



# Hidden Britain

....Leading the way in discovering and developing responsible rural tourism

## Totnes Mystery Visitor Survey Summary

To understand the view of Totnes from an outsider's perspective, Hidden Britain arranged a survey of the town. The survey used the Mystery Visitor Evaluation process, which is widely used as a 'snapshot' tool to measure how market towns appear to a visitor, who may be experiencing the town for the first time. The methodology is designed to measure the range of facilities on offer in a market town that a visitor might want to use during their visit, and the value for money that these offer, rather than evaluating one particular visitor attraction/ retail /service outlet.

Below is a summary of the findings,

### TOTAL SCORE

235 out of possible 280 = 75.81% (Average = 66.02%)

### 1. SPECIAL FACTORS

Time of visit – January (weekday and outside main visitor season)

The weather – Clear and mild for time of year (8°C)

### 2. ARRIVAL IN TOWN - PARKING

Score 31 out of 40

#### *Strengths*

- » Clearly signed that you are arriving in Totnes from main routes
- » Car parking clearly signed from main routes
- » Plentiful spaces and car parks close to town centre (although all car parks fairly small)
- » All machines and facilities working in car parks (no graffiti or vandalism evident)
- » Car parks very clean and all bins emptied regularly

#### *Weaknesses*

- » Once within town itself car-parking signs less clear, although somewhat caused by the winding nature of the street layout (creating some tight turns and difficult manoeuvres to access in places)

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- » Very little in terms of interpretation or maps in main car-parks making signage from car parks for on foot pedestrians not as clear as could be
- » No free parking available and parking costs incentivise on street parking for short term visits (90p per hour in car park vs 60p on street)
- » Full day parking is relatively expensive at £6

### 3. TRANSPORT FACILITIES

Score 26 out of 30

#### *Strengths*

- » Bus links available to key destinations and urban centres during daytime Mon-Sat
- » Mainline train services (3 hr journey to London)
- » Plenty of car parking available at station
- » Maps and signage available at station on immediate arrival

#### *Weaknesses*

- » Though signage is available the first impression from the train station is disappointing, with the route placing you on a main road with little indication of where to go next. Trees beside station block view of the castle so provide little in the way of anticipation
- » Bus shelter opposite Royal Seven Stars in poor state of repair

### 4. SHOPPING AND CATERING FACILITIES

Score 115 out of 130

#### *Strengths*

- » Excellent retail provision for size of town, including many independent “destination shops” offering alternative and interesting options - well set-up for browsing shoppers
- » Very few high street names giving an individual and eclectic feel
- » All windows well maintained, many premises showed clear signs of recent decoration
- » Excellent provision of choice and type of catering options within town centre for both formal and informal catering options (including plenty of coffee options with differentiated offers)
- » Many local produce focussed options (at least 3 butchers and plentiful local and organic options)
- » Great options for self-catering or self-sufficient audiences as well as restaurants (although good evening options as well) including artisan and specialist offers (ostrich pie noted)
- » Most retail options housed in historic and architecturally interesting buildings
- » Pop-up shops utilising vacant retail space
- » Lots of alfresco options (even in January) creating a buzz on the streets

#### *Weaknesses*

- » Some vacant premises obvious
- » Little value differentiation from a city centre (general parity in prices).

- » Opening hours erratic, some premises closed in middle of afternoon, others close early or open late and little Sunday provision)

## 5. MYSTERY SHOPPING EXERCISE

1<sup>st</sup> Mystery shopping – score 8 – Very good and friendly service. Too busy to welcome customer on arrival, but helpfully answered queries related to both the business and Totnes as a whole, very knowledgeable and conversational and thanked customer on departure.

2<sup>nd</sup> Mystery shopping - score 9 – Exceptional and friendly service. Cheerfully welcomed customer on arrival, quick and efficient in answering queries related to both the business and Totnes as a whole (including making suggestions and recommendations) and thanked customer on departure.

## 8. VISITOR INFORMATION CENTRE

Score 8 out of 10

### *Strengths*

- » Welcoming and friendly staff no matter the enquiry, but knew exactly when to help and when to allow the visitor to browse of their own accord
- » Customer questions greeted with interest, handled politely, multiple solutions or ideas offered and recommended publications including ones additional to enquiry
- » Range of Totnes specific publications on display

### *Weaknesses*

- » Location not immediately obvious as signage inconsistent (absent in key places and pointing in the wrong direction in others)
- » Selection of leaflets offered duplicated some information and all in very different styles and a general lack of a call to action across the board
- » Not open Sunday – where is information available when closed?

## 9. OTHER FACILITIES

**Cash Machines** scored 10/10 well above average (wide selection available in destination)

**Mobile Internet** scored 10/10 above average, possible to read a QR code and stream a Youtube clip whilst on High Street

## 9. TOILETS AND BABY CHANGE FACILITIES

Score 19 out of 20

### *Strengths*

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- » Toilets were clean, all working well, plenty of consumables, obviously maintained regularly, all lights working
- » Almost complete lack of odour from any of the cubicles checked
- » Babychange area provided

#### *Weaknesses*

- » Only open in daylight hours
- » No nappies or wipes provided in babychange
- » Some discarded tissues in babychange area

## **10. GENERAL ASSESSMENT OF DESTINATION**

Score 9 out of 10

#### *Strengths*

- » Very well presented town with plenty of historical architecture
- » Differentiating atmosphere and ambience backed up by the independent and individual product and retail offering
- » Map boards and fingerposts signing to key attractions from town centre (but see below)
- » Generally welcoming, friendly and people generally keen to converse and
- » Public seating available in numerous locations (many very pleasant ones) and in generally good condition

#### *Weaknesses*

- » Lack of interpretation and map boards in car park areas and fingerposts in town inconsistent and misleading
- » Some street furniture looking a little tired (needs TLC - especially fingerposts)
- » Cigarette butts and small litter items in evidence throughout town at time of visit
- » Key attractions closed at time of visit

## **11. OVERALL IMPRESSION**

### **BEST**

1. Totnes offered something very different to most destinations and had plenty to occupy the interest of a visitor for a day visit
2. Big choice and range of retail and catering options available including very individual or different options
3. Excellent welcome and level of customer service across the board
4. Welcoming and knowledgeable staff at TIC
5. Above average public toilets

### **WORST**

1. Opening hours of business and facilities erratic
2. Information and signage inconsistent or misleading (absent in main car parks)

3. No real sense of arrival at Station
4. Little evidence of information provision outside of TIC hours
5. Some small litter issues

