



National Tourism Awards 2013
special edition

Celebrating excellence within
the tourism industry in Wales

Quality Wales
Issue 7, 2013



wales.gov.uk/tourism



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Foreword

Business Minister, Edwina Hart MBE CStJ AM



National Tourism
Awards for Wales

Gwobrau Twristiaeth
Cenedlaethol Cymru

I was delighted to be able to attend the National Tourism Awards 2013 and to meet some of winners and shortlisted businesses which undoubtedly demonstrated the diversity and the quality of the products that Wales has to offer.

With record entries for the awards, the winners of each category can be very proud of their achievement. What's more, the quality of those entries was outstanding. We are very fortunate in Wales to have a tourism sector of such high calibre. The dedication that these businesses show to quality and redeveloping their product to meet with customers needs in a difficult economic climate is to be applauded.

The tourism sector is worth £5 billion to the Welsh economy and employs more than 8% of the workforce and is one of our key growth markets. The National Tourism Awards play an important part in recognising the best that Wales has to offer and in

improving quality which is crucial if Wales' tourism industry is to achieve the 10% growth target which has been set in the new tourism strategy for Wales.

Congratulations to all the winners and the shortlisted businesses, we hope you reap the rewards of winning such a prestigious accolade.

Edwina Hart MBE CStJ AM

Minister for Economy, Science and Transport

If the most successful team of the world's largest and most award-winning PR agency worked on your doorstep, you'd talk to them.

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National Tourism Awards for Wales

Gwobrau Twristiaeth Cenedlaethol Cymru



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National Tourism Awards for Wales 2013



The 2013 National Tourism Awards for Wales proved to be the biggest competition of its kind. Organised by Visit Wales, working in partnership with the Wales Tourism Alliance and in commercial partnership with Quadrant Media & Communications, the awards showcase the very best of Wales' vibrant tourism industry.

From cosy B&Bs to luxurious country house mansions, from quiet walks along the Wales Coast Path to adrenalin rushes on a zip wire – Wales has it all and all set among some of the world's most stunning natural landscape.

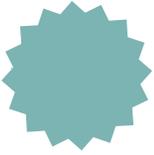
In a break with tradition this year the Best Place to Eat category was decided by public vote. A shortlist of some of Wales' finest places to eat – café, pub and restaurant – was offered for the public to decide where they liked to go.

The on-line voting campaign secured over 4,000 public votes – a very high number for a public vote and testimony to how passionate so many people feel about good food and drink.

Sponsors for this year's award include Conwy County Borough Council – Visit Conwy; Venue Cymru – the host venue; Afonwen; Eysys; Edwards Coach Holidays; the four regional tourism partnerships – Tourism Partnership North Wales; Tourism Partnership Mid Wales; South West Wales Tourism Partnership and Capital Region Tourism; Llechwedd Slate Caverns; Grŵp Llandrillo Menai; Wrap Cymru; Pontcysyllte World Heritage Site; Weber Shandwick, RMG – Research & Marketing Group; and Llanerch Vineyard & Cookery School.



BEST PLACE TO STAY – HOTEL



Winner

St Brides Spa Hotel



So close you can almost touch it – the sea that is – it gives guests to St Brides Spa Hotel a feeling of almost floating above the cliff tops, overlooking Saundersfoot harbour and its wide stretch of golden sand.

Andrew and Lindsey Evans and team run this hotel by the sea on the Wales Coast Path in Pembrokeshire that has gained a reputation for offering the perfect getaway or escape. Busy summer months see occupancy rates approaching 90 per cent with many of the guests coming for the luxurious spa treatments or simply to relax in what is one of the most beautiful corners of Wales.

“The answer is yes, now what was your question?” was how hotel marketing and front of house manager, Alison Fowler, described St Brides’ approach to caring for its guests, and they are certainly cared for in style.

With 34 en-suite rooms and six two-bedroomed apartments the hotel can cater for everyone – singles, couples, families and corporates. With five treatment rooms in the state-of-the-art spa, a fitness suite, two restaurants, a range of meeting and function suites all coupled with stunning natural views, St Brides is a place to indulge oneself.

Much of the hotel’s business comes from repeat bookings and the spa facilities are open to day visitors as well as staying guests.

Andrew and Lindsey took over the hotel in 2000 turning into today’s luxury resort set amid its dramatic coastal location.

Giving the hotel a true sense of place is the commitment to the support of Welsh artists, whose changing works can be seen at the hotel. Similarly attention is paid to the sourcing of local ingredients with the likes of fresh fish being sourced along the coast at Milford Haven, chicken from Fishguard and cheeses from Rosebush, near Narberth.

“We strive to make every visit to the hotel as perfect as possible”, said Alison. “That’s why almost 60 per cent of our business comes from regular customers. We spend a lot of effort on keeping in touch with those who stay with us and that certainly pays off. Making their stay extra special is what it is all about.”



www.stbridesspahotel.com

Runners Up Vale Resort Bodysgallen Hall & Spa



Vale Resort

This resort hotel & spa has established itself as one of Wales' premier event, conference and sporting venues as well as offering four-star accommodation for a range of leisure and business breaks.

Set in over 650 acres the 143 bedroomed hotel has two championship golf courses, Wales' largest spa and an award winning restaurant. Although seemingly nestled in deep countryside it is just a 15 minute drive from the capital city. www.vale-hotel.com



Bodysgallen Hall & Spa

You reach Bodysgallen Hotel & Spa at the end of a winding drive nestled in 200 acres of stunning parkland and formal walled gardens. Breathtaking views include the Snowdonia range and the medieval castle at Conwy.

Guests have the pick of 15 spacious bedrooms in the main hall, each sumptuously appointed, while the spa offers a variety of health and beauty treatments to hotel residents, day guests and Spa Club members alike.

This 17th century country house has been skilfully restored and boasts two restaurants – the imposing Dining Room, awarded three AA Rosettes, and the informal 1620 Bistro – both of which are committed to using local produce. www.bodysgallen.com





BEST PLACE TO STAY – GUEST ACCOMMODATION

Winner

Llwyn Helyg Country House

Situated in the heart of the beautiful Tywi Valley, midway between Carmarthen and Llandeilo, Llwyn Helyg is set amid three acres of landscaped gardens.



This modern property with classical features has been a labour of love for the owners over many years. From the demolition of a derelict house back in 1996 Llwyn Helyg has been lovingly rebuilt and formally opened for business in March 2013.

Over £1 million has been invested in making Llwyn Helyg the perfect place to stay and relax. Much of the rebuild work was carried out by owner Caron Jones – the third house he has self-built.

The quality of the accommodation together with the attention lavished on guests from Caron and his team quickly secured five star guest accommodation grading from Visit Wales and won the 2013 AA Guest Accommodation of the Year award for Wales.

Three luxurious rooms are on offer to guests – the Dryslwyn, Tywi and Paxton suites – complete with 42 inch flat screen TVs with DVD player and bespoke marble and granite furniture, while the marble or limestone fitted en-suites come with genuine Jacuzzi Whirlpool Baths.

“We enjoy meeting people”, said Caron, “and owning Llwyn Helyg gives us the opportunity to pursue our love of Wales, its music and art while opening our home to guests. We go the extra mile to ensure our guests’ complete comfort. For example we work closely with Y Polyn restaurant, which is close by, and are happy to deliver and pick-up our guests so that they can enjoy their evening meal without worrying about having to drive.”

Caron Jones – a proud Welshman – believes that while the comfort of his guests is paramount it is also important that Llwyn Helyg reflects the culture and traditions of Wales. As a result music and art lovers will not be disappointed in what this country house has to offer.

A busy programme of music events is supplemented by the “listening room” – a dedicated acoustically designed room with a vaulted ceiling featuring green oak ceiling trusses. To create the perfect listening experience the room contains what Caron refers to as one of the largest hi-fi systems commercially available, along with a fine collection of both vinyl and CDs.

www.llwynhelygcountryhouse.co.uk



Runners Up Nanteos Mansion Escape Boutique B&B

Escape Boutique B&B

Llandudno's first contemporary boutique bed and breakfast hotel came to fruition following a complete lifestyle change for owner Sam Nayar and wife Gaenor. Living in Cheshire and working in Birmingham Sam and his wife decided to escape to the Welsh coast and so the concept of their luxury B&B was born.

With annual occupancy rates in excess of 70 per cent Escape benefits from a great deal of repeat business – testimony to the quality of its rooms and guest comforts. The latest refurbishment uses lots of retro furniture giving Escape a unique look and feel. www.escapebandb.co.uk

Nanteos Mansion

Nestled in the heart of the countryside in Aberystwyth sits one of Wales' most luxurious new offerings, Nanteos Mansion. This five star graded country house opened its doors in May 2012 following a huge investment and restoration project to transform the mansion, built originally in 1739, back to its former glory.

