

FIVE STAR AWARD COMMENDS JACOBITE FOR CREATING WORLD CLASS CRUISE EXPERIENCE ON LOCH NESS

Jacobite – Experience Loch Ness has been officially designated one of Scotland’s premier league visitor attractions by the country’s tourism agency VisitScotland. Company owner Freda Rapson received VisitScotland’s supreme Five Star award from the agency’s chairman Peter Lederer in a presentation at this week’s Expo, the annual tourism industry showcase in Glasgow’s SECC.

Freda Rapson says: “I’m immensely proud to have created a five star quality cruise experience on Loch Ness. Five stars is what we aim for, so I’m delighted to see our efforts recognised officially by VisitScotland. Now we are operating all year round on Loch Ness we can offer visitors in all seasons the certainty that they will enjoy the experience of Loch Ness to the maximum with Jacobite.”

Peter Lederer, VisitScotland’s Chairman says: “VisitScotland’s five stars say a lot about a tourism business. They stand for exceptional product quality and exceptional service delivering an exceptional experience. We are delighted to recognise Jacobite for creating a five star visitor attraction in one of Scotland’s iconic locations and congratulate Freda and her employees on running a business which exemplifies best practice in the industry”

The award is reserved only for those select operators and attractions whose product is adjudged by VisitScotland’s Quality Assurance assessors to be of an ‘exceptional’ standard. In their appraisal the assessors concluded Jacobite earned this five star grading by consistently exceeding visitor expectations and presenting Loch Ness’s scenery, history, and intrigue in a unique product delivering high quality standard facilities and service. It is the first time a Loch Ness cruise operator has been awarded five stars.

Tony Mercer, Head of Quality & Standards at VisitScotland says:

"Jacobite is a worthy holder of the 5 star Tour accolade as it sets very high standards in the hugely important day trip market. Visitors and locals alike can enjoy the experience of viewing some of our most famous sites, Loch Ness and Urquhart Castle, from the loch itself on an informative and comfortable cruise combined with coach trip. We are delighted that the advice of the Quality & Standards team has been useful in ensuring that customer needs are met to such a high degree".

The award also follows the recent elevation of Loch Ness and its visitor attractions in tourism businesses to the very top of the 'must do' category of Pete Irvine's 'Scotland the Best' guide, a book now regarded as the 'bible' of Scottish visitor attractions. In his 'Best places to visit' category, Pete Irvine awarded Loch Ness his coveted 'Three Ticks' commendation, rating Loch Ness as world class and 'simply unique'. Pete Irvine says: "One of the best ways to see Loch Ness is on a cruise from Inverness."

The award also continues the recent success of Jacobite since its £500,000 re-investment bringing all year round operating and the introduction of a programme of cruises and tours allowing visitors the chance to experience Loch Ness in its dramatic winter setting. The new five stars award continues Jacobite's run of plaudits which include a 2005 Thistle Award, Investors in People status; Hospitality Assured Award for high standards of service; National Business Awards Tourism Business of the Year 2004, VisitScotland Green Tourism Business Scheme Bronze rating for adopting environmentally friendly practices; Association of Visitor Attractions (ASVA) Best Leaflet Award for its brochure 'Jacobite Summer Cruises - Sail the Loch, Live the Legend' and Best Visitor and Marketing Initiative at the Inverness Tourism Awards.

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Notes for Editors

The *Jacobite – Experience Loch Ness* tours and cruises programme run all year round with seasonal programme variations. The fleet's centrally heated and double glazed luxury vessels offer a unique opportunity to travel in comfort and style around the history and mystery of one of the world's most picturesque and intriguing lochs.

The tours include informative and entertaining audio, and a range of on-board snacks and drinks are available as well as a variety of Scottish Jacobite gifts and souvenirs.

Fitting in with any visitor's schedule, tour times range from the one-hour *Jacobite Inspiration* to the ultimate Loch Ness tour - the four-hour *Jacobite Sensation* cruise and tour. Prices start at just £6 for children and £8.50 for adults.

For more information or to make a booking visit www.jacobite.co.uk or call 01463 233999.

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