



Experience of the Year

Recognises providers of memorable and immersive activities for visitors to participate in, from cooking masterclasses to woodland nature tours.

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.
- The application must relate to one named experience only.
 - For businesses that offer multiple experiences, you are invited to submit applications that relate to only one experience (ideally your 'hero' or most popular experience).
 - (Any award must then be associated with this one experience).
- 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).
- 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.
- 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 Bombay Sapphire Distillery is eligible to apply for the Large Visitor Attraction of the Year category, which includes its 'Discovery Experience' as part of the standard admission ticket (therefore it would not be eligible for this category), but they could enter their 'Gin Cocktail Masterclass' within the Experience of the Year category as this is a separate experience not available to all visitors.
 - For another example, an outdoor activity centre (like Go Ape) providing a selection of separately booked high ropes experiences can enter their 'hero' or most popular experience (Treetop Challenge) as one application.
 - A boat tour business (like Serenity Farne Island Boat Tours) providing a selection of separately booked boat tours can enter their 'hero' or most popular experience (Holy Island Trip) as one application.
- The experience must be open to the public/ non-residents – i.e. participation is not restricted to residents, unless residency/ over-night accommodation is part of the itinerary for the named experience.
- 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.
- The named experience must be taking place during the published judging dates and must occur on a regular and ongoing basis. One-off, seasonal or short-term experiences are classed as events and festival, and as such, are not eligible to apply to this category.
- Businesses of all sizes can apply as this category is judged within the context and style of the business.
- 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.

- For the purpose of eligibility for this competition, 'trading' means serving customers. If the business has not been trading this long, then they will need to wait to apply to the competition in 2025/26

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.

Name of Experience:

Enter the name of the experience here.

Closures during judging period

Enter closures during the judging period here.

Age of business

When did the business relating to this application start trading?

Note: For the purposes of eligibility 'trading' means serving customers.

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
- Wording provided is subject to edit
- 120 words maximum

Enter the promotional description here.

Promotional Images

Provide up to three 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 credit e.g. photographer, please provide details
- These photos will be used in PR and awards literature

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 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 Traveller's Choice Award
- Green Tourism award
- VisitEngland quality assessment, local quality accreditation

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).

Enter information on any quality assessments here.

Online presence & reviews

(this section is 30% of the final score)

- Social Media & Website = 20%
- Online Reviews = 10%

Provide links to your online presence, which will be reviewed and scored by judges in addition to your answers to the four questions. Other sites may also be checked. As part of this review, judges will be looking for evidence of your commitment to Accessible and Inclusive Tourism and Ethical, Responsible and Sustainable Tourism.

Enter the website URL here.

Accessibility & inclusivity information

Provide links to your accessibility and inclusivity information.

Enter the accessibility & inclusivity information URL here.

Sustainability information

Provide links to your sustainability information.

Enter the sustainability information URL here.

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

Enter the social media URL here.

Online review sites

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

Enter the online review URL 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).

Describe the unique selling points, strengths and essence of your business.

Judges will be looking for detailed examples of quality from across the business.

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

- Quality of your core product and customer experience
- 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
 - For example, this may include information provision, adapted customer experiences, accessible facilities for people with a range of impairments, employing disabled staff and staff disability awareness training
- Managing and improving environmental, social and economic impacts
 - For example, this may include a carbon reduction plan, energy and waste monitoring, green transport, community initiatives and responsible purchasing
- Innovative adaption, diversification and/ or resilience building

Enter answer to question 1 here.

Links to relevant supporting evidence online (optional):

It is not a requirement to submit supporting evidence; however, if you do, ensure that the focus is on the quality and relevancy of the evidence submitted rather than quantity.

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).

Explain your reasons for making the improvements and indicate which parts of the business are impacted.

Judges will be looking for examples of improvements from across the business.

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.)

- Promotional initiatives e.g. new website
- Improving the skills of you and your team
- Expansion, upgrade of facilities, enhancements to your services
- Facilities and welcome for people with a range of accessibility requirements
 - For example, this may include information provision, adapted customer experiences, accessible facilities for people with a range of impairments, employing disabled staff and staff disability awareness training
- Managing and improving environmental, social and economic impacts
 - For example, this may include a carbon reduction plan, energy and waste monitoring, green transport, community initiatives and responsible purchasing
- Innovative adaption, diversification and/ or resilience building
- Use of digital technologies, such as automated services, robotics and artificial intelligence (AI)
- Approximate date of improvement

Enter answer to question 2 here.

Links to relevant supporting evidence online (optional):

It is not a requirement to submit supporting evidence; however, if you do, ensure that the focus is on the quality and relevancy of the evidence submitted rather than quantity.

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).

Judges will be looking for detailed examples of successes from across the business. 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):

It is not a requirement to submit supporting evidence; however, if you do, ensure that the focus is on the quality and relevancy of the evidence submitted rather than quantity.

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).

Judges will be looking for detailed examples of future plans from across the business, with a clear rationale.

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 adaptation, diversification and resilience building
- Facilities and welcome for people with a range of accessibility requirements
 - For example, this may include information provision, adapted customer experiences, accessible facilities for people with a range of impairments, employing disabled staff and staff disability awareness training
- Managing and improving environmental, social and economic impacts
 - For example, this may include a carbon reduction plan, energy and waste monitoring, green transport, community initiatives and responsible purchasing
- 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
- Use of digital technologies, such as automated services, robotics and artificial intelligence (AI)

Enter answer to question 4 here.

Links to relevant supporting evidence online (optional):

It is not a requirement to submit supporting evidence; however, if you do, ensure that the focus is on the quality and relevancy of the evidence submitted rather than quantity.

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.