Mark Rawlings-Lloyd, who joined as General Manager at the beginning of last year to oversee the restoration project and official opening of Nanteos, says the key to providing an unforgettable guest experience is down to a real focus on customer service, and letting the magic and history of the building speak for itself:

"We like to welcome our guests as we would welcome long-lost friends, whilst creating an environment where guests are able to escape and relax." He goes on to say "for us it's about providing a personal experience in an environment where you can escape and relax, so if our guests wish to kick off their shoes in front of the fire, read the paper or just enjoy a cup of tea and a scone, they are very welcome to."

What adds to the charm of Nanteos is the dedication and sense of pride taken by every one of the 30 staff. From the receptionist, to the gardener and the housekeeper, each one will stop to chat to

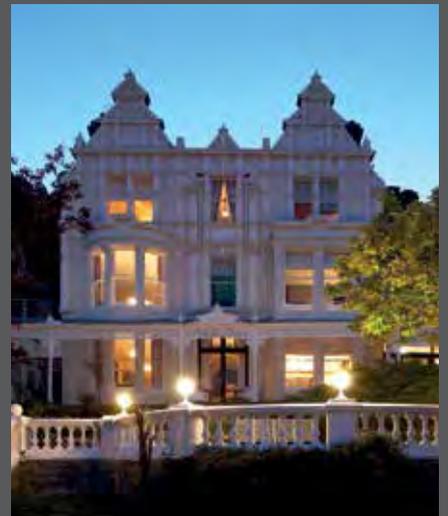
guests about their day and to talk to them about the history of the building:

"Our aim is to break down barriers between the property and our guests", says Mark.

After a day of relaxation, wandering around the magnificently well-kept grounds of the Mansion and unwinding, enjoy an evening of the finest food prepared by the very talented head chef, Nigel Jones. Nigel left his life as a young farmer behind to begin his career in cooking under the guidance and supervision of well-known chef Antony Worrall-Thompson. After learning a great deal from Antony, Nigel went on to run his own restaurant in New Quay and now runs the culinary team at Nanteos Mansion.

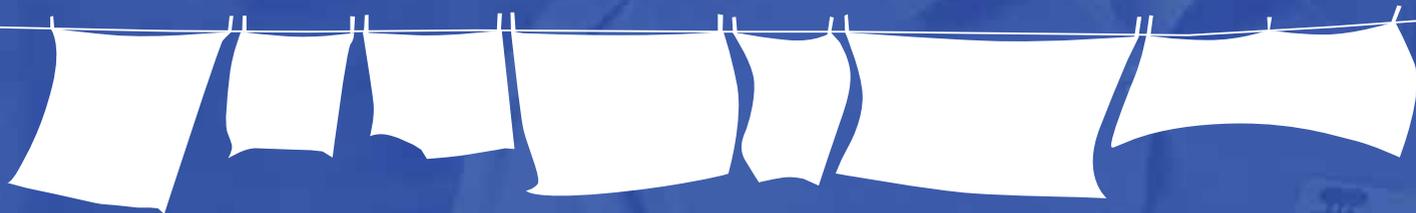
There are many function rooms available on site too, making Nanteos the ideal place to host corporate guests or a business event. You can even celebrate your wedding day here too and enjoy exclusive use of the estate for 24 hours.

Possibly one of Wales' best kept secrets, Nanteos Mansion is a true Georgian gem and is an experience not to be missed. Highly recommended as a quiet retreat where a warm welcome will be waiting for you. www.nanteos.com



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BEST PLACE TO STAY – SELF-CATERING



Winner

Plas Cadnant Hidden Gardens and Cottages

Seventeen years ago, Anthony Taverner, a dairy farmer with a love of plants, gardens and historic houses, discovered Plas Cadnant at Menai Bridge, Anglesey – at that time, a collection of derelict farm buildings, a walled garden and a completely overgrown network of paths in a hidden valley.



With enormous determination and focused effort, he set about rebuilding the Welsh longhouse and farm buildings which the previous owner had planned to demolish. Restored between 1997 and 2001, the buildings have now been transformed into luxury four and five star self-catering cottages, and income from that venture has supported his long term plan – to restore Plas Cadnant’s 10 acres of derelict gardens.

Anthony has achieved this largely single-handed, restoring walls and paths and planting thousands of special plants and trees, and today the Hidden Gardens are widely recognised for their outstanding quality and attract visitors from all over the UK and overseas.

Plas Cadnant now also offers a visitor centre and traditional tea room, and has been honoured with awards including the CPRW’s Rural Wales Award™ and has been shortlisted for Country Life’s Country Garden awards. Kay Laurie, Plas Cadnant’s Visitor Services and Marketing Manager, says they have always taken time to make sure that everything is to the highest standard.

“Visitors frequently comment that it is our attention to detail that they notice and

appreciate,” she says. “An architect specialising in the restoration of ancient buildings advised on the restoration of the cottages, for which materials such as lime mortar and traditional paints were used.

“We’ve furnished them with classic and antique furniture, textiles and paintings, and we have four poster and antique beds creating an intimate and special atmosphere.

“Our traditional tea room has classic Lloyd Loom chairs, we have silver tea pots and generous portions of homemade cakes, and local and fresh is a key part of our offer for the best visitor experience. Produce for the tea room is sourced locally where possible, cakes and scones are baked in our tea room kitchen, and we play Welsh harp music there and in our visitor centre – and also have a visiting musician who plays in the gardens.

“The people involved in the business really care about the cottages and gardens, and this passion for the place shines through.”

 www.plascadnant.co.uk



Runners Up Ffynnon Gron Lon Lodges



Ffynnon Gron

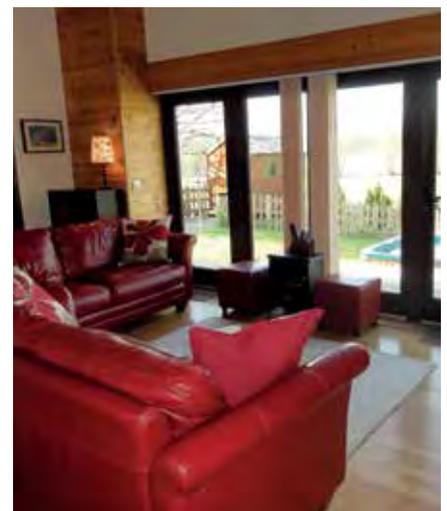
Ffynnon Gron, a self-catered Georgian country house near Hayscastle, sets out to provide guests with the best Pembrokeshire has to offer – including a local postman who's also a falconry expert and a leading sustainable farmer who allows guests to help with the milking.

The house caters for 16 people in eight beautiful bedrooms who have the run of a lounge with big open fireplace, a huge working kitchen and a well-equipped games room.
www.ffynnongron.com



Lon Lodges

Lon Lodges welcomed its first guests to its two holiday lodges in 2007. Over the years, links have been developed with businesses – pre-order options with local food and wine suppliers, local produce for their welcome packs – to make guests' visits as comfortable as possible, and nature trails are being built with the help of a local wildlife expert and a wildlife illustrator to produce an information guide and map for each.
www.lonlodges.co.uk





BEST PLACE TO STAY – HOLIDAY, TOURING OR CAMPING PARK

Winner The Plassey Leisure Park, Wrexham

Over 50 years, this outstanding holiday park has built a loyal clientele by giving visitors a warm and friendly welcome and ensuring there is always something new and fresh for them to discover.



“It’s about the service and warm welcome we give to customers,” says managing director John Brookshaw. “That, and constant re-investment to keep our offer fresh, is how we have grown from a small farm into what we are now.”

The Plassey Leisure Park has been lovingly developed by the Brookshaw family out of their former dairy farm’s land and its striking Edwardian buildings into a beautiful and popular destination, and this new award adds to many others the park has won over the years, including Practical Caravan UK’s Best Family Site 2011 and Overall UK Winner in both 2004 and 2007.

A favourite with families with young children and retired active couples alike, The Plassey is set in 247 acres of park and woodland in the Dee Valley, near the

villages of Overton and Bangor-On-Dee, with amenities including a five star touring caravan and holiday home park with deluxe touring pitches, a nine hole golf course, nature trails – used by local schools – cycle paths, fishing ponds, and conservation areas.

The attractive Edwardian farm buildings on the site have been converted to house a stylish craft and retail centre of 25 shops and businesses including a restaurant, a coffee shop and golf clubhouse, all of which use locally sourced Welsh produce – and real ales from the site’s very own Plassey Brewery!

It all helps to keep guests and day visitors coming back again and again. “We host food and craft fairs every summer and Christmas which promote local food and craft producers, and we have a demonstration kitchen where local chefs show off their skills,” says John.

“They’re free events and have proved to be extremely successful, with over 4,000 people attending per event.

“We keep adding to the park as well – recently we’ve installed 11 new gravel touring pitches and fully refurbished the restaurant washrooms with extensive use of oak and granite, no less, throughout.

