



Press Release

Friday, Feb 3rd, 2017

Irish Tourism Industry Awards celebrate innovation and excellence in Irish tourism

Winners include GPO Witness History, Westport House, and Dublin Airport

Minister for Tourism Shane Ross TD says all winners are “shining examples of a vibrant industry”

Ireland’s tourism industry was celebrated last night at the Irish Tourism Industry Awards, where winners in 14 categories won awards for excellence and innovation.

Minister for Tourism Shane Ross TD and the Minister of State for Tourism Patrick O’Donovan TD, were both on hand to present the Waterford Crystal trophies to winners at a gala event in the Clayton Hotel Burlington Road.

The Irish Tourist Industry Confederation (ITIC), the umbrella group for the tourism industry in Ireland, organises the awards in conjunction with Failte Ireland and Tourism Ireland. Over 550 people from the industry were in attendance.

Designed with the intention of rewarding innovation and excellence in tourism, 14 worthy winners were ultimately selected from approximately 250 entries.

Award winners included Westport House for Best Leisure Tourism Innovation, Dublin Airport for Best International Access Initiative and the GPO Witness History Visitor Centre for Best Cultural Experience.

There was also a Special Recognition Award from the Irish Tourism Industry for the Ireland 2016 Centenary Programme, which the adjudicating panel felt shone a positive spotlight on Ireland to a global audience.

Minister Ross said: “The range of awards recognises both innovation and excellence and rewards the best operators within Irish tourism. It gives us the opportunity to come together to champion excellence, reward success and inspire others in the tourism industry to follow suit. Congratulations to all winners.”

Adjudication on the awards was carried out by an independent panel of experts, chaired by Maurice Pratt, the Chairman of the Uniphar Group and including Noirin Hegarty, Operations Director from Lonely Planet; Philip Browne, Chief Executive of the IRFU; Simon McKeever, Chief Executive, the Irish Exporters’ Association and Marian O’Gorman, Chief Executive, the Kilkenny Group.

Minister of State for Tourism Patrick O'Donovan TD said: "Irish tourism is performing extremely well and it is only fitting that successful initiatives, experiences and innovations within Ireland's largest indigenous industry should be acknowledged and commended publicly."

Speaking at the event, Paul Gallagher, Chairman of the Irish Tourist Industry Confederation said: "The Irish Tourism Industry Awards are a celebration of Irish tourism and validate all of the hard work that the industry puts into growing this sector. ITIC believes if pro-tourism policies are adopted and appropriate investment strategies implemented that overseas earnings from inbound tourism can be as high as €7 billion annually by 2025 thus adding another 50,000 jobs to the sector".

Full details of the awards and winners are available at
www.irishtourismindustryawards.ie

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Notes to Editor

The full list of winners is here:

- Best International Access Initiative: **Dublin Airport**
- Best international Marketing Initiative: **MCI Dublin** for the World Buiatrics Congress
- Best Leisure Tourism Innovation (city): **King John's Castle**, Limerick
- Best Leisure Tourism Innovation (county): **Westport House**, Mayo
- Best Business Tourism Innovation: **Green Light Events** – Google Sales Conference
- Best Environmental Tourism Innovation: **Lullymore Heritage & Discovery Park**, Co. Kildare
- Best Local Authority Tourism innovation: **The Lough Derg Marketing Group** (a joint initiative of Tipperary, Clare and Galway County Councils)
- Best Innovative Place to Stay: **River Valley Holiday Park**, Co. Wicklow
- Best Festival/Event Experience (over 50,000 people): **Bray Air Display**

- Best Festival/Event Experience (under 50,000 people): **Aer Lingus College Football Classic 2016**
- Best Adventure Experience: **Vagabond Tours of Ireland**
- Best Food & Beverage Experience: **Airfield Estate, Dundrum, Dublin**
- Best Cultural Experience (over 100,000 people): **GPO Witness History, Dublin**
- Best Cultural Experience (under 100,000 people): **Cnoc Suain, Connemara, Co. Galway**
- Special recognition Award: **Ireland 2016 Centenary Programme**

What are the Irish Tourism Industry Awards?

The Irish Tourism Industry Awards showcase Ireland's most successful and innovative tourism products, services and experiences. They were organised and presented by the Irish Tourist Industry Confederation (ITIC), Ireland's business group for tourism, together with ITIC's industry members, Fáilte Ireland, and Tourism Ireland. For more information on the awards, please visit: www.irishtourismindustryawards.ie

Why an Awards event?

The Awards recognise and promote people, companies and organisations – overseas and at home – that have made significant contributions to developing, marketing, selling and delivering improved visitor experiences in Ireland and to increasing the number of visitors from overseas.

In particular, the Irish Tourism Industry Awards aim to:

- Publicly recognise and reward excellence
- Provide a benchmark for best practice
- Encourage improved standards
- Promote better visitor experiences
- Emphasise the value of the tourism sector

Who Are the Judges?

A judging panel of significant business and tourism experience was put together which included:

- Maurice Pratt, the Chairman of the Uniphar Group (panel chair)
- Noirin Hegarty, Operations Director, Lonely Planet;
- Philip Browne, Chief Executive, the IRFU;
- Simon McKeever, Chief Executive, the Irish Exporters' Association;
- Marian O'Gorman, Chief Executive, the Kilkenny Group.