they were real foodies. I decided to make a hand drawn map of the local area where they could go out and taste the best what Thanet has to offer, from the local produce at Quex Barn, to the wonderful local seafood at Hantverk and Found, and afternoon tea on the fabulous Walpole Bay terrace. They were so thrilled by the effort that they have been coming back each month to try all the culinary delights of Thanet.