“Future plans include two new castle themed children’s play areas with climbing frames, zip wires, slides and suspended bridges, more deluxe touring pitches and some glamping pods. It never stops!”

 www.plassey.com

Runners Up Quay West Holiday Park South Wales Caravan Park, Llwynifan Farm



▲ Quay West Holiday Park

A presence in New Quay for over 25 years, current operators Haven have kept the park fresh, taking advantage of its fantastic sea views by adding walks, a “Picnic and Play” sports field, a Wildlife Activity Centre – and even a tepee!

Community links are close, with local schools using their Wildlife Garden and leisure facilities off-peak, and local business encouraged to set up markets to offer visitors and residents something different. www.haven.com/parks/south-wales/quay-west/



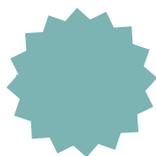
▲ South Wales Caravan Park, Llwynifan Farm

Twenty-five years ago, Cathrin and Hywel Davies’ parents thought holidaymakers might like to stay on their farm near Llanelli on their way to Pembrokeshire or Ireland. As it was, they liked Carmarthenshire so much, they wanted to stay put and experience the county.

Now brother and sister run the park, offering visitors a quiet and peaceful stay with stunning views of the surrounding countryside towards Swansea and the Black Mountains. www.southwalescaravansite.co.uk



BEST PLACE TO STAY –
HOSTELS, BUNKHOUSES AND ALTERNATIVE ACCOMMODATION



Winner

Cosy Under Canvas, Newchurch, Powys

There's glamping, and there's proper glamping. And when you get Cosy Under Canvas in deepest Powys, it's proper, proper glamping.



Proprietor Emma Price, who runs the business, set in four acres of beech woodland and wetland near Hay-on-Wye, on the edge of the Brecon Beacons National Park, says she tries to set herself apart from others and be slightly different.

“Our site lends itself to a relaxed, alternative break away from the trappings of a hectic life,” she says. “It’s perfect if you love the idea of a unique, low impact and environmentally friendly camping holiday with everything provided, plus that touch of luxury.

“One of our business objectives is to use alternative technology where possible. We have solar fairy lights in our communal areas, use wood fired showers and compost toilets and are in the process of designing a pedal

powered charging station for the charging of phones and our rechargeable lanterns.”

Cosy Under Canvas began with two units, a simple camp kitchen and solar camping showers and five years later has five units – Scandinavian style “tentipis” and geodesic domes – a substantial and well equipped kitchen, separate eating area, wood fired showers – and two sets of compost loos.

Emma’s most recent addition for the ultimate in glamping has been two wood fired hot tubs for the exclusive use of guests staying in the domes. “These really enhance the visitor experience and set us apart from our competition,” she says. “They’re a fabulous addition to the site.”

Emma has made the most of the site’s idyllic location. “We have built a nature trail

for kids, and are designing a ‘Playing in our woods’ booklet to accompany it with suggestions for games and activities that children can play in the woods, either on their own or with parents.

“There will be ideas on what can be collected around the woods, a guide to den building and stream dipping as well as feely boxes and reed weaving activities. It’s all aimed at providing them with a good eco-alternative to sitting in front of a computer screen!”

 www.cosyundercanvas.co.uk

Runners Up

Hidden Valley Yurts

Trellyn Woodland Camping



Hidden Valley Yurts

Number five in the UK's Cool Camping Guide, this luxury yurt glamping site on Lower Glyn Farm near Chepstow has immersed itself and its guests in the philosophy of sustainability since it opened in 2007.

Timber grown, felled and milled on the farm is used for all building work, solar power heats the water, and guests are offered a chance to meet and greet farm animals and learn about food production.

www.hiddenvalleyyurts.co.uk



Trellyn Woodland Camping

Kev and Claire Bird set up Trellyn Woodland Camping in Abercastle, Haverfordwest because they hated the traditional experience of camping in a field, with people cheek to cheek and no camp fires.

So visitors wanting to experience low impact camping and alternative accommodation in their yurts, geodesic domes and tipis will find themselves on possibly the perfect camp site: just 40 people spread throughout 16 acres – and camp fires encouraged.

www.trellyn.co.uk





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 - Cwblhau adnewyddu'r safle 2014
 - Lansiad Zip Llechwedd 2014
- The world famous Deep Mine Tour gets a great new script and fabulous lighting 2013
 - Antur Stiniog launch downhill bike trails 2013
 - Relaunch of historic tours as an hour long experience 2014
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 - Launch of Zip World Llechwedd 2014

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www.llechwedd-slate-caverns.co.uk

BEST EVENT

Winner

Abergavenny Food Festival



“We have grown over the years from modest beginnings, but keep close to our founding principles which underpin everything we do,” says Heather Myers, Chief Executive of Abergavenny Food Festival.



“So we celebrate the craft in food making in farm, factory and kitchen, the diversity of foods and traditions both in Wales and from other places, and the conviviality and sociability of eating and drinking whether with friends or strangers.”

Clearly, these are sound principles, as they have established the Festival as one of the best known in Wales, helping to raise the profile of the country, both in terms of its food story and its significance as a visitor destination.

The event caters to the widest possible demographic, with an emphasis on the family, and aims to be truly egalitarian, appealing to all ages, backgrounds and cultures. Visitors can engage at a number of levels – as a great day out with lots of fun, quality food shopping, entertainment and interactive workshops; or more in depth via masterclasses, tutored tastings, talks and food debates and conferences.

Guest performers reflect huge cultural diversity – British, Indian, Swedish, Jewish, Palestinian, Persian, Vietnamese, Ghanaian – and through their networks, the message goes out globally about the festival and the Welsh food and drink offer.

“Because of our geographical location, we are effectively ‘the gateway to Wales’ and as such have had success bringing both UK and overseas visitors into Wales for the first time,” says Heather. “A significant percentage return to stay longer and take in other aspects of the country’s landscape and heritage, which helps to challenge pre-conceptions about what Wales has to offer.” A reputation for being an innovator in the food festival world has resulted in an increasingly high profile for the event.

“We have a significant reputation with food journalists in the national press who attend the festival and help spread the word, and with journalists and film crews visiting from abroad we have had coverage from Australia to Scandinavia” says Heather.

“But we don’t ever sit back and think we’ve done it all. We are always looking to move forward and keep it all fresh and interesting.”



 www.abergavennyfoodfestival.com



Runners Up

World Alternative Games

Always Aim High Events Ltd / Slateman Triathlon



Always Aim High Events Ltd / Slateman Triathlon

Rated as one of the top five in the UK, The Slateman Triathlon showcases the beauty of Snowdonia, with competitors passing through iconic locations including Llyn Padarn, the Llanberis Pass and Capel Curig.

It puts Wales in the spotlight, with TV deals secured by organisers Always Aim High meaning it's watched by UK audiences on S4C and Channel 4, and by millions more in Asia, the Americas, Australasia, Africa and Europe on satellite channels. www.alwaysaimhighevents.com

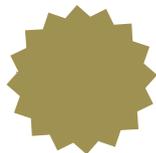
World Alternative Games

Inspired by the news that London would be hosting the Olympic Games in 2012, the Alternative World Events was set up to embrace the Corinthian Spirit, promote Wales and Llanwrtyd Wells, and to get the community involved. Over 2,000 competitors and nearly 5,000 spectators came together to celebrate fun and quirky outdoor events ranging from bog snorkelling and worm charming to chariot racing and wife-carrying championships.

www.worldalternativegames.co.uk



BEST VISITOR EXPERIENCE



Winner

Celtic Quest Coasteering



It was a school outward bound adventure that first got Cleopatra Browne realising that you could turn a pastime into a career. Following her dream eventually led to the launch of Celtic Quest Coasteering – picking up on a craze that was first developed in Pembrokeshire in the 1960s.

Portsmouth born Cleopatra went to school and college in Llanelli and that school visit to Pendine led to her working for a range of adventure companies in the Pembrokeshire area.

She set-up Celtic Quest in 2009 and with her team of eight instructors look after up to 100 visitors a day during the busy summer months.

Described as extreme rock pooling or the most fun you can have in a wetsuit, coasteering involves exploring the beautiful Pembrokeshire coast at sea level – diving, sliding and jumping into the sea.

With the company targeting families they have ensured that the sport is accessible to all – no matter what your competency in the water is. Activities are carefully geared to the individual's needs and abilities – that might

mean doing a gentle belly-flop into the water or diving in from about 35 feet.

Rain or shine the guys at Celtic Quest are ready for action – as Cleopatra says “you are going to get wet anyway, so why worry if it is raining! We have had people doing high dives on New Year’s Day with snow on the ground.”

The company has just started a marketing campaign aimed at businesses looking for an away day with a difference. “We have had a few companies join us and they have all realised what a great team building exercise it offers. So we are hoping to attract more corporate business in the future,” said Cleopatra.

