



The coveted annual *Handyman France Annual Awards* are made to those countries sending the dirtiest/cleanest, most stupid, least/most considerate, or in any other way the most memorable tourists to take their holidays in France.

The list is a little longer than usual this year due to a couple of never-before-awarded trophies for never-before-encountered situations. Just when you think you've seen it all...

As ever, I promise you that none of the following anecdotes are anything other than true. Nothing has been invented or even exaggerated. Identities and locations have been omitted to protect the guilty.

At the start of the season it looked as though this year's awards would be a purely Anglo-American affair. But other countries did join in as late entries, though somewhat limited compared to previous years. The nominations include – UK; USA; Australia; Denmark; Canada; Spain; New Zealand; Ireland; France. Notable for their absence this year are the Belgians, Dutch and Germans.

The Pants on Fire Award goes to the English guests who lied consistently throughout their stay about a smell of cigarettes in one of the bedrooms just to get a refund. They even fabricated evidence by collecting dog-ends and photographing them on the ground outside the bedroom window. By pure chance I had taken a photo the day before, and there were no dog-ends.

The Moody Blues' 'Go Now' Award to English guests who caused a minor problem when they refused to leave the house before the next guests arrived. Even when they did eventually take the hint, they came back in after a few minutes because it was raining.

The same guests also win the *Albert Einstein Award**. The washing machine died, and with the help of a colleague I delivered the new machine. We were carrying it through the kitchen when one of the guests mentioned that there was a pool of water in the utility room. 'Yes, we've just taken the old washing machine out', I said. 'Are you replacing it?' he enquired. 'Yes, we're carrying it in now!' So he went into the utility room, shut the door and moved everything that wasn't bolted down into the space for the washing machine.

There was another candidate for the Einstein Award, but instead he wins the *John McEnroe 'You cannot be serious' Trophy* for the most ridiculous question of the year. "I noticed that those lights go on and off," he said, pointing to the street lights, "and I wondered - are they connected to the pool pump?"

The Work Rest and Play Award goes to the British family who left the house in very good order. Very clean and tidy. Except for one Mars Bar wrapper. In a bin. In the toilet. Why does anyone eat in the loo?

It is perhaps predictable that the British sent the dirtiest this year, and so have won the *Steptoe Award* yet again. In conversation during the meet & greet, they mentioned that they were also in property management and were fully aware of the state people leave

houses in. The house was borderline filthy when they left. Every floor was covered in crumbs and sweet wrappers. Melted chocolate had welded itself to floor tile grouting. Head Office even saw one of the teenage girls eat a packet of crisps and throw the bag onto the lounge floor.

The Auf Wiedersehen, Pet (Gissa a Job) Award goes to the English guest who is a retired pool engineer. He brought test equipment and chemicals with him (just in case) and thoroughly enjoyed pampering the pool for a week. I have to admit, he's a man after my own heart.

The *Derek & Clive 'I'm Going to Complain' Award* goes to the Australian who was miserable when he arrived, stayed miserable throughout his stay and was still miserable when he left. He complained about anything and everything, though the complaints were simply not justified, inaccurate or grossly exaggerated. If anyone ever needed a holiday, it was him...

...along with a French guest who was staying in a neighbouring property and therefore nothing to do with us. He was a postman, and lectured me about the need for the house number to be displayed on the property we manage. I confirmed with him that he was indeed on holiday, but my French failed me when I wanted to advise him to take a day off. For him, the *Trophée de Postman Pat*...

...and his *Black and White Cat* for the guest who sent an email flagged urgent to the owner complaining that when they arrived there was a stray cat on the terrace. On second thoughts, I think this English visitor deserves nothing less than *Mrs Slocombe's Pussy*.

The cleanest guests were British and so gain the *Head Office Seal of Approval*. Which is unusual. The absence of Belgium this year would appear to be a factor if it were not for the fact that no fewer than two British families launched UK into pole position.

The Americans proved yet again that the stereotype we have of them being loud, brash, demanding and not too bright is a myth. The Yanks are the least troublesome again this year...

...though the stereotypical Australian as being laid-back and totally carefree is not supported by the *Derek and Clive Award* winner.

* Einstein once said that the difference between genius and stupidity is that genius is limited.

Oh the joys of property management in the summer!