



## Press Release

Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2019

# The Hythe Imperial Hotel and Vine + Country Tours celebrate double wins at the Kent Tourism Awards

The winners have been announced for the 2019 Kent Tourism Awards with **The Hythe Imperial Hotel** and **Vine + Country Tours** each taking two coveted awards home from the Kent tourism industry awards. All the nominees and winners attended the awards ceremony at the Kent Cricket Ground in Canterbury on Monday afternoon (2<sup>nd</sup> December) where The Hythe Imperial Hotel scooped both the “Taste of Kent” and the “International Tourism Award” and Vine + Country Tours took the “New Tourism Business Award” and the award for the “Experience of the Year.”

Eight additional Kent businesses were also awarded prizes at the ceremony in a range of categories. Winners in the ‘Accommodation’ categories included **Brambles Bed and Breakfast**, who took the prize for ‘Small Accommodation Provider of the Year’ and the **Hotel du Vin** (Tunbridge Wells) winners of the ‘Large Hotel of the Year’ for the second year running, whilst the “Camping, Glamping, Holiday Park and Self-Catering Accommodation of the Year” was won by **Kits Coty Glamping** in Aylesford. The “Large Visitor Attraction of the Year” was won by English Heritage property, **Walmer Castle and Gardens** and the “Small Visitor Attraction” went to vineyard **Balfour – Hush Heath Estate**. The final two awards went to **Leeds Castle** as the “Business Events Venue of the Year” and the “Pub of the Year” trophy went to Canterbury based **The Foundry Brew Pub**.

Woodchurch-based Kent attraction **The Rare Breeds Centre** also picked up a special award recognising their on-going charity work with the Family Holiday Association. The award was presented by John Kinnear from the Family Holiday Association, who commented *“We are thrilled to work with so many Kent attractions who have generously given us so many tickets over the years to help us offer family days out to struggling families having a tough time. This award really recognises that the Rare Breeds Centre have gone above and beyond this year, donating tickets throughout the entire year and helping us to deliver family days out to people that really need them.”*

Around 150 tourism industry invitees attended the awards ceremony this week. Guests were served a selection of delicious canapes and drank Kentish vineyard Biddenden’s English sparkling wine and award-winning Red Love Apple juice.

The awards were devised and launched in 2017 by destination specialists Go To Places - who deliver Visit Kent - to reward exceptional standards of customer service and outstanding visitor experiences within the local tourism industry. Following an initial round of judging by an expert panel of independent tourism judges, the shortlisted finalists were decided by mystery shopping visits. Winners will automatically go through to compete in Visit England's National Awards for Excellence.

Deirdre Wells OBE, CEO of Go To Places, said: *"We're thrilled to celebrate and honour Kent's incredible tourism businesses with another year of the Kent Tourism Awards. From first-rate accommodation providers to exceptional visitor attractions, this year's winners really demonstrate the quality and diversity of Kent's current tourism offering. Delivering extraordinary experiences, delicious food and drink and a world-class warm welcome, Kent's businesses continue to grow the visitor economy in Kent and we're very proud to take a moment to celebrate their achievements. Congratulations to all the 2019 winners and nominees!"*

An additional award to mark the end of the 3-year PROFIT cross border partner project, was also celebrated with 5 finalists including West Flanders in Belgium, Zeeland in the Netherlands, Pas-de-Calais in France, Essex and Kent. PROFIT is an Interreg European funded project that has helped coach and build the capacity of Kent's SMEs through innovation and collaboration. Mijn Lielingsplek (which means *My favourite place*) received this special PROFIT International Award, recognising their commitment to the project and personal innovation journey. From the Netherlands, this group of 17 small farm campsites led by women, shared their passion, collaborated and marketed their campsites together rather than individually, putting their visitors first.

The awards were sponsored by Biddenden Vineyards, Brachers, InsideKent Magazine, Leftlion, Quinn Estates, MHA MacIntyre Hudson, NFU Mutual Tunbridge Wells, Pillory Barn, Sleeping Giant Media, and Southeastern. The event was supported by Interreg 2 Seas PROFIT.

### **The full list of 2019 winners:**

- Business Events Venue of the Year - Leeds Castle, Maidstone
- Camping, Glamping, Self-Catering Accommodation of the Year – Kits Coty Glamping, Aylesford
- Experience of the Year – Vine + Country Tours
- International Tourism Award – Hythe Imperial Hotel
- Large Hotel of the Year – Hotel du Vin, Tunbridge Wells
- Large Visitor Attraction of the Year – Walmer Castle and Gardens
- New Tourism Business Award - Vine + Country Tours
- Pub of the Year – The Foundry Brew Pub, Canterbury
- Small Accommodation Provider of the Year – Brambles Bed and Breakfast, Eythorne
- Small Visitor Attraction of the Year – Balfour – Hush Heath Estate, Staplehurst
- Taste of Kent of the Year – Hythe Imperial Hotel
- Family Holiday Association – Rare Breeds Centre, Woodchurch

