

The World Responsible Tourism Awards 2019.

The Judges' Reasons

To become a Finalist in the World Responsible Tourism Awards (WRTA) is a significant achievement, it marks you out as a leader in Responsible Tourism; it carries a responsibility to exercise leadership. The purpose of the WRTA is to inspire, educate and challenge. Our purpose in organising the Awards has not changed since they were launched back in 2004 – we want to encourage change in the industry, to single out for recognition those who are taking responsibility and can evidence that they are having a positive impact, that they are making tourism better. The bar for winning a World Responsible Tourism Award rises every year reflecting the progress which is being made by some in the sector.

One of the core values of Responsible Tourism is transparency. To be clear about why your business or organisation tackles particular issues, about what you do and the impact of your efforts. Where you work with others it is important too to talk about the partnership. We publish the judges' reasons for all of the awards within the World Responsible Tourism Awards family, including now Africa and India, in order to justify our decisions and to enable others to see what the leaders in Responsible Tourism are doing. Those engaging in Responsible Tourism are achieving a great deal more than the leaders were back in 2004, but still too few are engaging and using tourism to make better places for people to live in.

We created the “ones to watch” category for emerging leaders, businesses which we hope will apply again when they have been pursuing their initiative for longer, have more evidence to share of their impact or when there is a more appropriate category for them to enter. This year's “ones to watch” can be found online. <https://news.wtm.com/emerging-leaders-in-responsible-tourism/>

Benefitting Local Communities

This category always attracts large numbers of entries. This year the judges were looking for examples of businesses which are making particular efforts to benefit neighbouring communities, by providing social, economic or environmental benefits to the community, through training and progression or working with local people to create a local supply of goods or services for purchase by the tourism business or tourists.

Gold: Bakrichhap for the Goat Village, India

www.grppl.in, www.thegoatvillage.com, www.bakrichhap.com

Green People and Bakri Chhap Natural Himalayan Produce have worked together to create Goat Villages in Uttarakhand, in the Himalaya. Devastating floods in 2013 and the lure of an urban life led to rapid migration away from these high altitude farms. In just three years 109 community run home stays have been developed and free computer education has been provided to village children in the Jaunpur region of Tehri Garhwal. Bakri Chhap Natural Himalayan Produce has begun to revive the

local goat based farming economy, they have vaccinated 5,000+ goats and are working directly with 120 farms and more than 500 farmers indirectly across 35+ villages. The organic produce is sold to luxury hotels such as Ananda, Vana, Jaypee, JW Marriott, Leela, Crowne Plaza, a few up-market super stores, wellness experts, food critics and the guests coming to The Goat Villages.

Silver: Nikoi Island, Indonesia

www.nikoi.com

Nikoi was a degraded 15 ha. uninhabited tropical island, when a lease was purchased from the Indonesian government in 2004. 99% of the 132 staff are from Bintan and Batam, staff turnover averages less than 9%. Full-time staff have medical insurance. On average staff are saving 20% of their pay. Staff work a five day week, six is the norm in Indonesia. Staff are allowed to bring family members from time to time to see their workplace and if there is availability to stay on the island as a guest. Nikoi reports that this has helped strengthen family relationships and created a sense of pride in their workplace and loyalty. In 2009 the owners of Nikoi established The Island Foundation (TIF) which works to benefit communities in the Riau Archipelago and which has trained over 1,000 local teachers through eight learning centres. TIF has established a retail brand to help sell and market arts and crafts to tourists. Nikoi has worked to develop local suppliers, for example Tomy Lukas started working for Nikoi in 2013 when he had one car, he now has a fleet of ten cars and employs eight other drivers. They have restored an unused farm on Bintan which now employs six people supplying fresh food to the lodge.

Reducing Carbon

The judges were looking for examples, from any part of the sector – airlines, coaches, cruise, car hire, and accommodation – where solutions have been implemented and where demonstrable and replicable reductions in emissions have been achieved.

Gold: Feynan Ecolodge, Jordan

<https://ecohotels.me/Feynan>

From the beginning in 2005 the lodge's carbon emissions were low. Feynan is completely off the grid and generates 100% of its electricity through a PV system that saves 72 tonnes of CO₂. The system powers lighting in kitchen and bathrooms and essential appliances. The rest of the lodge is lit by local community produced candles. Laundry is air-dried, eliminating the need for wasteful driers and all hot water is provided by a solar heating system. A Decentralized Wastewater Management System, converts leftover food and waste from the lodge's toilets and kitchen sinks into biogas which is used for cooking. The wastewater is used to provide irrigation for native plants which sequester carbon. For space heating they burn jift, olive oil waste, preserving four tonnes of trees annually and food is delivered once a week, minimising the environmental cost of transport. The judges were impressed by the thorough approach which has been taken to decarbonisation.

