



## **NI TOURISM AWARDS 2019 ENTRY PACK**

The Northern Ireland Tourism Awards (NITA) is organised by Tourism Northern Ireland (Tourism NI) and is a competitive process.

With the process and categories having been refreshed for the Awards' 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2018 and a record number of entries having been received, the process will remain the same for NITA 2019, with only a few minor changes to categories. We hope you find this entry pack useful in helping you to prepare your entries and understand the process.

### **Eligibility**

Tourism NI welcomes entries from individuals, organisations actively engaged in the business of tourism. Businesses who have been operating for less than one year are now eligible to enter, with the exception of the accommodation categories.

There is no cost to enter.

All entries must describe activities **undertaken within the past year** and completed by **18<sup>th</sup> January 2019.**

### **Categories for Entry**

- Authentic NI Experience of the Year – Site Based **\*\* New for 2019**
- Authentic NI Experience of the Year – Immersive, Trail or Tour **\*\* New for 2019**
- NI Tourism Entrepreneur of the Year
- NI Food and Drink Experience of the Year
- NI's Best Hotel Stay
- NI's Best Guesthouse/B&B Stay
- NI's Best Self-Catering Stay
- Best NI Event or Festival Experience
- Most Promising Authentic NI Event or Festival Experience
- Best International Experience of the Year
- Best Digital Marketing Campaign **\*\* New for 2019**
- Best Use of Digital Technology to Improve the Visitor Experience **\*\* New for 2019**

## Entry Process

- Each category has separate criteria listed on [www.nitourismawards.com](http://www.nitourismawards.com) and also in this entry pack, highlighting pointers which the judges will look for in your answer/s.
- Decide the category/ies which are most relevant to your business or project and confirm that the activity you are describing in your entry has been undertaken **within the past year and completed by 18<sup>th</sup> January 2019.**
- You may enter more than one category, but you may only enter each category once for the specific project or business.
- Essential information is requested for each entry and this will not be scored (see sample online form later in this pack)
- Each category has the same two questions to answer (word limits apply), but if you are entering more than one category, you must reflect the different criteria in your answer/s and submit separate entries for each category.
- Each question will be awarded a maximum of 5 marks at stage 1 judging. Essential information requested will not be scored.
- Question 1 asks ***"In no more than 800 words tell us why you believe your business/project merits this award, bearing in mind the category criteria and what your business/project has achieved to meet the criteria"***
- Question 2 asks ***"In no more than 500 words please provide details / evidence of the positive impact and outputs your business or project delivered"***
- **IMPORTANT:** Please ensure you draft your entry offline on the word document before completing the online form, as the online form cannot be saved and edited at a later date.
- Entries will only be accepted via the NITA website online form and received successfully by the closing date, which is **5pm on Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> February 2019**
- **The online entry form is available at [www.nitourismawards.com/enter-online/](http://www.nitourismawards.com/enter-online/)**
- You will receive a confirmation email once your entry has been submitted successfully.

## Judging Process

The judging process is in two stages, details of which are outlined below:

### Stage 1

- Questions 1 & 2 will each be scored against criteria by Tourism NI judges **and an external expert**.
- A maximum of 5 points is available per question.
- Scores will be scaled according to the quality and clarity of the information provided.
- The top 3 scores for each category will go through to the second stage. **Please note:** Going through to Stage 2 does not automatically indicate receipt of an award.

### Stage 2

- Depending on the category you have entered, shortlisted entries at this stage will either be **mystery shopped** or be required to make an informal **presentation** to a panel of judges. This is indicated in the category descriptions.
- You will not be informed if your entry has proceeded to the **Mystery Shop** stage until the shortlisted entries are published in early April. **Upon request**, individual Mystery Shop Reports will be circulated to each entrant after the awards gala event.
- **Presentations** will take place in Tourism Northern Ireland's office in Belfast between **20<sup>th</sup> – 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2019**. If you have successfully reached the second stage of judging for presentation, you will be contacted with one week's notice to confirm your attendance.
- Please ensure that if you have entered a category which requires a presentation at Stage 2, that you can make a representative available to attend the presentation.
- The presentation is an informal process which allows you to present or discuss further information about your organisation/project that you weren't able to do in the entry form, such as photographs/ videos, marketing or promotional materials and other supplementary evidence to support your entry. However slides are not obligatory.
- The Winners List will only be agreed after completion of all Stage 2 judging.