The Celtic Quest team have taken an extreme sport and made it accessible to a wide audience – even non-swimmers can join in, safe in the knowledge that they will have an experienced instructor standing by.



 www.celticquestcoasteering.com

Runners Up Cardiff City FC Zip World



Cardiff City FC

Founded in 1899, Cardiff City's recent promotion to the Premier League has seen it manage crowds larger than ever before. The club recognised the importance of ensuring that away fans visiting their new stadium needed to have a good visitor experience and not be treated with the minimum of effort so often handed out.

City's away stand – the Croeso Stand – is now covered in iconic Welsh images giving visitors a sense of place. Each visiting fan is given a welcome pack giving them essential information about Wales and its capital city – leading to a 15 per cent increase in the attendance of away supporters.
www.cardiffcityfc.co.uk



Zip World

Based amid the stunning and awe-inspiring scenery of Snowdonia Zip World gives visitors the experience of "flying" at speeds of up to 100 mph and at some 500 feet above the ground. No experience or particular skills are required and full instruction is given throughout.

The Zip World Experience is located in the most dramatic of settings – Penrhyn Quarry – once the largest of its kind in the world. Now it houses the northern hemisphere's longest zip wire, offering breath-taking views as far as the Isle of Man. It is said to be the closest thing to sky diving without actually putting on a parachute.
www.zipworld.co.uk

MOST SUCCESSFUL TOURISM TEAM



Winner Trecco Bay Holiday Park

Trecco Bay Holiday Park is a long-established family holiday park and iconic in the local Welsh community – families today still speak affectionately of Miner’s Fortnight at Trecco Bay.

But things have changed a lot since then. In 1999, Trecco Bay was acquired by the current owners Parkdean, and the past 13 years have seen significant investment – £12 million in the past six years alone.

Existing facilities have been refurbished, and additions made including a brand new outdoor multi-sports pitch, an adventure golf course, a playground and water park, and a conservation and wildlife park created with the support of a local nature reserve.

It’s a big enterprise by any standards. Trecco Bay has some 2,000 caravans and contemporary lodge pitches, mostly for holiday hire but many under private ownership. In 2012, holiday hire alone generated 25,000 bookings, which equates to 105,000 bed nights.

All of which takes a big team to run. Staffing levels at peak times are in excess of 350, with the majority living locally. Their efforts result in over 250,000 happy visitors during a year, including day visitors, holiday-makers and owners – many of them regular repeat visitors – and a clutch of industry awards.

After six years of consistent growth, Trecco Bay had its best year last year, and is 10% ahead of that in the current season.

Parkdean regional director Karl Schmidtke says it’s not just the financial investment in

the product that is responsible for people continuing to visit such a long-established holiday park, but the big focus the company has on training.

“The two go hand in hand to create the success we’re currently enjoying,” he says. “Every staff member undertakes Walk This Way training when they first join us. The idea is that they put themselves in the customers’ shoes so that they treat them the way they would expect to be treated.

“In turn, our customers have an opportunity to nominate staff members if they feel they have gone the extra mile. If that nomination is accepted, the staff member is presented with a gold feet pin badge together with a certificate for outstanding customer service.

“In addition to this incentive approximately 100 of our staff have successfully taken part in the Welcome Host Gold Programme, and as such we are very proud of the quality service we provide.”

 www.parkdeanholidays.co.uk/wales-holidays/trecco-bay/trecco-bay-holiday-park.htm



Runners Up

Folly Farm Adventure Park and Zoo

Gwesty Cymru

Tre-Ysgawen Hall Country House Hotel and Spa



Folly Farm Adventure Park and Zoo

The “one big happy family” ethos has been the driver of Folly Farm’s success over the years, with staff encouraged through an open door approach to seek progression and try different roles within the business.

The family-run operation began 25 years ago, offering visitors the opportunity to see its dairy herd being milked. It’s now one of the top tourist attractions in Wales with close to 400,000 visitors each year.

www.folly-farm.co.uk



Gwesty Cymru

Every waiter or waitress at this contemporary Welsh restaurant with rooms in Aberystwyth is considered a potential hotel and restaurant manager, every kitchen porter a potential head chef.

It’s an approach which has seen staff members grow from 12 to 24 since 2007, and which has been key to the high quality of service which has kept customers coming back, and to turnover projections being exceeded year on year.

www.gwestycymru.com



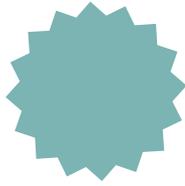
Tre-Ysgawen Hall Country House Hotel and Spa

With its 29 bedrooms and state-of-the-art spa complex, Tre-Ysgawen, on Anglesey, is considered to be one of the finest country house hotels in Wales.

As the only asset directly responsible for the success or failure of the business, the hotel recognises that investment in staff is more important than any material investment in the building, assessing and delivering training and actively encouraging sign up to NVQs.

www.treysgawen-hall.co.uk





BEST PLACE TO EAT – CAFÉ

Winner

The Old Station, Tintern

If you want a café with that step-back-in-time, get-away-from-it-all feeling, that Brief Encounter romance to that slower pace of life, then the Old Station tea room at Tintern is just the ticket.

Part of a 10 acre countryside visitor attraction, you know when you arrive that you are clearly at an old railway station, but a totally unspoilt one which steers away from anything too high tech.

Owned and managed by Monmouthshire County Council, the tea room is in what used to be the old Victorian railway waiting room, with other attractions on site including a signal box used for changing exhibitions, two restored railway carriages housing a gift shop, a Wye Valley exhibition, and a meeting room. There's also a one-mile riverside meadow walk and a campsite.

All the food is produced in the tiny ticket office kitchen from produce sourced from within 20 miles, and even the meals haven't escaped the railway theme as diners tuck into the Fireman's Shovel Breakfast or the Station Master's Platter.

Site manager John Sterry says the secret to The Old Station's appeal is the fact that all ages are catered for, and that attention is paid to those personal touches which make a visit memorable. "It's loved by everyone who comes," he says. "We make sure we have something for everyone, whether young or old, local or traveller.

"We try to look after everyone's needs – for example, we're visited by lots of cyclists on the Land's End to John O'Groats run, so we've developed an energy packed sandwich for them of peanut butter, honey and banana.

"The staff believe in a friendly welcome and all try to exceed expectation and to be helpful to those that need help, and as a result, the tea rooms are loved fondly by those who continually return to visit.

"They all say the genuine warmth of welcome and the lack of modernisation and tranquillity are what makes it so appealing."



www.facebook.com/oldstationintern



Runners Up The Bakers' Table, Talgarth Mill Quayside Tearoom, Lawrenny Quay



The Bakers' Table, Talgarth Mill

This bakery and café in the newly-renovated 19th century Talgarth Mill is a Community Interest Company established in July 2011 with local produce at the heart of its philosophy.

It serves morning and afternoon coffee and cakes, light lunches and wood-fired oven baked pizzas using flour from the adjacent mill for its bread and pastries, and sourcing meat, cheese and vegetarian foods from within eight miles of the town.

www.talgarthmill.com/cafe/



Quayside Tearoom, Lawrenny Quay

Refurbished from a derelict state in 2004 by proprietor Andy Knowles with his life savings, this characterful waterfront café has built a reputation on sourcing and serving the best local produce with good manners and great service.

"We offer simple and unfussy fayre, letting the food speak for itself," he says. "We have anything up to nine blackboard Specials a day. When they have sold out, that's it – they're sold out! That's when a Special really is a Special!"

www.quaysidelawrenny.co.uk



BEST PLACE TO EAT – PUB



Winner The Bell at Skenfrith

Nestling in the idyllic Monmouthshire countryside, next to a humpback bridge over a charming river, down the road from an ancient castle – what’s not to love about the idea of staying at The Bell at Skenfrith and sampling their delectable menus?



Remote but not too far away, this bastion of fine food and high-end accommodation has been offering visitors from near and far a warm welcome over the past 13 years.

As well as its location to die for – surrounded by fields, next to the River Monnow, and a stone’s throw from Skenfrith Castle – the five star restaurant with rooms has built a reputation through its food and a “legendary” wine list, and won some prestigious awards in the process, including Best Place to Stay in Wales, Michelin Pub of the Year, and the 2012 AA Wine Award for Wales and for the UK overall.

After taking the air on one of the recommended country walks around the pub (you can pop over to England for a quick walk if you want – two countries in one day!),

a sumptuous overnight beckons in one of The Bell’s 11 rooms which bear what have to be the most intriguing room names of any accommodation – so travellers from afar (American visitors are common) can rest weary legs and heads in Lough Arrow, Royal Wulff, Tups Indispensable, Whickham’s Fancy, or Heckham Peckham.

Janet Hutchings, who owns and runs the pub with husband William, says they are spoiled with the choice of superb produce available in the vicinity, of which head chef Kieran Gough makes full and joyous use.

