

The last-minute UK holiday app that could be the answer to this year's travel plans

Have you tried to book a UK holiday for this summer? With certainty on overseas holidays being allowed still unclear, more people than ever before are using their annual leave to stay on home soil and explore what the country has to offer.

Enter Staze, a last-minute UK travel app that launched during the pandemic. We spoke to its cofounders Jay Olenicz and Henry Popiolek.

What was your professional background before founding Staze?

We worked as management consultants for Newton Europe, leading transformational change projects in FTSE 250 businesses.

Jay is a physics graduate from the University of Bristol. During his time there, he rowed the Atlantic Ocean with his brother, breaking three World Records! Henry studied Modern Languages at Durham, doing 'Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs' placements across Europe during his year abroad. His fun fact

is that he speaks five languages.

We put working together on a consulting project in the Midlands, where the Staze story begins.

What was the catalyst for launching Staze?

Working at Newton, we used to stay on site in project teams from Monday to Friday, which often meant staying in *Airbnbs* . Despite booking last minute, there was always availability and we realized that hosts were willing to give cut rates in order to fill their properties.

This led us to discover the fact that dedicated holiday rentals were massively under-used, with an average occupancy of 55% – that’s the equivalent to 50 million empty nights each year in the UK alone, and 1.2B empty nights across the whole world.

After attending industry trade shows and speaking to property managers to validate how they saw the problem, and with the belief that we could significantly improve on a typical last minute guest booking experience, we set off to solve it. This was three weeks before the first lockdown!

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Tell me about Staze?

We love the fun and freedom of last-minute travel, so our goal is simply to help people live more spontaneously. Staze is a last-minute booking app that shows the best deals on properties in the next 14 days and makes it easier than ever to discover and book a trip.

Speaking to hundreds of our target market during last year’s lockdowns, we learn that although most people know they want to travel in the UK this summer, they often have no idea where they want to go. And yet this is precisely the first question that every booking website will ask you: “Where do you want to go?”

Staze is different – we’ll ask you how far you’re willing to travel, show you the best destinations within reach and display the key bits of information you need to make a decision. What’s the weather doing? What’s special about this place?

What's more, every property listed on Staze is a dedicated rental managed by a professional property manager. This means fast check-ins, reliable amenities & quality you can rely on. Again – factors which help our guests make quick decisions!

To fuel our journey, we raised £ 500,000 in December 2020 from a range of respected angel investors.

Why did you decide to launch a travel app during the pandemic?

We had the naivety to go full time on Staze three weeks before the pandemic really hit the UK and caused the national lockdown. It's been a great test of our perseverance! However, in those first three weeks, we onboarded 1,000 properties and took 50 bookings – enough to persuade us there was a real problem in the market that needed solving.

If there's anything that lockdown has taught us, it's that being stuck in one place for too long can be miserable. We've always believed that domestic travel would bounce back stronger.

What has business been like so far?

We've been in closed beta up until now, relying on word of mouth to give us hundreds of app downloads and thousands of pounds of bookings. At the moment, we have over 4,000 properties on the app and with a couple of exciting partnership announcements to come, we're expecting to have built that up to 50,000 by the summer.

This summer, we want to establish ourselves as the go-to app for UK staycations. Once we've really established the app as something our users love and proven the model, we want to scale this to unlock spontaneous travel in new markets across the world. Our mission is to unlock spontaneous travel for as many people as we can.

The [Staze app](#) is available for download on iOS and Android now.