- PROFIT International Award - Mijn Lievelingsplek, Netherlands

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### Notes to Editors

For further media information, please contact PR Consultant Katy Towse at [katy.towse@visitkent.co.uk](mailto:katy.towse@visitkent.co.uk) or Brand Manager (Destinations) Lana Crouch at [ana.crouch@visitkent.co.uk](mailto:ana.crouch@visitkent.co.uk). For more information about Go To Places, visit [www.gotoplaces.co.uk](http://www.gotoplaces.co.uk)

### List of the full Kent Tourism Awards finalists 2019

- **Business Events Venue of the Year**, sponsored by Quinn Estates
  - Hotel du Vin, Tunbridge Wells
  - Leeds Castle, Maidstone
  - Salomons Estate, Tunbridge Wells
  - Westgate Hall, Canterbury
- **Camping, Glamping, Self-Catering Accommodation of the Year**, sponsored by NFU Mutual
  - Canterbury Camping and Caravanning Club Site
  - Kits Coty Glamping, Aylesford
  - Nirvana Cottage, Minster on Sea
- **Experience of the Year**, sponsored by InsideKent Magazine
  - Leeds Castle Falconry, Maidstone
  - Romney, Hythe and Dymchurch Railway
  - Vine + Country Tours
- **International Tourism Award**, sponsored by House of Britain
  - Balfour – Hush Heath Estate, Staplehurst
  - Canterbury Guided Tours
  - Hythe Imperial Hotel
- **Large Hotel of the Year**, sponsored by Sleeping Giant Media
  - Chilston Park Hotel, Maidstone
  - Hotel du Vin, Tunbridge Wells
  - Hythe Imperial Hotel
  - The Spa Hotel, Tunbridge Wells
- **Large Visitor Attraction of the Year**, sponsored by Pillory Barn
  - Diggerland, Rochester
  - Kent Life Heritage Farm Park, Maidstone
  - Walmer Castle and Gardens
- **New Tourism Business Award**, sponsored by Brachers
  - CountryBike, Tonbridge

- Hut 55, Deal
- Vine + Country Tours
- **Pub of the Year**, sponsored by Leftlion
  - The Dog at Wingham
  - The Foundry Brew Pub, Canterbury
  - The Goudhurst Inn, Cranbrook
  - The Minnis Bay Bar & Brasserie, Birchington
- **Small Accommodation Provider of the Year**, sponsored by MHA MacIntyre Hudson
  - Brambles Bed and Breakfast, Eythorne
  - Broome Park Hotel, Canterbury
  - Frasers, Egerton
- **Small Visitor Attraction of the Year**, sponsored by Southeastern
  - Balfour – Hush Heath Estate, Staplehurst
  - Battle of Britain Memorial Trust, Capel-le-Ferne
  - Mount Ephraim Gardens, Faversham
- **Taste of Kent of the Year**, sponsored by Biddenden Vineyards
  - The Ambrette, Canterbury
  - The Ambrette, Margate
  - Hythe Imperial Hotel

### **About Visit Kent**

Visit Kent Ltd is the Destination Management Organisation for Kent (the Garden of England), welcoming 60million visitors a year, championing the county's £3.6 billion tourism industry and supporting more than 72,000 jobs.

It is recognised as one of the country's leading DMOs, targeting UK and overseas markets to raise Kent's profile as a premier destination, improving quality and skills within the industry, and growing investment in tourism. Visit Kent is a public/private sector partnership supported by Kent County Council, Medway Council, district and borough councils, and the leading sector tourism businesses in Kent.

For further information visit [www.visitkent.co.uk](http://www.visitkent.co.uk) (consumer) or [www.visitkentbusiness.co.uk](http://www.visitkentbusiness.co.uk) (business), or tweet @visitkent.

### **About Go to Places**

Go To Places delivers innovative, effective and sustainable destination management services in the UK.

Committed to improving quality and skills within the tourism industry, Go To Places has developed a unique destination management organisation (DMO) model, based on developing great locations through innovative marketing, public and private sector partnerships, and positively influencing the tourism industry.

This includes offering expertise on funding bids, helping tourism and leisure businesses to better understand their market and audience, and sharing proven, effective marketing campaigns.

The Go To Places' destination management model has been developed through its experience as Kent's DMO, Visit Kent, which was created in 2002. This model is now being effectively delivered through other portfolio businesses, such as Visit Herts (Hertfordshire).

Go To Places is the only officially recognised organisation delivering destination management services across multiple counties and thematic campaigns such as Gardens and Gourmet.

For further information visit [www.gotoplaces.co.uk](http://www.gotoplaces.co.uk) or tweet @GTP\_Deirdre

### **About Interreg 2 Seas PROFIT**

PROFIT is an Interreg European funded project that has helped coach and build the capacity of tourism SMEs to innovate, collaborate and grow through new online campaigns and approaches.

Marking the end of the 3 year PROFIT cross border project in which many of the tourism businesses in Kent have been involved. Five regional business winners from West Flanders in Belgium, Zeeland in the Netherlands, Pas-de-Calais in France, Essex and Kent competed for the overall PROFIT International Award of the Year.

For further information, visit <https://www.profittourism.eu/en/cross-border-inspiration/>