



Tourism Calgary Honours Exceptional Hospitality and Tourism Industry Professionals and Businesses

26 deserving industry stars recognized at Calgary White Hat Awards

May 18, 2016 - This evening, Tourism Calgary celebrated tourism and hospitality excellence at the 54th annual Calgary White Hat Awards. These awards recognize the people who welcome over 8 million visitors a year to Calgary with world-renowned western hospitality, supporting a \$1.7 billion visitor economy.

“The Calgary White Hat Awards are about celebrating the tremendous people and businesses which make our tourism industry as successful as it is,” says Cindy Ady, CEO Tourism Calgary. “The stories of the nominees and winners really exemplify the warmth, spirit and western hospitality of our city and they deserve to be celebrated as the remarkable professionals they are.”

A complete list of all Calgary White Hat Award winners follows.

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event hashtag: #whitehatyyc

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Media Contact:

Cassandra McAuley

Director, Communications

Tourism Calgary

C: 403.835.0711

O: 403.750.2376

cassandram@tourismcalgary.com

54th annual Calgary White Hat Award winners:

White Hat of the Year – Accommodation

Calgary Marriott Downtown Hotel

Whether we travel on business or as a get-away with friends or family, we are always eager to see the hotel. How's the lobby? Are we in the heart of the action? Are the beds comfy?

When you're an established, quality hotel ready to transform from fantastic to fabulous but also stay open and serve guests with a high level of service, what do you do? You power through. You make changes that will delight past visitors while attracting a whole new clientele.

You add 4,000 square feet of meeting space. You create a stylish interior that caters to the way people live, work and travel today. And, you integrate the latest in technology, such as a mobile app that lets guests bypass the front desk to get their electronic key straight to their smart phone.

This wasn't merely a renovation. For a hotel at the centre of Calgary's tourism industry for 20 years, and on the site where a former hotel allegedly played a role in the Wild West, it was a rebirth.

The crown jewel of this hotel's renovation is a new restaurant and bar, which pays homage to Calgary's past, while offering drinks and bites in keeping with today's sophisticated tastes.

White Hat of the Year – Attraction

Calgary Zoo

When you're an attraction that continually reinvents itself to keep things fresh, you're always at the top of everyone's must-see list. Both residents and visitors alike flock to the Calgary Zoo, eager to see the familiar and the new in equal measure.

Innovation in programming keeps visitors coming back for more, contributing to economic growth for the city. One new 2015 event drew 11,000 visitors from outside Calgary; 20 per cent of those stayed in a hotel. Then add in meals, and visits to other sites, and you've got a Calgary destination gold star.

IlluminAsia, the multi-day September event lengthened summer and welcomed autumn. It combined the exoticism and history of Chinese, Japanese and Indian cultures and illuminated the night sky with 366 Chinese lanterns. It offered lion dancers, drummers and music, alongside the lush plantings this destination is known for.

Even in winter, this famed Calgary site draws visitors from home and away, coaxing us outside to embrace the season with our families and friends, to appreciate a night awash in twinkling lights.

White Hat of the Year – Festival / Event

Honens Festival and Piano Competition

One of Calgary's greatest features is that while we celebrate our western heritage and cowboy spirit, we're equally as enthralled with the complexity and beauty of classical music. We cheer for chucks and we also embrace the arts.

Our arts events add colour and softness to our image, draw visitors from around the globe and help us offer a full range of experiences to residents and visitors. You might expect an event of this calibre and notoriety to be in London, Paris or New York. But 20 years ago, a visionary Calgarian decided to bring the world here, spotlighting the city, the arts, and the artistry of performers competing at the highest level.

With media coverage from eight North American and European journalists, and an online broadcast audience from 95 countries, the event is known world-wide. It elevates the art itself, contributing to excellence and widening appreciation for music sometimes considered out of reach to the average person.

We applaud Honens Festival and Piano Competition for continuing to position Calgary as an international cultural destination.

**White Hat of the Year – Restaurant
Yellow Door Bistro**

Each day, we eat. With so many delicious, original, fresh dining options in Calgary, how do we choose where to enjoy a meal? And how do we choose just one restaurant to receive the coveted White Hat award?

We start with what people are saying. From décor to desserts to brunch, this year’s winner has achieved a heaping serving of praise – online, in the media and through prestigious awards.

Then there’s giving back. This restaurant’s participation in Mealshare has already provided some 3,500 meals to people in need. Being part of the community also includes support for the Make A Wish Foundation of Southern Alberta, Meals on Wheels Calgary and the Mustard Seed.

Atmosphere is essential to our fine dining experience. With a witty approach to the space that evokes European bistros and yet has a whimsy sometimes characterized as “Alice in Wonderland,” the distinctive décor is part of this restaurant’s DNA.

The menu is bistro-inspired. It is classic French cuisine meets contemporary influences and modern techniques. The Executive Chef sources local ingredients and forges relationships with farmers to deliver a regionally-influenced dining experience. Add in attention to dietary needs, and one of the largest wine-by-the-glass selections in Calgary, and you have a restaurant worthy of recognition.

Additional honorary awards:

Mayor’s White Hat Award: Suelin Richards, Calgary Stampede

Doug Johnson Service Award: Gail Ouellette, Fairmont Palliser Hotel

All Calgary White Hat Award winners:

CATEGORY	WINNER/EMPLOYER
Best Server: Fine Dining	Kristen Sargent - Anju
Best Server: Café/Diner	Sam Huigeri - Delta Calgary South
Best Server: Banquets/Catering	Shane Berdahl - Calgary Sports & Entertainment Corporation
Best Customer Service: Retail	Edna Webb - Heritage Park Historical Village
Best Host(ess)/Maitre d'	Bruno Medeiros - Calgary Marriott Downtown Hotel
Best Guest Service: Reservations/Travel Agent	Angela Turner - The Fairmont Palliser

Best Restaurant Support: Non-Server	Nelson Prenda - The Fairmont Palliser
Best Customer Service: Airline/In-flight Service	Jody McLellan - WestJet
Best Back of House	Nitin Parswani - Best Western PLUS Port O'Call Hotel
Best Cleaning Services	Bayani Dionisio - The Westin Calgary
Best Server: Brasserie/Bistro	Vivien Huang - Double Zero, Chinook
Best Ground Transportation Driver	Michael Trigiani - Calgary Transit
Best Concierge/Bell Service	Ron Blanco - Delta Calgary Airport In-Terminal Hotel
Best Customer Service: Transportation/Counter Check-in Agent	Itala Saraiva - Budget Calgary
Best Guest Service: Accommodation/Front Desk Agent	Akshay Diwe - The Westin Calgary
Best Spa, Esthetics & Wellness Provider	Mia Ostojic - Stillwater Spa at Hyatt Regency Calgary
Best Bartender/Wine Steward	Jenny Slanisky - Calgary Stampede
Best Customer Service: Attraction	Carly Johansson - Calgary Zoo
Best Volunteer: Tourism and/or Hospitality	Keith Rutherford - Calgary Stampede
Best Culinary Services	Jodie Weber - Azuridge Estate Hotel
Doug Johnson Service Award	Gail Ouellette - The Fairmont Palliser
Mayor's White Hat Award	Suelin Richards - Calgary Stampede
White Hat of the Year: Accommodation	Calgary Marriott Downtown Hotel
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White Hat of the Year: Restaurant	Yellow Door Bistro