



Turn Visitors into Regulars

Practical ways for hospitality businesses in Norfolk and Suffolk to turn first-time visitors into repeat customers and build steady trade all year round.

For many local businesses, one busy weekend or holiday period is not enough. Real growth comes from giving people a reason to come back, whether they are local residents, day visitors, holidaymakers or people returning to the area for work, events and short breaks.

Why Repeat Customers Matter in Hospitality

Winning a new customer usually costs more than keeping an existing one. In hospitality, repeat customers help smooth out quieter periods, fill midweek gaps and create more reliable income outside peak season. This matters across Norfolk and Suffolk, where many businesses rely on a mix of residents, weekend visitors and seasonal tourism. If someone enjoys your venue in Norwich, Great Yarmouth, Cromer, King's Lynn, Bury St Edmunds, Ipswich, Southwold or Aldeburgh, the next step is making sure they have a clear reason to return.

Four Ways to Encourage Repeat Visits

1. Give people a clear reason to return

Do not leave repeat visits to chance. Promote a specific reason to come back, such as a Sunday lunch, themed supper, live music night, tasting menu, seasonal afternoon tea, quiz, wedding showcase or local produce event.

2. Build habits, not just one-off sales

Think about what could bring people back weekly or monthly. This could be a regular coffee catch-up, a locals' night, a business breakfast, a midweek set menu or a monthly supper club.

3. Make the experience personal

Friendly recognition, good service and simple follow-up make a big difference. Customers are far more likely to return when they feel remembered and valued.

4. Stay visible after the visit

Use your windows, table talkers, social media and email list to remind people what is coming up next. If customers enjoyed one visit, make it easy for them to picture the next one.

Create a Clear "Come Back Soon" Moment

The best time to encourage a return visit is before the customer leaves.

For example, staff might say:

- "If you enjoyed today, our steak night is on Thursday."
- "We're doing a seafood special next weekend using local produce."



- “If you’re staying in the area, our breakfast is open to non-residents too.”
- “We’ve got live music on Friday, and it gets booked up quickly.”

Simple Loyalty Ideas That Work

- Coffee or breakfast stamp cards for cafés.
- A free dessert or drink after a set number of visits.
- Priority booking or a small perk for regular diners.
- A locals’ offer on quieter midweek evenings.
- A bounce-back offer for guests to return within 30 days.
- A simple incentive for hotel or holiday-let guests to book breakfast, lunch or dinner on their next stay.

Make People Feel Valued

Small touches can make a strong impression.

- Train staff to welcome returning customers warmly.
- Remember favourite tables, drinks or menu choices where possible
- Thank people for booking again or visiting more than once during their stay.
- Ask guests where they have visited from and use that to suggest another reason to return
- Make local recommendations that add value to the visit and position your business as part of the wider place experience

Actions You Can Take This Week

- Choose one regular reason for customers to return, such as a midweek offer or monthly event.
- Brief staff on one simple line to invite customers back before they leave.
- Add your next event or offer to menus, receipts, booking confirmations or table displays.
- Identify one partnership opportunity with a nearby attraction, accommodation provider or local event.
- Review your customer journey and ask: what would make someone come back within the next month?

Common Mistakes to Avoid

- Waiting for customers to decide for themselves whether to return.
- Offering discounts without giving a real reason to come back.
- Focusing only on peak summer or holiday trade.
- Missing opportunities to convert day visitors into repeat local customers.
- Not using local events, festivals and seasonal moments in your marketing.

Take Action

Pick one clear reason for customers to return and start promoting it this week