

NEWS RELEASE

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Under embargo until 29 October 2008

Final line-up announced for prestigious Tourism Awards

The final results of the Tourism ExSEllence Awards covering the whole of the South East were announced last night at a Gala Event. Winners, Runners Up and Highly Commended organisations from the 16 shortlisted businesses in Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire across 15 categories can now be revealed. The winners in the three counties are **The MacDonald Compleat Angler at Marlow** (Large Hotel category), **Blenheim Palace, Woodstock** (Large Visitor Attraction category), **Caswell House, Brize Norton** (Self Catering), employee **Brendan Budgen from the Best Western Reading Moathouse** (Outstanding Customer Service), and the **Royal Windsor Information Centre** in the Tourist Information Centre category.

There was significant success across the 3 counties with Runners Up and Highly Commended Awards going to 12 organisations. In **Oxfordshire** these included **Oxford Castle** (Runner Up, Small Visitor Attraction), **Banbury Tourist Information Centre** (Highly Commended, TIC category) and **Abingdon's Abbey Guest House** (Runner Up, Access for All) – [see Note to Editor for full list of Oxfordshire winners](#). Awards for **Berkshire** organisations included **The Coppid Beech Hotel, Bracknell** (Highly Commended, Large Hotel), **Ascot Racecourse** (Runner Up, Sports Tourism) and the **Swan at Streatley** (Highly Commended, Small Hotel) – [see Note to Editor for full list of Berkshire winners](#). **Buckinghamshire** successes included **Waddesdon Manor** (Highly Commended, Best Tourism Experience) and **The Five Arrows Hotel**, again in Waddesdon (Runner Up, Small Hotel) – [see Note to Editor for full list of Buckinghamshire winners](#).

With a total of 15 Award categories, including 'Sports Tourism', 'Best Tourism Experience' and 'Business Tourism', the Tourism ExSellenace Awards are the premier awards for the tourism industry in the South East and are managed by Tourism South East. They cover all kinds of tourism organisations, from small Bed & Breakfast businesses to large exclusive hotels and visitor experiences. Winners in this region will go on to compete in the national Enjoy England Awards for Excellence in 2009.

Judges look for excellence, quality and innovation, covering all aspects of the business from customer service, sales & marketing, to training & development for staff. Tourism chief Ken Robinson CBE FTS was the judge of the Large Visitor Attraction Category and described Winner **Blenheim Palace** as 'a 'Big Beast' of the Historic House sector.....with staff very customer aware, welcoming , helpful and informative.' He was also impressed by Blenheim's newly added visitor experience, 'Blenheim Palace: the Untold Story', demonstrating 'a continuous commitment to improvement.'

Judge Stephanie Edwards (MD of Customer 1st International Ltd) declared **Brendan Budgen from the Best Western Reading Moathouse** as the Winner in the Outstanding Customer Care Category. She said 'Every hotel in the world should have a Brendan Budgen, passionate about his hotel, its staff and every customer who walks through the door. It was a delight to meet him and share in his memories.' She praised Brendan for, among other things, his swift actions during recent floods and his consequent provision of a tractor and white wellies in a bid not to disappoint a bride and groom on their wedding day!

And Judge Peter Birnie (former Chief Hotel Inspector for the AA) felt the **Macdonald Compleat Angler in Marlow** deserved its position as Winner of the Large Hotel Category and described it as; 'A superb product' and went on to say; 'The recent refurbishment has been of a very high quality. Service scores are high and food quality is excellent. Other key areas, such as training and accessibility are well addressed.'

Robert Collier, chief executive of Tourism South East, comments on this year's successes, "It's a delight to see such a high standard of entry – it gets better every year. We look forward to seeing more success as the winners go forward to the national Enjoy England Awards for Excellence in 2009.

More information about this year's Tourism ExSellenace Awards can be found at www.getdiscovered2008.co.uk.

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Note to Editors:

Full final line-up for the Tourism ExSEllence Awards in Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire are as follows (full list across the South East available on request):

Berkshire

Winners

Brendan Budgen, Best Western Reading Moat House, Outstanding Customer Service

Royal Windsor Information Centre, Tourist Information Centre

Runners Up

Ascot Racecourse, Sports Tourism

Highly Commended

Swan at Streatley, Streatley-on-Thames, Small Hotel

Coppid Beech, Bracknell, Large Hotel

Best Western Reading Moat House, Large Hotel

Buckinghamshire

Winners

Macdonald Compleat Angler, Marlow, Large Hotel

Runners Up

Five Arrows Hotel, Waddesdon, Small Hotel

Highly Commended

Waddesdon Manor, Waddesdon, Best Tourism Experience

Oxfordshire

Winners

Blenheim Palace: The Untold Story, Woodstock, Large Visitor Attraction

Caswell House Coach House and Granary, Brize Norton, Self Catering

Runners Up

Fallowfields Country House, Kingston Bagzuize with Southmoor, Flavour of the SE

Oxford Castle Unlocked, Small Visitor Attraction

Abbey Guest House, Abingdon, Access for All

Blenheim Palace, Best Tourism Experience

Highly Commended

Banbury TIC, Tourist Information Centre

Cogges Manor Farm, Witney, Sports Tourism

Quotes from judges and other details for all listed organisations can be supplied – email as above. [Images of each Award recipient are available.](#)

Sponsors of the Tourism ExSEllence 2008 Awards include:

Customer Maze – further information from www.customermaze.com

Enjoy England www.enjoyengland.com

Pure Brand Media www.purebrandmedia.com

South East Food Group www.sefgp.co.uk

Sport England www.sportengland.com

Take One www.takeonemedia.com

The Visitor Network www.thevisitornetwork.com

Tourism for All www.tourismforall.org.uk