## Tips for Preparing and Submitting your online entry

- Download the NITA 2019 Entry Pack and ensure that your submission is compliant with the Rules of Entry.
- Set aside time to prepare your entries well ahead of the deadline.
- **Prepare your answers 'offline' in a separate word document or text file for each category you have decided to enter.**
- Have someone else cross check and proof read your submission before the deadline.
- Verify the word count – **800 words** for Question 1 and **500 words** for Question 2. Answers exceeding these limits may be disqualified and the online form is programmed to stop after these limits.
- Finalise the version you are happy to submit as your entry and save it locally to your PC shared network or desktop files
- Log on to the [www.nitourismawards.com](http://www.nitourismawards.com) website and click on the Enter Now to open the online form.
- Complete the essential information requested (not scored)
- Select the category you are entering from the dropdown menu \* NB: criteria for the selected category will pop up for your reference.
- Copy and paste your pre-prepared answers into the appropriate fields
- ***Please note you will NOT be able to save and return during your submission.***
- You will receive a confirmation email once you have submitted successfully.
- Entries will only be accepted via the NITA website online form and received successfully by the closing date which is **5pm on Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> February 2019.**

## Rules of Entry / Terms and Conditions

- All entries must describe activities undertaken within the past year and completed by 18<sup>th</sup> January 2019.
- At the time and date of entry, entrants agree that the information supplied is truthful and accurate.
- Incomplete or late entries will not be considered. Once submitted, entries cannot be amended.
- All criteria must be covered within the 800 word submission for Question 1 and 500 word submission for Question 2 and cannot be covered in any supplementary materials.
- All entries must be submitted via the online entry platform and cannot be submitted in hard copy or by email.
- It is the entrant's responsibility to ensure the correct text is uploaded within the entry and that the entry is submitted for the correct category.
- Supporting materials such as visuals, press clippings, marketing materials etc. will not be accepted as part of any submission. If forwarded this information will be disregarded as part of the process.
- Entries exceeding the word count may be disqualified.
- Entrants and prospective entrants are welcome to contact Morrow Communications Ltd acting as agent / event organiser to Tourism NI to discuss any aspects of the competition or if they have difficulty.
- Category Sponsors cannot enter the category they are sponsoring.
- The decision of the judging panel will be final and correspondence cannot be entered into.
- Entrants must have the written permission of any third party involved in the entry, or with whom they have worked on the project, prior to its submission in these Awards.
- Shortlisted entrants will be contacted to supply one image and company / project logo for the screen presentation at the awards.
- **Feedback is available from Tourism NI upon request but only AFTER the Gala Awards Presentation on 23rd May 2019 by emailing: [industry.development@tourismni.com](mailto:industry.development@tourismni.com)**

## PR & Publicity

- Tourism NI reserves the right to publicise winning entries.
- **Shortlisted for an award? Won an award?** Be sure to let your followers and customers know with updates on your website and posts on your social channels (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat) using the official hashtag **#NITA2019**
- All official PR and publicity to media and press will be managed solely by Tourism Northern Ireland around the key dates of the process (Launch, Shortlist and Winners). Successful entrants are asked to prioritise official publicity before releasing their own material.
- Shortlisted finalists and category winners will be provided with a branded logo for use on your own promotional activity. These will be supplied to you following the Gala Event.

## Disclaimer

Morrow Communications is the managing agent/event organiser appointed by Tourism NI, operating impartially in the competition and is in no way associated nor can influence the judging process for NITA. Employees of Tourism Northern Ireland nor Morrow Communications Ltd or any other contracted supplier to Tourism NI are permitted to submit an entry.

## Contact:

Morrow Communications Events Team

**Tel:** 028 90 393837

**Email:** [tourismni@morrowcommunications.com](mailto:tourismni@morrowcommunications.com)

**Category 1: Authentic NI Experience of the Year – Site Based**

**Category 2: Authentic NI Experience of the Year – Tour, Trail or Immersive**

Travel is all about inspiration. In an age of smart communications, digital media and always-on connectivity, travellers are looking for something different. They want to replace the humdrum of the everyday by engaging with local culture and experiencing everything that makes a destination unique in the world. Experience development is about creating an emotional appeal that will leave a once in a lifetime memory moment.

