



Experience of the Year

Recognises providers of truly memorable and immersive activities for visitors to participate in.



Eligibility Criteria

- Directly involved in tourism, making a contribution to the visitor economy with a significant proportion of business generated by people visiting from outside the local area.

- Any visitor experience that requires participation in an activity
- The experience may involve a host/teacher/instructor/guide or may be undertaken independently
- Likely to be immersive and interactive
- Typically experiences will be learning, adventure or relaxation based
- Likely to fall under one of these themes:
 - Wellness and well-being (e.g. spa)
 - Sporting and active (e.g. caving)
 - Environment (e.g. beach cleaning, dry stone walling)
 - Arts & culture (e.g. pottery making)
 - Culinary (e.g. cookery courses)
- Events and festivals are not eligible to apply to this category due to the likelihood of VisitEngland Awards for Excellence winners not being announced until one or two years after the event took place e.g. an event taking place in 2019 may not be recognised by VisitEngland until 2021; the event may have ceased or declined in quality since then.

Food service experiences are not eligible for this category and should consider the Taste of England Award category, which assesses the quality of food and drink served to the visitor.

Experiences (including guided tours) that are offered by visitor attractions will be eligible if they are standalone activities i.e. can be purchased separately, and not in addition to, general admission.

Businesses of all sizes can apply as this category is judged within the context and style of the business.

Applicant & Business Details

(Not scored)

Applicant's Name

Applicant's Job Title

Applicant's Phone Number

Applicant's Email

Business Name

<p>Give the name you use when promoting your business, as you wish it to appear in all publicity materials, on certificates, in presentations etc.</p>	
<p>Business Address</p>	
<p>Closures during judging period (the judging period runs from 1st October – 30th November 2019)</p>	
<p>Promotional description</p>	
<p>Provide a promotional description of your business.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on its strengths and stand out features • Write your description with regard to this category • This wording will be used in PR and awards literature if you are short listed as a finalist • Wording provided is subject to edit • 120 word maximum 	
<p>Promotional images</p>	
<p>Provide up to three landscape high resolution photos.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Photos should relate to this category • Photos should not be edited in any way e.g. embedded text or logos, a collage • Only include photos that you own the copyright for • If the photo requires a credit e.g. photographer, please provide details 	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These photos will be used in PR and awards literature if you are short listed as a finalist 	
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Background	(Not scored)
<p>Briefly outline the story of your business (250 words maximum).</p>	
<p><i>Judges will be looking for:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Length of time business has been under current ownership • Target market(s) and typical customer profile • Key milestones in developing the business • Indication of size of business • Number of staff employed, if any 	
<p>List any awards, ratings and accolades received in the last two years. Include the title, awarding body, level and date achieved.</p>	
<p><i>For example:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Successes in this competition and the VisitEngland Awards for Excellence • TripAdvisor Certificate of Excellence • Green Tourism award • VisitEngland and/or AA quality assessment, local quality accreditation 	
<p>There is no requirement for your business to be quality assessed. However, if you have an independent quality assessment/mystery shopping report from the last two years, you might wish to attach it when emailing your completed application form /upload it here (optional).</p>	

Online Presence & Reviews		(Scored)
Provide links to your online presence, which will be reviewed and scored by judges in addition to your answers to the four questions.		
Website		
Social Media Platforms		
Provide links to any business pages/profiles on Facebook, Instagram etc. and Twitter handles		
Online Review Sites		
Provide specific links to any customer review listings for your business e.g. TripAdvisor, Booking.com, Google, Euan's Guide		

Question 1 – Your Recent Improvements	(Scored)
Tell us about up to five ways in which you have developed your experience and/or improved the customer experience over the last two years (300 words maximum).	
<i>Judges will be looking for:</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expansion, upgrade of equipment and facilities, enhancements to your services • Promotional initiatives e.g. new website • Improving the skills of you and your team • Sustainability and accessibility improvements • Reasons for making the improvements e.g. based on customer feedback • Approximate date of improvement 	
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2.	
3.	
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5.	
Links to relevant supporting evidence online (optional):	

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Question 2 – Your Top Qualities
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(Scored)

Tell us about up to five ways in which your experience is impressive compared to your competitors (300 words maximum).

<i>Judges will be looking for what makes you unique, such as:</i>

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Added extras that delight your customers• How you care for your team• Use of local suppliers, including food & drink offer centred on locally sourced produce• Innovative marketing and PR, including partnerships with other businesses• Facilities and welcome for people with a range of accessibility requirements• Managing and improving environmental, social and economic impacts |
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Links to relevant supporting evidence online (optional):
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Question 3 – Your Results

(Scored)

Thinking of how you measure success, tell us about three successes from the last year (300 words maximum).

<i>Judges will be looking for:</i>

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Percentage increase in occupancy levels/visitor numbers, sales, customer satisfaction and wastage reduction• Percentage increase in online bookings• Increase in repeat business• Business generated from marketing activity• Growth of social media following and engagement |
|---|

1.

