



# Experience of the Year

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

**This sample application form is for information only and all applications must be made via the online application system.**

## 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
- A business 'main offering must have been open for a period of at least eight weeks since the introduction of COVID-Secure operating guidelines (after July 2020) and this period must be reflected within the application. Businesses where the main offering has remained closed since April 2020 may consider applying to the Resilience and Innovation Award
- 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. guided tours, pottery making)
  - Culinary (e.g. cookery courses)
- The experience must be open during the judging period
- 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
- Before applying to this category, please read the visitor attraction definition in large and small visitor attraction categories to ensure you are eligible
- An experience located at a visitor attraction may only apply to this category if it can be booked separately to the main attraction and can be accessed without the need to pay for or visit the main attraction e.g. the Eden Project is eligible to apply for the Large Visitor Attraction of the Year category, but could also put forward their zip wire experience for the Experience of the Year category
- Businesses that serve food must have a minimum food hygiene rating of three out of five. The competition organisers reserve the right to refuse an application if this minimum requirement is not met at any point prior to the awards ceremony. An exception is made for new businesses who have not yet been graded
- 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 2020 may not be recognised by VisitEngland until 2022; the event may have ceased or declined in quality since then

- Businesses of all sizes can apply as this category is judged within the context and style of the business
- Applications from a chain or group operator must relate to a single experience or multiple experiences at a single site
- Businesses that have been trading for at least three months and up to two years when applications open are strongly recommended to apply to the New Tourism Business of the Year category before considering applying to any other categories.

SAMPLE

## Applicant & business details

(not scored)

### Applicant's name:

Enter the applicant's name here.

### Applicant's job title:

Enter the applicant's job title here.

### Applicant's phone number:

Enter the applicant's phone number here.

### Applicant's email:

Enter applicant's email here.

### Business name:

Name of business application relates to. Give the name used to promote the business, as you wish it to appear in all publicity materials, on certificates, in presentations etc.:

Enter your business name here.

### Business address:

Enter your business address here.

### Closures during judging period (the judging period runs from November 2021 to January 2022):

Enter closures during the judging period here.

### Promotional Description

Provide a promotional description of your business.

- 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

Enter the promotional description here.

### **Promotional Images**

Provide up to three landscape high resolution photos.

- 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 third-party credit e.g. photographer, please provide details
- These photos will be used in PR and awards literature if you are short listed as a finalist

## Background

(not scored)

**Briefly outline the story of your business (250 words maximum).**

For example:

- Length of time business has been trading and time 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

Enter information on the background of your business here.

**List any awards, ratings, accolades received in the last two years, including any that relate to COVID-19. Include the title, awarding body, level and date achieved.**

For example:

- 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
- VisitEngland's 'We're Good to Go'; the AA's 'COVID-19 Confident'; Quality in Tourism's 'Safe clean and legal'

Enter information on any awards, ratings or accolades here.

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 upload it here (optional).

## Online presence & reviews

(this section is 30% of the final score)

Provide links to your online presence, which will be reviewed and scored by judges in addition to your answers to the four questions. Judges will also be looking for evidence of customer reassurance within your online presence as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Other sites may also be checked.

### Website (10%)

Enter the website URL here.

### Social Media Platforms (10%)

Provide links to all business pages/profiles on Facebook, Instagram etc. and Twitter handles

Enter social media platforms here.

### Online review sites (10%)

Provide specific links to customer review listings for your business e.g. TripAdvisor, Booking.com, Google, Euan's Guide, UpFront Reviews

Enter online review sites here.

## Question 1 - Your Top Qualities

(this question is 20% of the final score)

**Tell us about up to five ways in which your experience is impressive compared to your competitors (500 words maximum).**

One or more of the following example areas may be relevant to address in your answer (it is not mandatory to cover every area):

- Added extras that delight your customers
- How you care for your team
- Use and promotion 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
- Innovative adaption to restrictions, diversification and resilience building during the COVID-19 pandemic

Enter answer to question 1 here.

Links to relevant supporting evidence online (optional):

You will not be penalised if you have not included supplementary evidence. Any written answers that are included within the supplementary evidence, attempting to circumvent the question word counts, will be disregarded.

Enter links to supplementary evidence here.



## Question 2 - Your Recent Improvements

(this question is 20% of the final score)

**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 (500 words maximum).**

One or more of the following example areas may be relevant to address in your answer (it is not mandatory to cover every area):

(Only include examples of improvements undertaken in the last two years.)

- Innovative adaption to restrictions, diversification and resilience building during the COVID-19 pandemic
- Sustainability and accessibility improvements
- Promotional initiatives e.g. new website
- Improving the skills of you and your team
- Expansion, upgrade of facilities, enhancements to your services
- Reasons for making the improvements e.g. driven by customer feedback
- Approximate date of improvement

Enter answer to question 2 here.

Links to relevant supporting evidence online (optional):

You will not be penalised if you have not included supplementary evidence. Any written answers that are included within the supplementary evidence, attempting to circumvent the question word counts, will be disregarded.

Enter links to supplementary evidence here.

### Question 3 - Your Results

(this question is 15% of the final score)

**Tell us about three successes from the last year, providing figures where relevant (300 words maximum).**

One or more of the following example areas may be relevant to address in your answer (it is not mandatory to cover every area):

- Whether you are able to attribute success directly to any of the improvements that you've made (mentioned in Question 2)
- 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
- The significance of the level of impact on your business

Enter answer to question 3 here.

Links to relevant supporting evidence online (optional):

You will not be penalised if you have not included supplementary evidence. Any written answers that are included within the supplementary evidence, attempting to circumvent the question word counts, will be disregarded.

Enter links to supplementary evidence here.

## Question 4 – Your Future Plans

(this question is 15% of the final score)

**Tell us about three ways you will develop and promote your experience over the next year and the reasons why (300 words maximum).**

One or more of the following example areas may be relevant to address in your answer (it is not mandatory to cover every area):

- Continued adaption, diversification and resilience building as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic
- Sustainability and accessibility improvements
- Expansion, upgrade of facilities, enhancements to your services
- Improving the skills of you and your team
- Marketing and PR, including partnerships with other businesses
- Operational efficiency

Enter answer to question 4 here.

Links to relevant supporting evidence online (optional):

You will not be penalised if you have not included supplementary evidence. Any written answers that are included within the supplementary evidence, attempting to circumvent the question word counts, will be disregarded.

Enter links to supplementary evidence here.