Northern Ireland is a land overflowing with giant surprises. From urban quarter to greenest glen, we are creating multiple opportunities for our visitors to embrace the giant spirit of our people and our land through authentic experiences found only in Northern Ireland.

Entries are invited from tourism providers that are actively engaged in creating a unique Northern Ireland experience; one that is authentically local, that captures the spirit of our people and conveys a sense of the place we call home. An experience that inspires the visitor.

This year the award has been divided into 2 categories - one which is site based and the other focusing on activation of the experience through a tour, trail or immersive activity. You will be asked to select the appropriate category in the online form.

**Entries for both categories need to demonstrate that –**

- The experience is authentically local, provide visitors with a real sense of place and creates memories and associations, which are specific to Northern Ireland.
- The experience is immersive, providing visitors with the opportunity to engage with our landscapes, heritage and culture.
- The experience focuses on the needs of the visitor providing a quality end to end experience
- The experience is saleable, sustainable and repeatable

This category will be judged in Stage Two by **Mystery Shop or Presentation**, depending on the nature of the business.

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**Category 3: NI Tourism Entrepreneur of the Year**

Entrepreneurs start and grow businesses. They identify a customer problem and find a solution to it. In so doing they are willing to accept risk. These action-oriented people operate with vision, passion, optimism and focus. They have tenacity and are resourceful independent-thinking problem solvers.

**The individual or business should demonstrate:-**

- a passion for tourism, show ambition and inspire others
- outstanding contribution to tourism through business innovation and delivery of quality service and products, whilst driving a profit making business.
- making an impact aligned to driving exceptional visitor experiences and attracting visitors to NI
- action, thriving on opportunities
- a growth mind-set and a willingness to be challenged
- strong work ethic and leadership.

This category will be judged in Stage Two by **Presentation**.

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#### **Category 4: NI Food and Drink Experience of the Year**

Entries are invited from tourism and hospitality businesses, including food tours, cookery schools, pubs and restaurants that offer an enhanced local food and drink experience.

##### **The best food and drink experiences should demonstrate:-**

- how you have incorporated local food and drink stories, events and culinary experiences
- regional and seasonal spread
- a focus on quality and provenance
- international appeal

This category will be judged in Stage Two by **Mystery Shop OR Presentation** depending on the nature of the entry.

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#### **Category 5: NI's Best Hotel Stay**

#### **Category 6: NI's Best GuestHouse/B&B Stay**

#### **Category 7: NI's Best Self Catering Stay**

Entries are invited from accommodation providers who are actively engaged with Tourism NI, or members of the Grading Scheme. ***Where an individual trader or business is the applicant to the category, they must have been trading for at least one year at the time of application.***

##### **Entrants must be able to demonstrate:-**

- how they make the visitor stay a remarkable and memorable accommodation experience, i.e. through delivery of excellence at every touchpoint of the visitor experience.
- how they make the visitor stay an authentically NI accommodation experience, i.e. utilising local stories and incorporating local food and drink provenance, to deliver something that is unique to NI. This would be measured through quality rating, guest reviews or evidence of working collaboratively with other tourism partners
- a clear understanding of their target customers
- Collaborative working with other visitor centric businesses, i.e. discounted rates for eateries, attractions, activities, airport pickups, business referrals – all of which will inspire visitors to explore beyond the accommodation.

These categories will be judged in Stage Two by **Mystery Shop**.

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#### **Category 8: Best NI Event or Festival Experience (International)**

Entries are invited from international events and festivals (in private, voluntary or public sectors) who can demonstrate significant tourism impact including successfully attracting visitors to, and entertaining them in, Northern Ireland.

##### **Entries must demonstrate how they have met the following criteria:-**

- enhanced visitor experience
- increase in visitor numbers and spend
- development of a positive profile for NI
- increased bednights
- extended the tourism season

This category will be judged in Stage Two by **Presentation**.

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### **Category 9: Most Promising Authentic NI Event or Festival Experience (National)**

Entries are invited from national events and festivals (in private, voluntary or public sectors) that can demonstrate the potential to scale up to:

- attract and meet the needs of international visitors
- enhance the visitor experience
- develop a positive profile for NI

This category will be judged in Stage Two by **Presentation**.

