



Never mind the Oscars, Baftas, soap awards and all the other luvvie ceremonies. This is the time of year for the Handyman France Annual Awards for nations sending the most (and least) demanding, difficult, dirty and untidy tourists to France.

The nominations in all categories are –

America
Australia
Belgium
Canada
France
Germany
Ireland
Netherlands
Spain
UK

Several countries withdrew from this year's competition, notably -

Denmark
Italy
Lithuania
Norway
Russia
Sweden

So without further ado, the winners in each category are...wait for it...

The Australians' (No Worries Mate) Cup for the least difficult/demanding – Americans, with Belgians a very close second

The Hyacinth Bucket Award for most difficult/demanding – French, with no other serious contenders

The Head Office Seal of Approval for the tidiest/cleanest – Belgians, with Americans a close second

The Steptoe Award for untidiest/dirtiest – British, with no close competition

Some of these awards warrant a little explanation. Most difficult/demanding category winners include a French group who arrived three hours late and even then at the wrong house, and didn't think to let me know they would be late*; a French lady who followed me around the house with a packet of coffee complaining there was no coffee machine (which there was, she simply hadn't seen it); a phone call saying that 'the pool is very dirty' – about a teaspoonful of sand in an outdoor pool is hardly a health hazard, is it? Untidiest/dirtiest is a general observation, compounded by one British group who, for instance, were apparently unaware of how a toilet flushes; had left behind so much stale food in the kitchen it became infested with ants, and included a baguette that could have doubled as a baseball bat; furniture moved between rooms and not returned.

* To be fair, the record late arrival was 32 hours a couple of years ago. Because they drove the pretty route. British.

Americans leading the least difficult/demanding group may come as a surprise, but they really couldn't be less trouble.

The coveted Einstein Award for Lifetime Achievement for Services to Idiocy can also be announced. Remember that Albert Einstein said, "Only two things are infinite – the universe, and human stupidity. And I'm not sure about the universe."

The accumulation of several years' worth of tourists from the winning country has produced the following examples of contributors –

- The lady who, on her previous year's holiday, sprained her ankle so brought with her a pair of crutches 'just in case'. On RyanAir as well!
- The group of twelve adults, none of whom could figure out how to turn on a shower.
- The woman who rang me to complain it was too hot and sunny and she was getting sunburnt – in July.
- The man who brought his digibox to watch TV then complained he couldn't use it (because he didn't know how).
- The family who went out for the day and left every door, window and shutter wide open. But they closed the driveway gates.
- The group who arrived at the house before the previous guests had even left and couldn't understand why we wouldn't let them in.
- The people who decided to leave early and left the front door key on the BBQ in full view of passers-by.
- Several people who drink a glass of water – and then ask if it's safe to drink the water.
- Having ruined a bed sheet with blood stains, one family thought they'd get away with it by painting the sheet with white gloss paint.

The winning nation is – Great Britain.

Makes you proud to be British, doesn't it?