2.
3.
Links to relevant supporting evidence online (optional):

Question 4 – Your Future Plans	(Scored)
Tell us about three ways you will develop and promote your experience over the next year (300 words maximum).	
<i>Judges will be looking for:</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expansion, upgrade of equipment and facilities, enhancements to your services • Improving the skills of you and your team • Marketing and PR, including partnerships with other businesses • Operational efficiency • Sustainability and accessibility improvements 	
1.	
2.	
3.	
Links to relevant supporting evidence online (optional):	

Terms & Conditions of Entry
<p>“Competition” means West Midlands Tourism Awards and the VisitEngland Awards for Excellence</p> <p>“Organiser” means West Midlands Growth Company and Reach Plc</p> <p>“Platform” means the online system that the applicant must use to complete their application.</p> <p>By submitting an application to the Competition, you agree to be bound by the following terms and conditions:</p>

- Applications for the Competition must be submitted within the time and date ranges specified at www.westmidlandstourismawards.com
- Applications must be submitted online at www.westmidlandstourismawards.com
- It is free to apply to all of the Competition categories
- You must be open for business at some point between 1st October – 30th November 2019 so the judges can visit if required. If you are closed for any part of this period, please ensure this is highlighted in the 'closures' box on your application.
- Any relevant tourism and/or hospitality businesses applying must lie within one of the following areas (i.e. pay their business rates to one of the following District or County Councils): Birmingham, Bromsgrove, Cannock Chase, Coventry, Dudley, North Warwickshire, Nuneaton & Bedworth, Redditch, Rugby, Sandwell, Shropshire, Solihull, Stratford-upon-Avon, Tamworth, Telford & Wrekin, Walsall, Warwick, Wolverhampton, Wyre Forest
- Applications may be submitted by any individual representing the business applying and the individual who submits the application will also become the contact whom all correspondence from the Organiser and VisitEngland concerning the Competition will be addressed to.
- You or a colleague must inform the Organiser immediately of any changes to the applicant contact information during the Competition
- Employees or representatives/agents of the Organiser and VisitEngland are not eligible to submit an application to the Competition except for categories in which third party nominations are publicly invited.
- You must ensure that your business complies with all current and relevant legal and licensing obligations before submitting an application. The judges reserve the right to not consider an application if this is in doubt and cannot be confirmed.
- You can apply for more than one category, except where specified within the eligibility criteria, but separate applications must be completed for each.
- Applications will only be considered if they are deemed to meet the eligibility criteria for the category.
- Applications will only be considered if they are submitted via the Platform and completed in full and do not exceed the maximum word counts.
- The Organiser reserves the right to move an application into a different category, if deemed more appropriate and should this occur the business affected will be informed.
- You **must** be willing to reimburse the judge and his/her partner (or family/companions in the case of some visitor attractions or experiences) on departure for the cost of the mystery visit/overnight stay, any meals taken (alcoholic drinks only for pub taste and hotel categories), or any admission or ticket cost as appropriate to the category.
- You agree to be part of any publicity undertaken in association with the Competition. If selected as a finalist, you accept and agree that the Organiser and VisitEngland may use or publish any photographs, comments or evidence submitted at any stage of the Competition in any media, waiving any rights to payment or to inspect and approve a finished product.
- Competition judges may decline to award winners at any level in some or all categories, if in their opinion there are insufficient entries of a winning standard.
- The prize provided by the Organiser for each winner will be a certificate and/ or a token gift. There is no cash alternative.
- Competition winners may publicise their success indefinitely provided the placing, category and year are specified in all publicity and materials.

- Competition winners may only use the specific logo issued by the Organiser or VisitEngland and not modify it in any way, nor use, or adapt for use, any other logo connected with the Organiser or VisitEngland.
- The logo may only be used alongside the location or part of the business that has won an award e.g. a self catering provider with multiple properties across different locations must only use the logo alongside the winning location.
- You confirm that you own the copyright to any photographs included with your application and permit the Organiser and VisitEngland to use these photographs in PR and awards literature if you are short listed as a finalist.
- The Organiser and VisitEngland will not accept responsibility for applications delayed or lost as a result of any network, computer hardware or software failure.
- In the event of any dispute regarding the Competition eligibility criteria, application forms, judging process, choice of finalists/winners or any other matter relating to the Competition, the decisions of the Organiser and VisitEngland shall be final and no correspondence or discussion shall be entered into.

National Judging

- Should you win an award in your local/regional Competition you **may** be automatically put forward for national judging by VisitEngland for the VisitEngland Awards for Excellence.
 - You must notify the Organiser in writing at the time of application if you do not wish to be put forward for national judging
 - In rare circumstances VisitEngland may deem that an application does not meet the eligibility criteria and reserves the right not to consider the application for national judging
 - It is not possible to revisit your application prior to being put forward for national judging
 - VisitEngland reserves the right to move an application into a different category, if deemed more appropriate
 - The prize provided by VisitEngland for each winner will be a certificate and/ or a trophy. There is no cash alternative.
 - Any queries in relation to national judging should be directed to VEAwards@visitengland.org
- Any data you provide will be handled in accordance with the [West Midlands' Growth Company privacy policy](#), [Reach Plc privacy policy](#), [VisitEngland's privacy policy](#) and [OpenWater's privacy policy](#) (application software provider) available on their websites. The Organiser, VisitEngland and OpenWater reserve the right to amend their privacy policies from time to time, and new versions will be provided on their websites. The most up to date version of any policies hosted on their websites will bind you and them.