“What draws people is the food – we are in an area blessed with wonderful local produce – fruit, meat and vegetables. We name suppliers on the menus, and on our suppliers’ board, which includes the local

villages they supply from. And we source based on how local a supplier is, the quality and the sustainability, not on price.

“On top of this, we started our own huge Victorian kitchen garden five years ago to reduce food miles even further, so we can have delicious fresh herbs, a good variety of vegetables, salad leaves, delicious spring and summer fruits and picking flowers for the restaurant tables – just by stepping outside the back door.

“It’s been such a success, we’ve now started fattening our own rare breed pigs to turn into cured meats as sausages and roasts as well.”



www.skenfrith.co.uk



Runners Up The Stackpole Inn Bryn Tyrch Inn



◀ The Stackpole Inn

The Stackpole Inn makes the most of its position on the beautiful Pembrokeshire coastal path. Staff are local, and trained to direct and advise on local walks and places of interest. However, with an attractive pub garden and a bowl of cawl or a pint of Welsh beer on offer, and an emphasis on local produce and fine food generally, the temptation to stay put must be overwhelming!
www.stackpoleinn.co.uk

Bryn Tyrch Inn

A commitment to cook food that people don't have the time to cook at home – like confit of Welsh beef shin or Menai mussels in Thai dressing – singles out this inn with rooms in the heart of Snowdonia.

That, and an insistence on using local and natural ingredients in their high-quality bistro food has helped take the Bryn Tyrch from a no star inn to a four star inn in five years.

www.bryntyrrchinn.co.uk





BEST PLACE TO EAT – RESTAURANT – SMALL

Winner

Llansantffraed Court Country House Hotel & Restaurant

Llansantffraed Court, near Abergavenny, is a Grade 2 listed country house hotel set in 20 acres of mature parkland, where owner Mike Morgan and his team provide excellent quality of service and customer care for their guests.

The Court Restaurant has retained two AA rosettes for 17 consecutive years, while the cellar has been shortlisted for AA Wine List of the Year for the last seven. About 80 per cent of kitchen produced is sourced within 15 miles of the hotel. Fresh fruit, herbs and vegetables are provided by the hotel's own walled kitchen garden where 54 varieties of vegetables, 28 herbs and 22 fruits are grown.

The commitment to sourcing local food works through to the dining room and lounge menus where diners are informed of the provenance of their meal.

The menu often changes twice a day to reflect what is best in the market and garden or delivered by a network of foragers, while an a la carte menu, that evolves with the seasons, allows guests to just eat one course if they wish.

Two 6 and 9 course tasting menus offer diners a chance to experience the kitchen's skills and try a wide range of Monmouthshire produce. Spare fresh produce from the garden is offered for sale as is the restaurant's own marmalade, jam, chutney and pickle.

"Our customers are invariably very knowledgeable about the importance of local sourcing and food miles, so we are completely honest and open about our food buying

policy," said Mike Morgan.

"It's rewarding to be able to offer ingredients measured in Food Metres, rather than Food Miles. Our chef undertakes demos at local events and festivals, we work with a local primary school to introduce the children to healthy real food, and we run gourmet wine tasting nights featuring exclusively Monmouthshire ingredients. Breakfast is taken seriously, for example our sausages are made locally to our own unique recipe, we offer Wye Valley smoked salmon with delicious scrambled eggs, proper dry cured bacon and at least two single varieties of apple juice, made just a few miles away."

The support for local businesses continues through to the very many paintings and works of art that can be seen throughout the restaurant and the hotel. Local artists are featured with their works offered for sale.

Despite their obvious success Mike Morgan sees the importance of continual improvement. "We have planning permission for a cookery school, an additional informal brasserie dining area, and four more bedrooms," he said.

 www.llch.co.uk



Runner Up Falcondale Hotel & Restaurant



Falcondale Hotel & Restaurant

Chris and Lisa Hutton bought The Falcondale Hotel and Restaurant in August 2000, and have refurbished the interior to a high standard, as well as enhancing the mature gardens and woodland. In 2007, the AA awarded the restaurant's first 2 rosettes, which has been maintained every year since.

The majority of the restaurant's food is sourced from suppliers and producers within the counties of Ceredigion, Carmarthenshire and Pembrokeshire. The menu gives customers details on provenance and serving staff are also well briefed and able to talk about the food and where it comes from. Sense of place is added to with bilingual menus and a bilingual website, which is under construction.

Chris, Lisa and their team aim for low food miles and a rural plan has been developed which includes the development of a kitchen herb garden.

www.thefalcondale.co.uk



BEST PLACE TO EAT – RESTAURANT – LARGE



Winner Signatures Restaurant

When Louise Williams and her chef husband Jimmy opened their Signatures restaurant almost five years ago they could have had no hint just how popular it would become. Based within the Aberconwy Resort in north Wales, Signatures is a fine dining restaurant which skilfully combines city chic with true Welsh hospitality.



Within three years of opening they featured in the Michelin Guide and now run one of the most popular restaurants in the area, inspired by the couple's Welsh heritage and the rich culture which surrounds them.

The exciting menu is beautifully complemented by the restaurant's stunning location with a backdrop of Snowdonia and views across to the Great Orme.

All the meat, vegetables and fish are from within a 10 mile radius with the main suppliers all being the very best local companies – even wines are locally sourced. A number of staff are Welsh speaking and the restaurant is fully wheelchair accessible.

Customer interest is maintained through a range of promotions and themed evenings as well as the Signature Club, now with over 3,000 members, which provides special monthly discounts and offers. Chef Jimmy also spends time to chat to regulars finding out their likes and dislikes in order to adjust the menu accordingly.

Dishes include such mouth-watering delights as bacon confit with homemade black pudding on a butterbean puree, served with a soft-boiled quail's egg and hollandaise sauce; or one of the chef's signature dishes of breast of pigeon on a sweet potato puree, served with sage gnocchi and spicy sausage.

Said Louise: "Customer satisfaction is paramount and so we pride ourselves on continued and never ending improvement and in understanding our customer needs and wants. We encourage feedback all the time. We have a theatre style kitchen which means the customers can watch the food being cooked. We offer customer feedback forms on the tables and encourage customers to visit Trip Advisor and our Facebook page to write a review and we take all feedback very seriously."

 www.signaturesrestaurant.co.uk



Runner Up The Grove



The Grove

The creative menus at the Grove restaurant perfectly complement the luxurious rooms in this country hotel on the edge of Narberth.

Owners Neil Kedward and Zoe Agar are committed to providing the very best food, sourced sustainably and, wherever possible, locally. The likes of Pembrokeshire salt marsh lamb, pork from Yerboston Farm three miles away and locally caught fish are supplemented with fresh vegetables and herbs from the Grove's two acre kitchen garden and fresh honey from the restaurant's own bee hives.

Their commitment to sense of place is further enhanced through their display of local art and craft, including works from local artists such as John Knapp Fisher and Gilliam McDonald. www.thegrove-narberth.co.uk



Ar ran Uwch Rhanbarth
Twristiaeth hoffwn longyfarch
holl ennillwyr Gwobrau
Twristiaeth 2013!

On behalf of Capital Region
Tourism, we would like to
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UWCH RANBARTH TWURISTIAETH

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Y Cymoedd

Calon ac Enid Cymru



The Valleys

Heart and Soul of Wales

Dylan Thomas

dylanthomas100.org

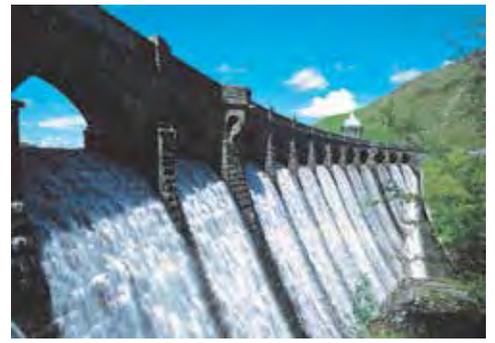
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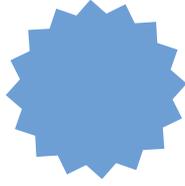





TOURISM PARTNERSHIP North Wales



PARTNERIAETH TWRISTIAETH Gogledd Cymru



REGIONAL TOURISM – CAPITAL REGION

Winner Welsh Whisky Company

The Penderyn Distillery Visitor Centre is a part of the Welsh Whisky Company, home of Penderyn Whisky – the only single malt whisky produced in Wales.

Hourly guided tours, seven days a week, are aimed at educating visitors about the ancient art of distilling, offering an outline of the differences between whisky making in Wales and other major producers in Scotland, Ireland and the bourbon industry of Kentucky.

Tours also cover the history of whisky making in Wales, the importance of water and wood to whisky maturation, seeing the distillery at work (including its bottling line) and tastings of Penderyn products.

