



## The sarl Handyman France Annual Awards 2021

Welcome, once again, to the [Handyman France Annual Awards](#) for 2021. It's a little different this year as the Covid-19 crisis continues to affect tourism. This year's nominees are -

- Belgium
- Canada
- France
- Germany
- Sweden
- The Netherlands
- Thailand
- UK
- The United Nations

As always, the following are true accounts of people we've met during the year with no invention or exaggeration of those encounters. Names and property locations, as always, are concealed to protect the guilty. This is the second year of the Covid crisis, but never mind. We can all still be cheerful. Can't we? Of course we can, as the first Award indicates. But not, sadly, the second.

This has nothing whatsoever to do with tourism but it's a nice story that deserves an audience. After queueing up at the same roadworks several times on the Carcassonne/Villalier road, the man operating the stop/go lollipop waved and smiled as cars went through. The first time I saw this I thought that he knew the people ahead of me. Then I realised he was waving and smiling to everyone, including me. The smile was huge (and somewhat enhanced by his ethnicity) and the wave was to say the least enthusiastic. Several times, he was even dancing. A **Ken Dodd ("Happiness") Award** for this quite amazing Frenchman who made the world a better place for so many people.

But it seems a Belgian family of five, spanning three generations, were not aware that happiness was allowed. According to the owner, they were the 'most demanding guests we've ever had'. I'd describe them slightly differently - plain miserable. Among their frivolous and almost entirely unjustifiable moans was that there were only four patio chairs of the same type, meaning that one person had to use a different chair to the others. A **Jungle Book ("I wanna be like you") Award** goes to them because if nothing else, watching it may cheer them up a bit. But probably not.

The much coveted **Head Office Seal of Approval** (for those guests leaving the property clean and tidy) goes to France. Germany was a close second. None were left in a bad enough state to merit the **Steptoe Award**.

The Belgian comedian Philippe Geluck said, *"When you are dead, you don't know that you are dead. It is difficult only for the others. It is the same when you are stupid."* Please bear this mind when reading the next three awards...

Early communications with a Dutch family were hampered somewhat because the contact said he didn't understand English or how to use an online translator. On the day they arrived, we waited 90 minutes for them before we gave up. They arrived half an hour later and only then responded to my text and email asking for an arrival time – and those replies were in English. They didn't need us to meet and greet because everything was 'OK'. When I visited after a week to do the pool, the safety cover hadn't been removed properly, the water level was several centimetres too low and consequently the water was turning green. And I found they all spoke English. When they left, the house was completely rearranged with numerous things moved for no apparent reason between various rooms. A **Preparation H Award** is merely the first...

...with the second arising from the fact that one double bed had three of its' five legs broken and the other two were also damaged (the bed has one leg in each corner plus another in the centre, in case you think I've lost the plot). They must have known about it, as a piece of trim was lying on the floor that could only be removed by unscrewing the base of the leg. So, a **Bobby Vee (Rubber Ball "bouncy bouncy, bouncy bouncy") Award** - because I'm jealous.

And it doesn't end there for this hapless group. They could easily have set the house on fire by lighting the BBQ on dry grass and under a pine tree instead of on the terrace (which is where the BBQ was when they arrived). What else but an **Arthur Brown ("Fire - I'll take you to burn") Award**. And they may even feature next year as a return visit in 2022 is promised – or is that a threat?

Are we all agreed that this Dutch family also merit an **Einstein Award** for a lifetime achievement in services to stupidity?

Owners' families have featured in the Awards before, but nothing quite as odd as this. One of our clients' grandson had two identical inflatable crocodiles. He named one after Boris Johnson and the other after me. I'm not sure if there's a compliment lurking in there or not. One of the crocodiles was punctured. He decided it was the one named after me, and I was declared dead at the scene. **The Wheels on the Bus Go Round ("the crocodile on the bus goes snap, snap, snap") Award** for this traumatic experience.

A problematic pool disrupted the holiday for a mixed group from France, Belgium and Thailand. **Handyman France** was parachuted in at the last moment to hold things together until we could carry out proper repairs. Despite repeated visits during their stay and the pool initially being out of use for a couple of days, the guests remained utterly charming and helpful. They didn't even make any complaint to the owner other than a polite request to have the pool sorted out. A **Bob Marley ("Everything's gonna be alright") Award** is shared between the three countries.

All of which is quite mundane compared to the following page. Here are some tales from around the world about some of the more ridiculous rules that have been imposed to combat Covid-19. We could only reach one conclusion. See if you agree...

**Malaysia** had a problem with overcrowding on public transport. The solution? They reduced the number of buses and trains. Oh dear...

And in **Belgium**, if you wanted to travel to the seaside by train, the ticket had to be bought online. One-way only, no returns. You were allocated a seat by the window. You couldn't sit anywhere else, and not next to anyone. Then, to travel home from the seaside you had to queue up at the ticket booth to buy the ticket. And you could sit wherever, and next to whoever, you chose. Oh dear, oh dear...

In **Vietnam**, Ho Chi Minh City was placed in total lockdown. No one was allowed to leave home for any reason. Free food was delivered to people's doors. That's OK if you like rice, because that's all there was. But – within days it was announced that the entire population of Ho Chi Minh City (around eight and a half million) were to be tested in one day. But not at home. Everyone had to go to test centres. Millions of 'em. All that the same time. Then go home to return to lockdown. Oh dear, oh dear, oh dear...

**Brazil** banned pillows on aircraft. (I'm running out of 'oh dears'.)

In September, **Dutch** night clubs were allowed to open. But not at night.

And it gets worse, because -

Leaf blowers were banned in **New York**. In **California**, 22 people were fined for watching the sun set.

In **Panama** women were allowed out on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. Men could only go out on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays. No one was allowed out on Sundays. The rule didn't last very long, but was inspirational because...

...not to be outdone, **Costa Rica** applied a similar rule – to cars. The registration number of your car determines which days you can go out.

Saving the best, or worst depending on your point of view, until last - in **South Africa** you can buy shoes, but not sandals or flip-flops.

It's tempting to say 'you couldn't make it up'. The trouble is, someone *did* make it up.

So our conclusion is to award to the United Nations (to be shared among our world leaders) the **Napoleon XIV ("They're coming to take me away, ha-haaa ... to the funny farm...") Award** because they have collectively striven so hard to prove which lunatics have taken over the asylum. (It was a hit record in 1966 by Jerry Samuels in case you've never heard of it.)

It's not just politicians who have displayed signs of lunacy, so this last item is dedicated to many lesser mortals. You know who you are...

The picture is of a poster seen in a shop on the Franco-Spanish border. No translation is needed.

