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**Experience of the Year**

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

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| **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 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. |

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| **Applicant & Business Details (Not scored)** |
| Applicant’s Name |  |
| Applicant’s Job Title |  |
| Applicant’s Phone Number |  |
| Applicant’s Email  |  |
| Business Name:*Give the official name as you wish it to appear in all publicity materials, on certificates, in presentations etc.* |  |
| Business Address: |  |
| Closures during judging period (*the judging period runs from 1 July 2019 to 2 September 2019*) |  |
| Promotional description |  |
| *Provide a 120-word maximum promotional description of your business, focusing on its strengths and stand out features. Please make sure that you 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.* |
| Promotional images |  |
| *Include three landscape high resolution images. These images will be used in PR and awards literature if you are short listed as a finalist.* |

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| **Background (Not scored)** |
| Briefly outline the story of your business (250 words maximum). |
| *Judges will be looking for:** 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
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| List any awards, ratings and accolades received in the last **two** years. 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
* Michelin stars
* Green Tourism award
* VisitEngland quality assessment and/or AA quality assessment
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| 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). |

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| **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* |

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| **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). |
| *Judges will be looking for:** 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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| 1. |
| 2. |
| 3. |
| 4. |
| 5. |
| Links to relevant supporting evidence online (optional): |

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| **Question 2 – Your Top Qualities (Scored)** |
| Tell us about up to **five** ways in which your experience is impressive compared to your competitors (300 words maximum). |
| *Judges will be looking for what makes you unique e.g.:* * 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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| 1. |
| 2 |
| 3. |
| 4. |
| 5. |
| 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). |
| *Judges will be looking for:** 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
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| 1. |
| 2. |
| 3. |
| Links to relevant supporting evidence online (optional): |

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| **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). |
| *Judges will be looking for:** 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
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| 1. |
| 2. |
| 3. |
| Links to relevant supporting evidence online (optional): |

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| **Terms & Conditions of Entry**  |
| **“Competition”** means Enjoy Staffordshire Tourism and Good Foods Awards and the VisitEngland Awards for Excellence**“Organiser”** means Enjoy Staffordshire Tourism and Good Foods Awards**“Platform”** means the online system that the applicant must use to complete their application.By submitting an application to the Competition, you agree to be bound by the following terms and conditions: * Applications for the Competition must be submitted between 9.00 a.m. on 8 April 2019 and 5.00 p.m. on 7 June 2019
* Applications must be submitted online.
* **The awards are free to enter for advertisers to Enjoy Staffordshire website. For non-advertisers there is a entry fee of £100 (plus VAT). For details of advertising on Enjoy Staffordshire please go to** [www.enjoystaffordshire.com/trade/join-us](http://www.enjoystaffordshire.com/trade/join-us)
* You must be open for business at some point between *1 July 2019 and 2 September 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.
* 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 must inform the Organiser immediately if your contact information changes during the Competition or you are no longer able to act as the contact for all correspondence.
* Employees or representatives/agents of the Organiser and VisitEngland are not eligible to submit an application to the Competition.
* 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 in their opinion 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 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 in the case of some Visitor Attractions) on departure for the cost of the mystery visit/overnight stay, any meals taken (alcoholic drinks only for Pub of the Year Award , Independent Restaurant of the Year Award, Contemporary Dining Restaurant of the Year Award, and Tea Room & Coffee Shop Award ), 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 for each winner will be a certificate and/ or a trophy. 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 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.
	+ 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 [Organiser’s privacy policy](https://www.enjoystaffordshire.com/information/data-protection-policy), [VisitEngland’s privacy policy](https://www.visitbritain.org/privacy-policy) and [OpenWater’s privacy policy](https://www.getopenwater.com/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.
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