The attraction is complemented by a shop selling Penderyn branded products and a range of local produce and books. For the whisky enthusiasts the Visitor Centre also offers whisky Masterclasses almost every weekend of the year.

The purpose built visitor centre involved an investment £850,000 and won a Regional Architecture Award from the Royal Institute of British Architects in 2009.

The Distillery is privately owned and a substantial contributing factor to its success is the passion of the people who run it. This passion is apparent in the delivery of the tour guides and is reflected in the warm, positive feedback received from visitors.

A sense of place is very evident throughout the centre from the brand

image built on the Welsh words Aur Cymru (Welsh Gold) through to the very many special products which have been produced to celebrate Welsh red letter days, such as historical events, Grand Slams and most recently Cardiff and Swansea football clubs' promotion to the Premier League. To ensure that visitors get the best out of their visit, the centre staff are trained Community Tourism Ambassadors with an in-depth knowledge of the local area.

Although the distillery is an adult-oriented attraction, special slots are set aside in the diary for visits by schools, colleges and groups with hearing difficulties or visual impairments. The number of overseas visitors is steadily increasing and tours are provided in French, German, Italian, Lithuanian and Russian as well as the national languages.

Launched on St David's Day in 2004 Penderyn Whisky has been widely acclaimed by renowned experts and ordinary consumers alike.

 www.welsh-whisky.co.uk



Runner Up Doctor Who Experience



Doctor Who Experience

The Doctor Who Experience opened in Cardiff Bay in 2012 and is run by the Live Events team at BBC Worldwide. It is just yards away from BBC's Roath Lock studios where the TV series is produced.

The attraction offers fans of all ages a unique way to enter into the Doctor Who universe. Profits generated by the Experience are reinvested back into the programme's production.

The use of 3D film, specially filmed sequences with key Doctor Who characters and theatrical effects ensures that visitors are taken on an exciting adventure. For Doctor Who fans there is also a detailed exhibition of costumes and characters.

www.doctorwhoexperience.com





REGIONAL TOURISM – SOUTH WEST WALES

Winner

Dan yr Ogof, The National Showcaves Centre for Wales

Dan yr Ogof, which celebrated its centenary in 2012, is a privately-run, family operation, which is still owned by descendants of the Morgan brothers who were farmers, and the original explorers of the Showcaves.



Designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and National Nature Reserve the caves employ 12 full-time members of staff and up to 50 part-time during the busy months.

A 67kw hydro-electric plant using the water from the Showcaves has recently been installed, which is then returned to the River Llynfell. Together with a bank of solar panels enough electricity is produced to make the site self-sufficient and carbon neutral.

The company has also recently planted over 80,000 broad leaved trees, which during their life span of 100 years will capture over 80,000 tons of carbon dioxide. Large lakes have also been built to increase the number of wetland birds and wild plants and flowers have been planted.

The use of the Welsh language is an important part of the visitor experience with a number of staff being Welsh speakers and the language being used in the audio commentaries available to visitors. The attraction is a great supporter of the local community from where it gets the majority of its staff and works closely with the local secondary schools who are able to supply most of the part-time workers – many of whom go on to develop careers in the tourism industry. In fact four of the Showcaves directors are local and started as part-time workers.

Regular investment, enthusiasm and a commitment to constantly looking to improve the visitor experience has been the key to the long-term success of the Showcaves.

Said James Price, director: “The Showcaves have just been completely re-lit, opening up new areas for the visitor to explore – the latest in sodium lamps, which

reduces power consumption, has been used in Cathedral Cave. We have 10 distinct visitor experiences and as well as the caves we have over 220 life-sized dinosaur models on site. In line with customer expectations and scientific discoveries these models are constantly re-assessed and added to as required. We are one of the largest Dinosaur Parks in the world.”

“At our Shire Horse Centre we are developing a breeding programme; this has had a positive impact on Shire Horse breeding lines as well as introducing foals to our site – a hugely popular addition with our visitors. We are hoping to train Shires to work on farms, and in forestry locations.”

Dan yr Ogof successfully links the past with the present and is quick to embrace new technology. An interpretation model is currently being built for the site for use on iPhones and tablets and QR codes are being introduced to enable visitors to easily access websites and social media outlets.



www.showcaves.co.uk

Runner Up Llwyn Helyg Country House



Llwyn Helyg Country House

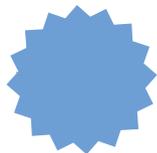
Llwyn Helyg was only formally opened to guests in early 2013, but has already received five star Visit Wales and AA grading. The aim of owners Caron and Fiona Jones is to offer a destination for, not only regular tourists, but also lovers of music and the arts.

This is a B&B with a distinct difference – a dedicated 'listening room' housing the largest and most exotic hi-fi system in the country is available to guests, while music evenings and themed music breaks are held regularly.

There is also a fully equipped treatment room and Fiona is a fully qualified holistic and clinical therapist. www.llwynhelygcountryhouse.co.uk



REGIONAL TOURISM – MID WALES



Winner Y Talbot



Y Talbot has been at the heart of Tregaron for over 250 years and although it has undergone extensive renovation, at its heart it remains a traditional inn – serving great food and drink and offering comfortable and welcoming accommodation.

This Grade 2 listed building was originally a drovers inn and remains an important meeting place for locals and visitors alike.

Food is freshly cooked using top quality local ingredients, while Welsh cask ales and ciders using breweries within 40 miles of Y Talbot are also on offer. Y Talbot was named CAMRA West Wales Pub of the Year in 2012 and features in the Good Beer Guide and the AA Pub Guide.

The commitment to local produce is very important to owner Michael Taylor and his team. Food miles are minimised by careful sourcing and a lot of hard work ensuring that they keep in touch with local suppliers with most of the restaurant's meat being raised, sent to market and butchered within five miles of the town. Guests have the choice of eating either in the cosy pub or in the restaurant – Y Long Room.

There are a range of public areas with a lounge and study to complement the historic pub and restaurant. Further comfortable seating areas are provided outside with an attractive terrace beer garden. A cycle store and drying room provide all weather facilities and add to the comfort of guests. The extensive renovation of the property has also provided the opportunity to significantly improve accessibility.

Promotion of the Welsh language at Y Talbot is achieved through bilingual signage, website and literature, encouraging non-Welsh speaking employees to learn the language, organising weekly Welsh learning classes and hosting Welsh medium events for local clubs and societies.



www.ytalbot.com

Runner Up Bwlch Nant yr Arian



Bwlch Nant yr Arian

Bwlch Nant yr Arian forest visitor centre is part of Natural Resources Wales who manage the Welsh Government Woodland Estate on behalf of the people of Wales.

Activities on site include an all ability circular trail, red kite feeding, two outstanding way marked walks, play areas for different ages, world class mountain bike trails, an orienteering course and a calendar of seasonal public events. The visitor centre contains a café serving local and healthy produce and a gift shop that sells many local items.

The most recent development has been that of a retail area and information desk within the visitor centre. Y Siop has been developed in order to showcase some of the best retail produce the area has to offer. This includes an extensive range of local food and drink.

www.forestry.gov.uk/bwlchnantyrarian

REGIONAL TOURISM – NORTH WALES



Winner

Ffestiniog & Welsh Highland Railways

At some 40 miles in length the two lines of the Ffestiniog and Welsh Highland Railway form the longest heritage railway in the UK, with 85 full-time employees and 1,000 volunteers keeping everything on track!



The Ffestiniog line takes passengers on a 13½ mile journey from the harbour in Porthmadog to the slate-quarrying town of Blaenau Ffestiniog and has been operating since the 1830s.

The Welsh Highland Railway is Snowdonia's newest railway, re-opened in 2011. Trains start a spectacular 25 mile scenic journey from beneath the castle walls at Caernarfon. The trains – hauled by the world's most powerful narrow gauge steam locomotives – climb from sea level to over 650ft on the foothills of Snowdon, before zigzagging dramatically down the steep hillside to reach Beddgelert, nestling in the heart of the National Park, then through the magnificent Aberglaslyn Pass and on to Porthmadog.

The rebuilding of the Welsh Highland Railway took more than 10 years and cost £28 million – the majority of which was raised through fundraising efforts, with some £12.5 million in grant funding from the Welsh Government, the EU and the Millennium Lottery Fund.

It reinstated a rail link lost for 70 years and is proving increasingly popular with visitors from around the world. Far from diverting traffic from the Ffestiniog Railway, both lines have benefitted from the huge amount of interest generated by the UK's biggest ever heritage railway project.

Some 300,000 passengers a year travel the two lines, passing through stunning scenery in this most beautiful part of Wales. The company is committed to promoting

its Welsh heritage and to help with sense of place local produce is used wherever possible in the cafés, bars and on train catering. Many of the staff are Welsh speakers and the company abides by a Welsh language policy, which among other things, sees much of the company literature produced bilingually.

