

CONGRATULATIONS

EXCELLENCE IN TOURISM AWARDS 2008

The cream of the West Midlands tourist industry were gathered at a prestigious awards ceremony last week for the Tourism West Midlands and Advantage West Midlands 'Excellence in Tourism Awards' held at the ICC in Birmingham.

Businesses and individuals from across the West Midlands region were presented with gold, silver and highly commended awards.

Shropshire was voted 'My Favourite Place' by the public, and the county won a total of 17 Awards. We would like to congratulate all the winners and in particular four of our members who walked away with awards on the night.

BDTA winners:

Severn Valley Railway

GOLD for 'Best Tourism Experience'

and

Award for 'Outstanding Contribution to Tourism by an Organisation'.

RAF Museum Cosford

GOLD for 'Access for All'.

Ironbridge Gorge Museums

'Best Cultural Experience' as voted for by the public

Highly Commended Award for 'Tourism Website of the Year'

Patshull Park Hotel

Highly Commended Award for 'Large Hotel/Townhouse of the Year'

Other Shropshire winners were:

Ludlow Food Centre - Gold (Taste of the Heart)

Goldstone Hall – Gold (Small Hotel/Townhouse)

Gareth Williams - Weston Park – Silver (Outstanding Customer Care)

Green Wood Centre – Silver (Sustainable Tourism)

Telford International Centre – Silver (Heart of England Business Tourism)

Bon Accueil – Silver (Self Catering Holiday of the Year)

Hollies Farm - Highly Commended (Sustainable Tourism)

Weston Park - Highly Commended (Taste of the Heart)

Tourism West Midlands Awards went to Weston Park for 'Festivals & Events' and Ludlow Food Festival for 'Food & Drink'.

NATIONAL TOURISM AWARDS 2009

Severn Valley Railway and the RAF Museum will as Gold award winners go forward to the National Tourism Awards next April where they will compete against other regional winners from across England.

PRESS RELEASES FROM THE WINNING MEMBERS



The cream of the West Midlands tourist industry were gathered at a prestigious awards ceremony this week night for the Tourism West Midlands and Advantage West Midlands 'Excellence in Tourism Awards' held at the ICC in Birmingham. Among the many winners from Shropshire were the Ironbridge Gorge Museums, who won Best Cultural Experience, as voted for by members of the public. They also carried away the Highly Commended award for their website, www.ironbridge.org.uk.

John Randel, IT Manager at Ironbridge Gorge Museums commented, "It was a real achievement to secure a place for our website on the short list and beat off competition from other tourism businesses. I am thrilled that the website has been awarded Highly Commended; www.ironbridge.org.uk gives a really good overview of historical, academic and tourist information and is regularly updated with fresh information about the many events that the museums run."

Steve Miller Chief Executive added, "While we knew that we had reached the finals in the website category it was a complete surprise that we had been nominated for Best Cultural Experience and we were all delighted when it was announced that we had won. The Ironbridge Gorge Museums are well known as a great day out, but this award shows that the public appreciate the very special nature of the Museum's work in maintaining and interpreting the remarkable Industrial Heritage of the area. Winning any award is always a great honour, but to win one voted for by the general public is especially gratifying, as it shows that all the hard work of the staff and volunteers is appreciated by our visitors."



LESS than a year ago, the Severn Valley Railway was 'on the ropes', the line between Kidderminster and Bridgnorth devastated by flood damage, and with incessant rain repeatedly disrupting the £3.5 million line rebuilding programme.

Now, following a remarkable turn-round in its fortunes this year, the 16-mile steam heritage has been voted 'top of the pops' in a clutch of special awards for its entertainment value, all-round excellence and its remarkable reconstruction campaign.

The railway has beaten allcomers to the gold medal for the 'Best Tourism Experience' in the Heart of England Excellence in Tourism awards - the 'Oscars' of the West Midlands tourism industry - and now goes forward to compete against other regional winners in next year's national finals.

Additionally, it has been deemed to have made the most Outstanding Contribution to Tourism in the West Midland's catchment area this year.

Elsewhere, the Severn Valley line has won the heritage railway industry's premier accolade - the 'Peter Manisty Award' - a discretionary award made by the Heritage Railway Association in consideration of the herculean efforts by SVR managers, staff, volunteers and contractors to reconstruct the line which in June last year was washed out in more than 40 places.

And it has also been confirmed as the winner of another major industry accolade for the way it went about 'getting back on its feet' following the summer flooding, though these details are currently embargoed to give the award promoters 'first shout' with publicity.

In taking the gold medal for 'Best Tourism Experience' in the Heart of England awards, the SVR beat off a powerful challenge from the eventual silver-medalist, Stourbridge International Festival of Glass and its many world-class exhibitions, and also the University of the Great Outdoors - a polished promotion by Herefordshire Council to promote activity holidays in the county, which took the 'highly commended' citation.

