

South West Tourism Excellence Awards

South West
England

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Tom Knowles-Jackson on his Contemporary Craft Festival pottery stall with customers Lola Browning, 9, and Cresta Browning

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Industry standards are raised

As well as a chance for the entrants to demonstrate their quality, a key aspect of the South West Tourism Excellence Awards is to raise standards in the industry by giving benchmark ideas for future improvements.

They are also the official scheme for the South West, with many finalists also nominated to represent the region in the national VisitEngland awards in April.

Last year the South West came away with six national winners, more than every other region.

The selection process for the South West awards involved



Contemporary Craft Festival claims title of tourism 'winner of winners'

BY MARTIN FREEMAN

The Contemporary Craft Festival has been crowned the overall winner as the spotlight was shone last night on the best in tourism in the South West.

The three-day celebration in Devon took the 'winner of winners' prize after also being named the event of the year in the South West Tourism Excellence Awards 2017/18.

Each year, up to 10,000 people are drawn to the festival in Bovey Tracey, which has become one of Europe's leading craft fairs since it began in 2003.

The prize was handed over by BBC Spotlight presenter Victoria

Graham who said deciding which of the 25 category winners stood out from the rest was a "tough call" for the judges.

"But they were unanimous in wishing to select a winner that shows all the attributes we like to commend in the awards: a commitment to excellence, to people, to partnership, to local provenance, to supporting those who can't help themselves, to education and to constant improvement and development," she said.

As well as the category and overall winner prizes, two special awards were presented for outstanding contributions to tourism in the South West.

The organisation award went to South West Protected Landscapes, the umbrella body for the most prized places of natural beauty in the region.

Neil Warren, project manager of the Countryside Mobility access scheme, won the individual prize.

The awards, with South West Water Business as the lead sponsor, attracted a record 647 entries from across the Isles of Scilly, Cornwall, Devon Somerset, Dorset Wiltshire and Gloucestershire.

They acknowledge excellence and achievement in a vital sector of the South West's economy. Categories ranged from B&Bs, self-catering properties, pubs and restaurants to

large hotels, holiday parks and international visitor attractions.

The winners were announced at a black tie dinner in the Arena at the Riviera International Conference Centre, Torquay, the biggest annual event in the South West tourism calendar.

"I'd like to commend you, the South West's leading tourism businesses, for your vision, investment, hard work and excellence," the awards organiser, Robin Barker told the audience.

"You have had the courage to put yourselves forward to be judged, have been through a three-phase judging process, and will all be winners tonight."

judges poring over entries, studying website and review sites, looking at use of social media and 416 business visits, most of them unannounced.

Reports and recommendations were then submitted to an independent panel, which made the final decisions.

Up to six finalists were announced in each category, with Gold, Silver and Bronze awards given out, some of them shared. In a few categories highly commended prizes were awarded.

Robin Barker, director of services for Tourism Ltd, which manages the awards, said: "Excellence is elusive. It requires patience, vision, consistency, commitment, drive, hard work, skill and often a bit of money. That's not an easy list and I'd like to commend this year's finalists for once again blowing the socks of the judges. You are a credit to tourism and the region is proud of you."