The scale of the operation generates huge benefits for the area. Research at Bangor University shows that the company generates £25 million and creates 400 jobs throughout Gwynedd area each year.

 www.festrail.co.uk

Runner Up National Slate Museum



◀ National Slate Museum

The world's only national slate museum opened in 1972, just three years after the closure of the Dinorwig Slate Quarry whose Victorian engineering workshops provide the dramatic location for what is also the headquarters of National Museum Wales.

Sitting in the beautiful Padarn Country Park, Llanberis, the museum attracts over 140,000 visitors annually. Although a national museum, telling the story of the slate industry in Wales, it also tells a very local story – of the Dinorwig Slate Quarry and the people from the village of Llanberis and nearby communities, who quarried it. www.museumwales.ac.uk





Theatre



Events



Restaurant

North Wales' premier venue for entertainment and events, Venue Cymru provides the very best in live professional performance all year round including: West End Musicals, Ballet, Drama, Dance, Comedy, Pantomime and Kids' Shows.

With more than 7000 square metres of conference and exhibition space and with banqueting for up to 1000 people, Venue Cymru's professional conference and events facilities attract more than 1000 events every year.

The sumptuous Y Review restaurant offers stunning sea views and is open for lunch and delicious pre-show meals.



Phone:

Tickets: 01492 872000
Events: 01492 879771
Y Review : 01492 873641

Visit:

www.venuecymru.co.uk



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Grŵp Llandrillo Menai are delighted to sponsor the 2013 National Tourism Awards for Wales.

All of our tourism provision is focused upon developing the knowledge, skills and employability of our learners to meet the needs of employers locally, regionally and beyond.

The Grŵp, in partnership with Cardiff Metropolitan University, is recognised as the leading provider of professional tourist guiding training in the UK.

From entry level to honour degrees, the Grŵp aims to make the ambitions of our learners a reality.

For further information please contact Nia Jones, Programme Area Manager for Travel & Tourism on **01492 546 666 ext. 249** or email **n.jones@gllm.ac.uk**



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Designated as a **UNESCO World Heritage Site** in 2009

11-Miles of historic canal
stretching through outstanding scenery in **North Wales**
and into the Shropshire Borderlands



Proud to be part of the
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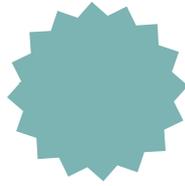


Pontcysyllte.Aqueduct

www.pontcysyllte-aqueduct.co.uk



@Pontcysyllte



BUSINESS TOURISM OPERATOR AWARD

Winner

Radisson Blu Hotel, Cardiff

As a national chain, putting down Welsh roots has been at the heart of The Radisson Blu Hotel, Cardiff's success over the past four years.



The 215 room, 4 star hotel in the city centre is managed by the Carlson Rezidor Hotel Group, and was the first Radisson Blu Hotel to come to Wales. Opened in January 2011, it's the tallest hotel in Cardiff with 21 floors, offering guests panoramic views of the city centre, the Bay and across the Channel.

Business guests are well catered for too, with six flexible state-of-the-art meeting rooms with conference and event facilities for up to 300 people.

The hotel has worked hard to develop strong, meaningful relationships with businesses, charities, tourism bodies, the media, the local government and the Welsh Government since announcing its intention to develop a Cardiff presence in 2009.

Staff have close relationships with the Cardiff Tourism Network, supporting them at events, and hosting business delegates and guests of the organisation who have

travelled from outside of Wales to visit Cardiff. Similarly with Visit Wales, the hotel has hosted overseas tour operators on familiarisation trips helping to promote Cardiff and south Wales as a tourist destination.

Locally, The Radisson Blu Hotel has a commercial agreement with Cardiff City FC, making it the hotel of choice for the Club. It hosts the Club's representatives during home games and offers fans special offers and discounts throughout the season. In celebration of the Club's recent promotion to the Premier League, the hotel commissioned Britain's Got Talent food artist Nathan Wyburn to create pizza portraits of owner Vincent Tan, manager Malky Mackay and captain Mark Hudson.

They have teamed up with St David's Shopping Centre on several occasions for joint initiatives and to support their annual calendar of events, and are involved with a

number of local charities including Barnardo's Cymru and Variety Wales. A recent event in support of the Noah's Ark Appeal helped to raise over £10,000 for the worthwhile cause.

And if any further proof was needed of the hotel's commitment to Wales, it can be found, of course, in its food and drink, with the use of Welsh produce where possible in its Italian restaurant, and the recent partnering with Otley Brewing Company, a stylish brand of craft beers from Pontypridd. To launch this partnership, the hotel hosted a beer and food matching evening attended by former rugby players, food bloggers, journalists and corporate guests.

 www.radissonblu.co.uk/hotel-cardiff

Runners Up Venue Cymru Bluestone National Park Resort



Bluestone National Park Resort

Over the past five years, Bluestone has grown and developed into a significant tourist destination and attraction in Wales, but it still prides itself on being a local business.

The local and regional community it operates in are pivotal to the business, from employment and procurement, to providing valuable services for the local community to enjoy, and its 400 staff are encouraged on a professional and personal level to immerse themselves into the community through social, charitable and work aspects. www.bluestonewales.com



Venue Cymru

A well established events venue in Llandudno, Venue Cymru nonetheless recognises that it is essential to grow, develop and diversify to remain strong and current during difficult economic times.

As well as investing millions in its facilities over the years, they have now begun organising events, festivals and trade shows themselves, offering services to the business tourism market, and providing a registration service for events elsewhere as a way of developing its business. www.venuecymru.co.uk



YOUNG TOURISM ENTREPRENEUR



Winner

Phil Scott and Tom Ashwell, RibRide

Working with social media and a passionate commitment to linking with other local businesses to enhance their offer are two of the hallmarks of how entrepreneurs Phil Scott and Tom Ashwell have developed a highly successful and energetic Anglesey business.



The pair run RibRide, taking over 5,000 people a year on adventure boat tours on the Menai Strait from locations around north Wales in high-performance rigid inflatables.

“We started in June 2005 with a single used boat, a few leaflets and no idea if anyone would show up,” Phil recalls. “Our first summer was spent mostly sat on the dock waiting and pouncing on the odd, unwitting passer-by.”

“Skip forward to 2013, and we now have a fleet of four new boats, two park-and-launch boat yards, five full-time staff, two part-time staff and up to 10 self-employed workers carrying happy clients all year round.”

So how has RibRide sailed to such success?

“Our tours provide an insight into the history, sociology, geography and biology of the area, working with the local community and partner businesses,” says Phil. “For example, we created a Sustainable Seafood programme for trainee chefs at The Oyster Catcher, a local restaurant with a chef cadet training programme for underprivileged youngsters. Partnering with Anglesey Sea Zoo,

Dylan’s seafood restaurant and Menter Môn, we showed the cadets what is taken from the sea, and how it can be used sustainably.” Initiatives such as these – they also offer local businesses free places for staff, and trips as prizes for community raffles – greatly enhance how RibRide is viewed by local businesses and the wider community. The goodwill created is a major part of their success.

So too is the role that social media plays. At the start of 2011, RibRide opened a Facebook site, and invested in cameras and video equipment for the boats. It worked a treat – customers uploaded images of themselves having a great a time. “We receive literally hundreds of great comments on Facebook, and our Trip Advisor reviews position us as the highest rated tour in north Wales,” says Phil.

“Our focus as a business is to consistently exceed client expectation, and working with others is the key to long term success. Be sure of your own businesses, then reach out to see how you can benefit others, and the goodwill will come back more than two fold.”



 www.ribride.co.uk

Runners Up

Jethro Moore – Adventure Beyond

Ryan Davies – Llanerch Vineyard



▲ Ryan Davies – Llanerch Vineyard

It's sheer enthusiasm that's driven Ryan Davies since the one-time geotechnical engineer took the plunge and became the owner of Llanerch Vineyard two years ago.

The Visit Wales and AA five star graded boutique hotel has 10 bedrooms, a bistro and an a la carte restaurant, a cookery school run by Angela Gray and a gift shop. "It's hard work, but I really enjoy it. I wake up every each day excited – there's always a challenge," says Ryan. www.llanerch-vineyard.co.uk



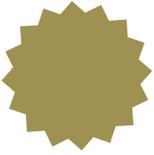
▲ Jethro Moore – Adventure Beyond

Setting up Adventure Beyond 15 years ago in Llandysul "because there was nothing else on offer", Jethro Moore has built a highly successful company running multi-activities such as canoeing, white water rafting, hill walking and coasteering in west Wales and all over the UK.

Working with up to 30 staff in peak season, Jethro and his team aim to pass on their knowledge to clients about the environment, heritage, flora and fauna as well as giving them a good time. www.adventurebeyond.co.uk



TECHNOLOGY IN TOURISM



Winner Celtic Quest Coasteering



Offering coasteering to all ages and abilities Celtic Quest has brought “extreme” adventure to the masses, enabling people to take part in an adrenaline-rush activity at their own level and speed.

