

BEST TRAVEL SERVICE PROVIDERS GET RECOGNITION IN LONDON



With the January snowstorms, unexpected disasters such as the spread of the volcanic ash cloud in Iceland or pre-planned cabin crew strikes, the travel industry has taken a bit of a beating over the past year or so. It is, therefore, no surprise that travel service providers, such as airlines and travel agents have had to work hard in order to bounce back from these crises in order to restore the faith of travellers and holidaymakers alike.

With customers dubious about travelling, booking holidays and forking out thousands to get to their dream destinations only for them to be cancelled, they are also quick to criticise those companies that have not adhered to their needs in times of travel woe.

However, there have been a selected few that 'stand alone' within the industry and with that in mind, UK airport parking, holiday insurance and airport hotel providers, **Holiday Extras**, decided it would be a great idea to give credit to those in the business that really have gone above and beyond the call of duty.

The Holiday Extras Customers' Awards 2010 gave customers the opportunity to vote for those travel service providers that shone throughout the year for various reasons such as being 'family-friendly' or 'value for money' among several other categories.

This year, the awards have seen over 24,000 votes, up 6000 from 2009 and have proved to be a roaring success with both travel industry professionals and the general public. Customers who voted in this year's awards were entered into a draw with the chance to win free airport parking, an airport lounge prior to flight or a stay at an airport hotel the night before departure as an add on to what they had originally booked with Holiday Extras.

The ceremony, held in London and presented for the second year running by popular travel journalist Simon Calder, welcomed representatives from Aer Lingus, Flybe, BAA, Virgin and EasyJet as well as Holiday Extras' staff, press and travel bloggers to name a few. It was a great chance for those in the industry to network as well as giving companies an incentive to make the shortlist for next year.

Aer Lingus claimed the title of 'Best Airline' with Virgin taking home an award for 'Best Cabin Crew' and Belfast International scooped up gold for 'Best Airport'. Some of the customer feedback for 'Most Recommended Airline for Travellers with a Disability' was 'Have travelled on this airline as a disabled passenger in the past. Excellent service provided by airport staff on the ground as well as crew on board the plane'. Air Canada won this award with Swiss and KLM coming second and third.

With Calder presenting the awards, the most controversial category 'Travel Personality of the Year', was sure to raise a few debates within the industry, with nominees including Stephen Fry, Sir David Attenborough, Julia Bradbury, Ben Fogle and Michael Palin.

To round up, the awards cast a positive outlook on what has seemed to be a bit of an unfortunate year for travellers and travel businesses, indicating that its not all doom and gloom for the industry. Here's to a less chaotic, boost in the travel economy for 2011 and the forthcoming winners of next

year's awards.

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