

“Of the Year” Awards Explained

Each year The Orvis Company recognizes exceptional performance of operators/businesses within the Endorsed partnership with the Orvis-Endorsed “Of the Year” awards. It is Orvis’ belief that the Endorsed Partnership comprises the finest group of Lodges, Outfitters, Guides, Hunting Grounds, Expeditions, and Fly Shops in the fly-fishing and wingshooting space, and that winners selected from this elite pool are unique in their fields. The act of recognizing select partners serves several purposes:

- Foremost, it salutes a job well done by a business that, like Orvis, is committed to delivering exceptional customer experiences.
- Second, the annual selection of standouts from the pool of partners optimally serves to motivate each member of the group, ensuring that partners continue to enhance their offering while soliciting customer reviews of that good work on Orvis.com.
- Finally, the “Of the Year” winner selection and nominee recognition allows greater exposure of the Endorsed Partnership, which in turn lends greater brand authority to the Endorsed Partnership as a whole.

Wonderfully, nominees and winners of these awards have leveraged the accolade to significant effect as a marketing/awareness tool, and fellow partners have noted the value. With that, the team within Orvis Adventures is regularly asked for transparency about what these awards communicate/mean (both internally and externally), how the winners and finalists are selected, and how nominees can leverage selection as a unique marketing tool.

The Orvis Adventures Team hopes that this document can answer those questions.

What is an Orvis-Endorsed “Of the Year” award?

An “Of the Year” award is, at heart, a peoples’ choice award, though additional criteria are considered when choosing winners from a pool of finalists. The award should recognize that a winner or nominee delivers the following in the eyes of both the consumer and the Orvis Company:

- An exceptional fly-fishing or wingshooting experience in an exceptional resource. Prioritized are attention to detail, service, safety, and willingness to assess each customer’s individual wants and needs.
- Consistency of quality throughout each facet of the experience (i.e., excellence in all dealings from communication, coordination, and booking process to the delivery of a day in the field or on the water).
- Efforts of the Endorsed Partner to be positive members of the greater outdoor community; to give back to the resource via conservation efforts or environmentally friendly practices; to welcome new and diverse customers into the endorsed activities; to be positive ambassadors for the Orvis brand.

How are selections made?

Selections are made by a team within Orvis Adventures with approval from stakeholders in the greater Orvis business. The selection process leans primarily on consideration of partner reviews obtained on each partner page at www.orvis.com . This vehicle allows the selection team to hear the voice of the customer, while simultaneously incentivizing partners to gather more reviews. These reviews are

remarkably strong marketing assets and represent enhanced authentic “content” on each partner page, driving more traffic to those pages. Accumulation of reviews helps you, the partner, get more business.

The actual selection process looks like this:

- A partner must receive a minimum of 20 individual reviews within the calendar year to be eligible for selection. This guardrail allows small operators or those with a short season to be measured equitably against businesses with a much higher customer volume.
- Those partners who have achieved the minimum number of reviews are “scored” based on the reviews. Note that the review process asks the reviewer to provide much deeper insight than what is revealed on the public-facing partner page (i.e., many questions are asked).
- The answer to each question/field in the review is weighted, with some questions impacting the final score to a greater degree than others. To ensure the highest score possible, it is vital that you (the partner) encourage your reviewer/customer to fill out each field in the review completely. Each field is considered, and a non-answer will offer no benefit to the overall tally of a final score.
- “Guide of the Year” selections are occasionally made by referencing specific feedback about an individual guide employed by a larger endorsed operation. Specifically, if a Guide is recommended for nomination numerous times within a Partner’s review process, and the anecdotal support is overwhelming that the Guide is deserving, that Guide can be presented as a nominee per the recommendation of the Orvis Adventures Team.
- Once the scoring of each individual review is tallied, all scores for all reviews received in a full-year cycle of the business are averaged. This average score is then measured against the average score for all qualifying partner businesses, and the highest scoring 3 or 4 partners are put “on the table” for consideration.

To this point in the process, the entire selection process is governed by customer reviews. Occasionally, one destination will have achieved a final score that makes that destination a clear frontrunner. Often, however, the scores are so close that more subjective consideration by the Adventures Team is required. In this case, the process proceeds as follows, with consideration of the finalists’ efforts on the following fronts:

- Product support: does the finalist go to great lengths to either sell or promote Orvis products via pro-shop sales, representation of products via guide use, availability of product for customer use, overall presence of Orvis-branded product throughout the customer experience?
- Conservation: does the finalist take part in and celebrate any specific conservation initiatives such as sustainable land-use practices, reduction of single-use plastic, conservation efforts on behalf of a specific species or region, employment of alternative/sustainable energy? The idea here is to celebrate efforts to keep our natural resources intact and healthy, so that we may continue to enjoy them while also profiting from their use.
- Community: does the finalist create a sense of community, helping peers or colleagues within the industry when opportunity arises? Though Orvis recognizes that there are certain differentiators or “trade secrets” within each individual business, we also recognize that collaboration, mutual respect, and peer-to-peer support strengthen the Endorsed Partnership and the industry. A good team player is a valuable member of the partnership.

- Citizenship: is the finalist a respected leader within the industry? Do they leave the campsite better than they found it? Are they looking forward, perpetuating an ethic of inclusion, stewardship, and awareness in quantifiable ways?
- Extras: did the partner business accomplish a remarkable work of service or philanthropy in the past year?
- Engagement with Orvis: does the finalist proactively leverage the partnership with Orvis via a variety of platforms.

Once these criteria are weighed, a winner is selected and approved by the entire Adventures Team as well as vested members of Orvis' Executive Committee.

How Nominees Can Leverage Selection as a Unique Marketing Tool:

Once nominees are selected, they will be announced on the Orvis News Blogs. At this point nominees will be given access to "Of the Year Finalist" logos that can be used in their marketing. Winners will be announced on the blog channels as well and will be communicated via social media. "Of the Year" Winner logos will be supplied at this time. Nominees and Winners should note the following best practices regarding marketing the nomination/win:

- When using logos, please ensure that the logo remains intact with date. Do not remove date or modify these logos in any other manner that could cause confusion as to the year of nomination.
- Logos indicating nomination should be used on all digital platforms, web pages, and print materials. The more the accolade is presented, the greater the brand authority.
- Physical signage or decals can be made by the nominee at their cost and displayed at the partner facility.
- Press releases in local news outlets are encouraged but are the responsibility of the nominee.
- If a winner or nominee leaves the partnership, Orvis asks that the accolade and logo no longer be referenced in marketing materials.
- In communicating the nomination or win, the partner should be cautious about designations that reference other partner destinations. Specifically, the proclamation that a partner is "*the only endorsed guide in Maine to receive the finalist designation 4 times*" may have limited shelf life as other partners meet or exceed the same frequency of nomination.

To Emphasize:

At root, the OTY awards should incentivize partners to solicit more customer reviews, which not only serve to educate potential customers on the finer points of the experience, but also attribute more content and authority to each partner's Orvis web page. Additional content such as reviews will enhance the SEO of your Orvis page and your brand, affording your business/brand higher ranking in natural search online (Google). Like a reinforcing loop, more content -> more visibility -> more traffic -> more customers -> more reviews -> more content, and so on. The opportunity for recognition as an OTY is real and valuable, but the work required to achieve the accolade poses an equally real and valuable impact on traffic to your business.