Owner Cleopatra Browne and her team are passionate about what they do and about Wales and are delighted to show their very many visitors some of world’s most beautiful and dramatic landscape as they dive, slip and slide through Pembrokeshire’s coastal waters.

Over 80 per cent of Celtic Quest’s clients are from outside Wales; including England, Europe, USA, Australia and New Zealand.

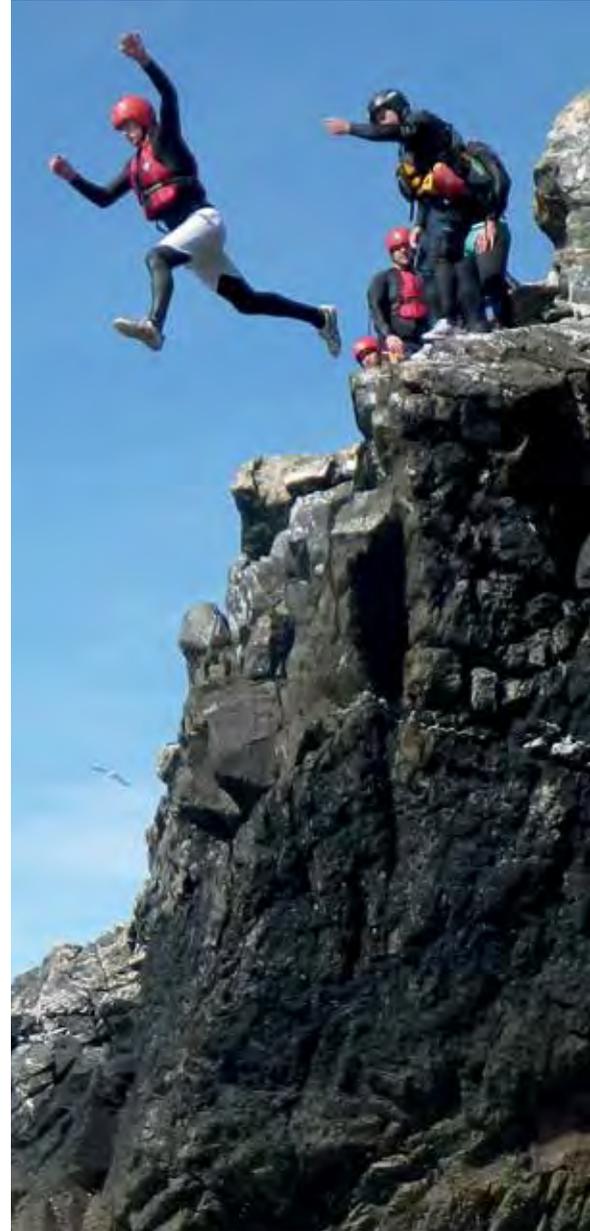
Marketing efforts direct visitors to the company website. Originally intended to act as an online brochure, it has now developed from its initial five pages into a large informative and interactive tool. Embracing current trends such as QR codes and social media, Celtic Quest has seen an increase in mobile users visiting the website and they now make up almost a third of all visits.

Since the activities offered by the company have such a high visual impact a lot of effort goes into marketing on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and Flickr.

The use of waterproof cameras and a Macbook Pro while out and about, enables Cleopatra and her team to post a range of images on the website in real time and supply clients with stunning images and a lasting reminder of their adventure.

Back in January 2012 Celtic Quest designed a simple QR code that directed the user to YouTube videos and dubbed the campaign Gorilla Marketing because it was used as a social media stunt. Dressed as gorillas and armed with hundreds of QR code stickers, Cleopatra and her team hit the streets of Pembrokeshire, visiting hundreds of locations.

The campaign was so successful that QR codes are now on all marketing materials, linking through to a video. As Cleopatra says: “One day Celtic Quest will be the Coca Cola of coasteering!” We can’t wait.



 www.celticquestcoasteering.com

Runners Up The Celtic Manor Your Tourism Community Limited

Your Tourism
Community



Your Tourism Community Limited

Your Tourism Community (YTC) is dedicated to the creation of online partnership tourism marketing tools. The latest project is TiM – a tourism map creation system, enabling tourism businesses to promote themselves and other businesses operating in the same area.

The company believes in developing software that is easy to use – and which does not depend on the users IT skills in order to be useful.

TiM works on mobiles with over 50 per cent of users accessing TiM from such devices. The team at YTC has received support from the Visit Wales Digital Tourism Business Programme. www.timwales.co.uk



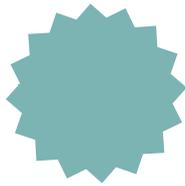
The Celtic Manor

Host venue for The Ryder Cup in 2010, the five star Celtic Manor Resort is set in more than 2,000 acres of panoramic parkland at the gateway to Wales in the Usk Valley near Newport.

With two hotels – a 330-room luxury Resort hotel and an historic 19th century manor house with 70 rooms – three championship golf courses, two spas and health clubs, six restaurants, fishing, adventure golf, treetop high ropes course, tennis courts, mountain biking and walking trails, The Celtic Manor Resort provides a complete experience for business and leisure travellers.

Customer feedback is encouraged by surveys, both electronic and hard copy. A questionnaire is left in all guest rooms and they are also encouraged to feedback by post-stay emails. Visitors using the restaurants can also provide comments at the table via the iPad tablets provided.

www.celtic-manor.com



OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

Winner

Gordon Green / Green Events Ltd

In the late 1970s, the pony trekking industry, the mainstay of the local tourist economy around Llanwrtyd Wells in mid Wales, was in alarming decline.

A group of local business people got together to do something about it – one of whom was Gordon Green, then the owner of the Neuadd Arms Hotel in the town.

He and his colleagues came up with the idea of organising a series of quirky, off-the-wall events which would be unlike anything anyone had ever seen before. It was a brainwave that was destined to change the fortunes and perceptions of the area in a way which continues to the present day, generating massive worldwide media coverage and playing a significant part in putting Wales on the tourism map.

Their first event, the Man versus Horse Marathon, was staged in 1980, followed by the Welsh International Four Days' Walks in 1981, and the Drovers' Walks in 1982.

As others came and went, Gordon and his friend Ron Skilton carried on creating and organising different events over the years – in total, 13 unusual events that could not fit into "main stream" became part of the Llanwrtyd persona, including the now iconic bog snorkelling (and mountain bike bog snorkelling), stone skimming and chariot racing – on bikes.

As the events grew in popularity and scale, the informal grouping of volunteers was formalised when Gordon helped to form Green Events Limited in 2001 as a not-for-profit company.

Green Events has had to grow to keep up with the increasing popularity of the events, and today there are different groups of local volunteers who manage the various events throughout the year.

In 2009 Gordon stepped down as chairman of Green Events, but his absence didn't last for long.

When it was announced that London would be hosting the Olympics in 2012 it was decided that Llanwrtyd Wells should hold its very own version of the Games to celebrate an array of unrecognised, very different events whose competitors were just as dedicated to their unusual sports as their Olympian counterparts.

Cue Gordon Green, who returned to take a role on the organising committee and was instrumental in ensuring that the World Alternative Games took place in 2012 – and is already working on the 2014 programme.

As a man who has given much of his personal time over many years to promote Llanwrtyd Wells and Wales as an event led destination, he is a worthy winner of the Outstanding Achievement Award.

 www.green-events.co.uk



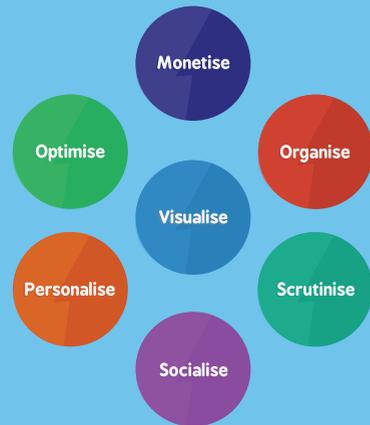


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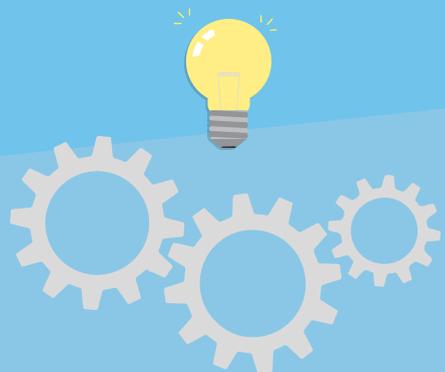


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Eysys Limited was founded by Simon Powell, founder and former-CEO of multi million pound travel technology company Comtec, and Humphrey Sheil, former CTO of Comtec and Head of Data Engineering and Infrastructure at Thomas Cook.

wales.gov.uk/tourism



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