



Press Release
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Search is on to find Valleys Vacationers

Valleys campaign looks for online reporters for summer events season

With 48 per cent of people planning to have a staycation this summer*, The Valleys Heart and Soul campaign has launched a search to find its official Valleys Vacationers who will be given exclusive access to the hottest Valleys events over the summer.

From partying to the sounds of The Blackout at Merthyr Rock and feasting on delicious food at The Big Cheese to watching boyband of-the-moment The Wanted at Ponty's Big Weekend and sampling the finest of ciders at the International Cider Festival, the chosen Valleys Vacationers won't be stuck for events to suit their tastes.

Two groups will be selected to become Valleys Vacationers – one family and a couple or two friends – and must enter by sending a picture and explaining in no more than 100 words why they would make brilliant Vacationers to vacationers@thevalleys.co.uk

The Vacationers will be asked to take pictures while at the events and send a short review which will be used as a photo blog on The Valleys' website over the summer.

And to help people plan their visit to the area, which spans from Kidwelly in the west to Pontypool in the east, The Valleys – Heart and Soul has launched a 'Which Valleys Vacationer Are You?' quiz on its website to reveal whether visitors are a

Hipster, Cosmopolitan, Foodie or Adrenaline Junkie and a suggested itinerary of events and activities based on their personality.

Huw Lewis, Minister for Housing, Regeneration and Heritage, said: “Wales is fast becoming a destination of choice for travellers with our own capital city recently voted in the top ten to visit. Yet Wales has so much more to offer for both visitors and locals alike.

“The Valleys is a fantastic location to visit with world renowned attractions such as Big Pit and now this exciting and diverse summer events programme. Local people can enjoy music concerts, festivals and much more right on their doorstep without having to venture too far afield.

“We can’t guarantee the weather but a good time is a cert. I hope locals and visitors alike will turn up in force to take advantage of what’s happening across The Valleys this summer.”

The Valleys Heart and Soul initiative is a three year campaign led by partnership organisations from the Western Valleys, Valleys Regional Park and The Valleys Partnership, and aims to change perceptions of The Valleys and bring long-term economic benefits to the area with the overarching aim of attracting more tourists to the region.

How to enter:

Send a picture of your group and explain why you should become Valleys Vacationers to vacationers@thevalleys.co.uk by no later than **12pm on Wednesday, 20 July**. Visit the ‘Get Involved’ page at thevalleys.co.uk for further information.

One couple (or two friends) and one family will be selected as Vacationers and will be required to attend six events between July – September 2011 and provide pictures and 100 words following each event.

All lead members of the group must be over the age of 18 and those under 18 will be restricted to attending some of the events such as Steelhouse Festival, Merthyr Rock or International Cider Festival. Full terms and conditions listed on the website.

Vacationers will be given free access to events as well as expenses for transport and food.

A flavour of the festivals and events taking place in The Valleys this summer:

Ponty's Big Weekend, Ynysangharad War Memorial Park, Pontypridd, 23-24 July - July's flagship event will see top boy band The Wanted headlining the Saturday night event while operatic sensation Paul Potts, our very own Sophie Evans, classical soloist Natasha Marsh and female quartet All Angels will thrill families at the free Sunday event.

The Big Cheese, Caerphilly Castle, 29-31 July - Set in the shadows of one of Europe's largest Castles, the town of Caerphilly comes to life as people of all ages visit The Big Cheese, an extravaganza of street entertainers, living history encampments, music, dance, traditional funfair, folk dancing, falconry, fire eating, minstrels, troubadours and much more. You will also get a chance to sample some great local cheeses including the delicious Blaenafon Cheddar and Snowdonia Cheese as well as a huge range of chutneys, pickles and patisseries

Steelhouse Festival, Hafod-Y-Dafal Farm, near Ebbw Vale, 19-20 Aug - A new classic rock festival, which will bring international artists to the heart of the South Wales Valleys. Enjoy a weekend of incredible music from established artists, up-and-coming breakthrough acts and the best tribute bands around, surrounded by beautiful countryside and breathtaking views.

Merthyr Rock, Cyfarthfa Park, Merthyr Tydfil, 2-4 Sept – The organisers behind the Hay Festival bring a new signature event to The Valleys – and we're proud to welcome Merthyr Rock! Cyfarthfa Park will be transformed into a tented village with great bands including Ocean Colour Scene, Funeral for a Friend and Merthyr's very own The Blackout. A day ticket price is only £20, so come and be part of something massive in Merthyr Tydfil, it could be next year's Glastonbury. With this line up, it's sure to soon become a festival-goers favourite!

Notes to editors:

*BRDC Continental

Images:

The Valleys Vacationers can attend events including The Big Cheese (pictured), Merthyr Rock and Ponty's Big Weekend.

For further information please contact Helen Newton at Equinox Communications on 029 20764100 or email valleys@equinoxcommunications.co.uk

The Heads of the Valleys regeneration programme is part-funded by the European Regional Development Fund, together with match funding from the Welsh Assembly Government and other partner organisations. The 3-year campaign aims to bring economic benefit to Blaenau Gwent, Torfaen, Merthyr Tydfil, Caerphilly, Rhondda Cynon Taf, Bridgend, northern parts of Swansea and Neath Port Talbot and the eastern Valleys of Carmarthenshire.

Aimed at changing perceptions of the Valleys both to local people and outsiders, the campaign will encourage more visitors and attract potential investors.

www.thevalleys.co.uk