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### **Category 10: Best International Experience of the Year**

Entries are invited from tourism businesses that can demonstrate active engagement with key international bodies and tour operators to grow international tourism to NI.

**Entrants must be able to provide evidence of:-**

- working collaboratively, planning for growth and actively engaging with international bodies and tour operators
- a strong commitment to providing an authentic Northern Irish experience which delivers a sense of place for the international visitor and has resulted in quantifiable increased business.

This category will be judged in Stage Two by **Presentation**.

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### **Category 11: Best Digital Marketing Campaign**

This award recognises tourism businesses that have leveraged digital marketing techniques in order to grow the number of tourists coming to Northern Ireland, enhance the visitors' travel experience, drive consumer engagement and/or increase business competitiveness.

**Entrants must be able to demonstrate and describe:-**

- the objective of the campaign;
- the approach taken and;
- the impact on delivery of business objectives.

This category will be judged in Stage Two by **Presentation**.

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### **Category 12: Best Use of Digital Technology to Improve the Visitor Experience**

This award recognises tourism businesses that have leveraged technology in innovative ways in order to deliver a step change in their visitors' experience.

**Entrants must be able to demonstrate and describe:**

- 'how' they have used technology in an 'innovative way', i.e. the application of technology to support a more seamless visitor experience; or animating and uplifting an existing experience or launching a new experience.
- 'what' the impact of this innovative approach has been, i.e. the impact of the innovative application including visitor feedback.

This category will be judged in Stage Two by **Presentation**.

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**Sample Online Form - PLEASE NOTE HARD COPY OR EMAIL FORMS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED THIS IS FOR INFORMATION ONLY.**

**Essential Information**

Lead Contact	First Name	Last Name
Business / Premises / Organisation Name		
Name of Project or Initiative <i>(if different from above)</i>		
Is your entry involving a partnership or on behalf of another organisation?	Yes No	
If yes, Please indicate other partners/organisations involved in your entry and you have sought their permission to enter.		
Business / Premises Address	Address 1 Town / City County Postcode	
Telephone of Lead Contact		
Mobile of Lead Contact		
Email of Lead Contact		
Synopsis: Tell us in no more than 250 words about your business/project. Please note that this is not scored and is purely for contextual purposes.		

**Please select the category you are applying for:** (If applying for more than one category you will be required to complete a separate entry form for each)

**A drop down list of the following categories will appear along with the criteria for the category you selected.**

**The next two questions are worth a total of 5 marks each and will be scored by Tourism NI judges alongside external experts.**

**Question 1** - In no more than 800 words tell us why you believe your business/project merits this award, bearing in mind the category criteria and what your business/project has achieved to meet the criteria.(5 marks)

**Question 2** - In no more than 500 words, please provide details of the positive impact and outputs which your business or project delivered. (5 marks)

**The online form is coded to only permit a maximum of the specified word count for each answer.**

**Please ensure you insert/paste the text for the category you have selected on the form and have verified the word count.**

**You will receive an email confirmation once submitted successfully.**

## Nominations

There is a nomination form available on the website which can be completed if you wish to nominate a colleague or friend about the categories. Please note, nominations for individuals will not be accepted, with the exception of the NI Best Tourism Entrepreneur of the Year Category.

<http://nitourismawards.com/nominate/>

**If you cannot access the online nomination form please email [tourismni@morrowcommunications.com](mailto:tourismni@morrowcommunications.com) with the following details:**

- Your Name / Surname
- Your Organisation
- Your Email Address
- Name/Surname of the lead contact for your nomination
- Name of their business
- Their telephone number
- Their Email Address
- Which category you recommend they enter

**We will contact the person you have nominated and encourage them to enter, or simply forward them the details in this entry pack.**

## Contact Us

### For entry and Gala Event queries:

Morrow Communications is the managing agent/event organiser appointed by Tourism NI, operating impartially in the competition.

### Morrow Communications

**Telephone:** 028 90393837

**Email:** [tourismni@morrowcommunications.com](mailto:tourismni@morrowcommunications.com)

<http://nitourismawards.com/contact-us/>

### For entry feedback post Gala event:

The Northern Ireland Tourism Awards is a competition organised by the Industry Development Section of Tourism Northern Ireland. Entrants are permitted to contact them for feedback after the Gala Event, by email to:

[industry.development@tourismni.com](mailto:industry.development@tourismni.com)