The gold award, in the form of a specially-commissioned, handcrafted Wedgwood trophy, was presented by West Midlands' media personalities Jo Malin (ITV Central) and Ed James (Heart FM), at Birmingham's International Convention Centre on Tuesday November 11th.

In the sphere of heritage railways where the Severn Valley has been a 'premiership' player for more than 35 years, the 'Peter Manisty Award' presented by the Heritage Railway Association is not an annual award, but one given only in cases of extraordinary achievement beyond 'normal' parameters.

The £3.5 million reconstruction of the devastated 12-mile section of the SVR between Bewdley and Bridgnorth between July 2007 and April 2008, was deemed by HRA Awards Chairman Ian Smith to be "without precedent in the field of railway preservation."

It was, he said "up there with the rebuilding of St. Pancras - a phenomenal achievement." The Awards Committee was "in awe" of the way in which the railway had organised itself and knuckled down to the task of rebuilding, simultaneously, at so many different 'washout' sites, and had set an example of leadership which had "galvanized the industry."

Commented SVR Marketing Manager John Leach: "At the time of the line rebuilding, we were so stretched there really wasn't time to think about much else but just getting on with it, and doing what we could to get the railway up and running again in the shortest possible time."

"For nine months we were able only to run a curtailed steam operation between

Kidderminster and Bewdley, and obviously revenues were well down as a result. But we've pulled it back, and in retrospect we're justifiably proud of our efforts, not just to restore the line, but to build it as a better, more robust railway than it has ever been. These awards have put the cherry on the cake for us."



Shropshire's very own Patshull Park Hotel, Golf & Country Club picked up a Highly Commended Award in this year's Heart of England Excellence in Tourism Awards. The hotel and country club went head to head with the Radisson SAS Hotel in Birmingham and the Menzies Welcombe Hotel in Warwickshire for the title of 'Large Hotel/Townhouse of the Year', at the awards held on the 11th November at the International Convention Centre in Birmingham.

Patshull Park, a previous winner of the 'Best Small Hotel' and 'Best Restaurant Service' in the Black Country Hotel and Tourism Awards, celebrated reaching the finals of the regional Heart of England Excellence in Tourism Awards after judges reported that the accommodation provider had significantly raised their game and have continued to demonstrate a high standard of customer service.

General Manager at Patshull Park, Stephen Kimbell said, "We were delighted to be in the finals of such a prestigious award. I am

immensely proud of the team here who work extremely hard 365 days of the year to ensure our guests have an enjoyable and memorable stay with us”.

The awards are supported by the Regional Development Agency Advantage West Midlands, through Tourism West Midlands (TWM) – the strategic tourism board. TWM Chairman, Brian Summers, said, “This year’s gala dinner and awards ceremony was the highlight of the region’s tourism calendar with a fresh look and local celebrity hosts - Ed James and Jo Malin from the ITV Central News team.” He added, “The evening was a wonderful opportunity to celebrate the very best in tourism and an industry that contributes £6 billion a year to the West Midland’s economy.”



The Royal Air Force Museum Cosford was awarded this week with the “Access for All Award” at the Tourism West Midlands Excellence Awards 2008 in recognition of its pioneering work in extending access to its multi-award winning Museum and National Cold War Exhibition.

The Museum beat off tough competition from Cadbury World and the Heritage Motor Centre who were also finalists in the ‘Access for All’ category. The Museum and exhibition were praised for their easy access for wheelchairs and the free loan of mobility scooters and tactile diagrams. The Museum was also commended on their prompt response to customer enquiries and the helpfulness of its staff.

Since the opening of the National Cold War Exhibition in February 2007, over 600,000 visitors have flooded through the gates of the Museum.

Alex Medhurst, General Manager says; “We are very pleased that the RAF Museum has been recognised for its achievements and the hard work of dedicated staff by being awarded with this very prestigious gold award for access for all”.

EVENTS

OLD VICARAGE ADVENTURE CENTRE Christmas parties

The centre is offering Christmas party packages with a difference until Christmas Day. If you are looking for festive celebrations with a difference, either with friends or work colleagues, the Centre is the perfect place to really let your hair down with an action packed morning or afternoon of adventure activities followed by a secret recipe mulled wine reception and a delicious meal created from locally sourced produce.

The half day package comprises 4 hours of tailor-made activities, shower and change, mulled wine reception, lunch or dinner.
Price is £45 per head
Call 01746 718436 to book

AGM

Don’t forget it is our AGM this Thursday 27 November. There will be 2 speakers from Severn Valley Railway and Trevithick 200, tea and coffee will be served and a bar is available. So hope to see you at the Punch Bowl, Ludlow Road, at 7.30pm.

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