



The **Handyman France Annual Awards** are back with the results for **2022**. It's different this year due to highly unusual circumstances.

We had a slow start to the year as I recovered from an incident in October 2021, when I broke my leg. I fell over in a swimming pool. How do you break a leg falling over in a pool, I hear you ask. Believe me, it's quite easy if the pool is empty at the time. It took six *sapeurs-pompiers* to get me out of the pool, a process which was, shall we say, a bit painful. None of them spoke English when they arrived. They were all fluent in swearing by the time they left. So, a **December 8th 1310 Award**¹ for them as a 'thank you'.. And it doesn't end there because, just as I was getting back on my feet (pun intended)...

...I had about five heart attacks, but was too dopey to realise it (I had chest pains but none of the other classic symptoms). In April, I was in an ambulance again, this time with heart failure (quite a bigly one - I had around five minutes left). It was in hospital that I was told that I'd had heart attacks. A **Homer Simpson "Doh!" Award** is self-explanatory.

A **Ray Charles ("If it wasn't for bad luck... (... I wouldn't have no luck at all)") Award** is also justified I think.

One of the nurses came in one day, took a blood sample, made sure the drip was OK, and asked me if there was anything I wanted. I couldn't help it. I said, "Yes, a cigarette." She went from zero to hyper-ballistic in less than a zeptosecond². Then she smiled as she realised I was kidding. To this French nurse, and indeed her colleagues everywhere, a **Carry On Nurse Award**. And a big thank you.

OK, so now to the more usual fun look at the last year. As always, names and property details are never revealed. This is to protect the guilty. Nothing is invented or exaggerated (well, almost nothing), because there really is no need. Truth is always stranger than fiction.

This year's nominees are - Australia - Belgium - Canada - France - Germany - Holland - Ireland - Poland - UK

The coveted **Head Office Seal of Approval** for the cleanest and tidiest guests goes, not unusually, to Belgium. Not only was the house spotless when they left, but they had done most of the laundry and even made the beds with the spare bedding that was available for their use during their two-week stay.

¹ December 8th 1310 is the first recorded use of the 'F' word. It was in Chester County Court and was, it seems, part of a defendant's nickname.

² A zeptosecond is 0.0000000000000000001 of a second, and is the shortest period of time ever measured. The nurse easily beat that.

This award goes to the very first guests of the year, also from Belgium. A few days before their arrival, they were advised that I was seriously ill in hospital. They were due to arrive at 12h00, which would have made it possible for Head Office to visit. But they were five hours late because they decided to do some sightseeing in Toulouse. They receive the **Professor Carlo Cipolla's 5th Law of Stupidity Award**. (This is a piece of genuine research. In the fifth law, it states that stupid people don't realise they are stupid, and consequently "*...this contributes to give greater strength, incidence and effectiveness to his devastating action.*")

Three British families share the following water-themed award...

We're used to strange questions at meets and greets. Sometimes the questions seem to defy all logic. Here's an example. The guests asked if the house had air con, or just central heating. "There's no air con," I replied wondering if they really wanted the heating on in June. "So how do we get hot water?" he asked. I advised him to turn on the tap. "Oh...", he replied sounding not too convinced.

The **Handyman France First Law of Holiday Rentals** states that if a guest can, a guest will - break it, bend it, lose it or just generally bugger it up. Hose pipe reels can often be difficult to use properly, and hoses can become twisted or folded over thus preventing any water from flowing. But tied in knots? How does anyone do that?

Guests at yet another property complained that a tap in the bathroom was loose. OK, it wasn't as tightly fitted as it should have been, but it didn't merit an 'emergency' call-out.

They share a **CCS "Tap turns on the water, see the water flow" Award**. Well done.

When talking with other people who are in the property management business, or with owners of gîtes, stories sometimes emerge that merit a mention here. Here's a couple of examples. The owner of a gîte became aware of chirping sounds coming from within the house. Fearing that birds may have entered through an open window, she went in. In the lounge were several baby chickens - in an incubator. Complete with infrared heater. The guests weren't too happy when told the chicks had to go outside. I hope they were put somewhere safe, and not where their award may suggest - a **Middle of the Road ("Chirpy chirpy cheep cheep") Award** goes to Belgium.

Guests due to arrive on a Saturday announced they would be arriving a day early. Note, 'announced', not requested. They were told that it was not possible as there were guests already in the house. So they arrived on the correct day - at 10h30. Unsurprisingly, the house wasn't ready so they were apparently told to go away and come back later. They returned at 11h00. They then had the temerity to complain about everything, and knowing the owners as well as we do, we don't believe a word of it. A **Rolling Stones ("I can't get no satisfaction") Award** to Belgium, which is featuring rather heavily this year.

Two separate families (of four and of three) used so much sunscreen that the filter in the Desjoyaux pool was completely blocked after less than a week, with enough muck in it to fill bucket (OK, I've exaggerated that bit). I understand the need to be sensible about sunburn – but what I don't understand is if you're that worried about it, why go on holiday to hot and sunny places? Another two British families share what else but a **Baz Luhrmann (“Sunscreen”) Award**.



Holidays are a time to be happy, yes? A time to laugh and have fun. A time to let the kids off the leash a little. A family was so dreary and cheerless that although I was with them for around 45 minutes whilst cleaning the pool, not one of them spoke, never mind any laughter or playful activity. There was total silence in the house, despite there being seven adults plus an unknown number of youngsters in there. A **Les Misérables Award** for this French group.

The aforementioned *Handyman France First Law of Holiday Rentals* applies to another group who managed to replicate the hose reel scenario with the strap on a pool safety cover. The strap is fairly essential for closing the cover, and must reach from one end of the pool to the other. It can't do this when tangled and knotted as in the photo. How do people do this? These Brummies were perhaps feeling a little homesick, so they win a **Spaghetti Junction Award**. And there's more to come with pool safety measures...



...which are there for a reason. To keep pools safe when unattended. It's a legal requirement and all are simple to use. We had two sets of guests who didn't seem to be able to grasp the importance of this, or how to use the cover correctly. In both cases, the cover was pulled over the pool, but not secured in any way, so the pool was unguarded. The financial penalty is significant (thousands of Euros). But the potential for a child drowning is the real issue here. Were they thick, lazy or reckless? I don't know for certain, but probably the first. So a **Stevie Wonder (“We can work it out”) Award** for UK and Canada. (Not the Beatles' original. This one because it's a cover version. *Cover*. Get it? Sigh.)

And there we have it, proving yet again that human nature doesn't respect national boundaries, cultures, language or anything else. And whilst it's true that working in the tourist industry would be a doddle without the tourists, it wouldn't be so much fun.

Saving the best until last, a very special mention for someone who suffered eight months of stress and disruption, and whose workload increased enormously when nursing, dietician and chauffeuring duties were added – all with great patience, and in total calmness and good humour. A **Tina Turner (“You're simply the best (...take my heart and make it strong...))” Award** goes to Head Office (aka Wossername, The Wife).