Silver: Les Villages Nature Paris, France

www.lesvillagesnatureparis.com

Les Villages Nature® Paris is a new mass eco-tourism destination in Europe designed by Euro Disney and the Pierre & Vacances-Center Parcs Group. This new resort combines geothermal, passive solar and wind generated electricity and the use of energy efficient appliances throughout the resort. The

resort includes the Aqualagon water park, the largest in Europe, heated entirely with geothermal energy, with slides for all ages, an aquatic climbing wall, a dedicated wave pool and white-water river. Of the resort's waste 70% is used to generate energy and 30% is recycled; all the maintenance vehicles are electric. What was an intensively farmed site has been planted with 28,000 new trees and 430,000 plants and shrubs, creating a carbon sink. The judges recognised Les Villages Nature Paris as an example of what can be achieved at large scale where there is a commitment to a low carbon future.

Silver: Soneva, Maldives and Thailand

www.soneva.com

Soneva has 25,000 room nights per year. They are unusual in including indirect emissions which for Soneva are 80% of their emissions. They use natural ventilation and shade and they have put in the usual LED light bulbs, air-conditioners with inverters, desalination plants with an energy recovery system, energy efficient appliances, and a hybrid solar-diesel system. They run their desalination system during the day to use solar rather than diesel. The judges recognise that they have done a great deal to reduce their Scope 1 emissions, they were impressed that in addition they have taken responsibility for their Scope 2 and Scope 3 emissions in their food sourcing, freight and host and guest air and ground travel. They have taken direct responsibility to mitigate these emissions. They introduced a 2% environmental levy on the room rate in 2008 and introduced an Environmental Profit & Loss which covers both direct and indirect CO₂ emissions as well as impacts from energy, water and land use via the food and beverage products in their supply chain. The environmental impacts of the restaurants has been reduced by 13% through menu engineering, increasing the vegetarian options and lowering the meat offers. Soneva has taken direct responsibility for their off-setting mitigation through the Soneva Foundation they have distributed 26,000 stoves in Darfur and sold 30,000 stoves at a 50% discount in Myanmar, planted over 500,000 indigenous trees and restores 300 acres of degraded forest land in Thailand; and installed a 1.5MW Suzlon wind turbine in Tamil Nadu.

Transparent Reporting

Transparency about the issues being addressed and the impacts of the initiatives taken by tourism businesses have always been important in Responsible Tourism. The judges were looking for examples of good practice where businesses publicly report the extent to which they reduce negative impacts or increase positive impacts whether at the accommodation or tour level or in company reporting alongside or integrated into annual accounts

Gold: TUI

www.tuigroup.com <https://bit.ly/2AOqa1u> www.tuigroup.com/en-en/responsibility/indices

TUI has a long history of reporting on its sustainability performance as part of its financial performance reporting. It has been reporting to the Environmental, Social and Governance community for more than 15 years, been listed in FTSE4Good for 13 consecutive years and since 2015 have been in the leader's band of CDP Climate Change. With a clear sustainability strategy for *Better Holidays, Better World* TUI has been reporting annually on progress against clear and robust KPIs. TUI aims to advance sustainable tourism at scale within its own operations, along its value chain, across the wider industry and in communities where it operates. TUI also embeds its sustainability

performance within its Annual Report & Accounts with a detailed non-financial declaration and they have been early adopters of the EU CSR reporting legislation which came into force in 2018 in Germany. TUI reports to the UN Global Compact and they have aligned their reporting with the UN Sustainable Development Goals. TUI are clear global leaders in transparent reporting in the travel and tourism sector and they were previously awarded a Gold World Responsible Tourism Award for communicating their sustainability message to their clients in the UK.

Silver: andBeyond

www.andBeyond.com/impact/

Unlike TUI, andBeyond is not a listed company and is under no obligation to report, but since 2015 they have undertaken sustainability audits at each of their lodges to enable them to communicate progress and share learning with their guests, trade partners and journalists. &beyond strives “to leave our world a better place than we found it through our care of the land, wildlife and people”, an aspiration communicated to clients. They have set clear targets, for care of the land, on carbon, water and plastics; on care of wildlife, on endangered species, habitat and biodiversity, and conservation education; and care of people, local procurement, employment and business development, and through the creation of shared value through capacity building and social service infrastructure. The chronicle of achievement in all three pillars is clearly reported and there is a detailed report on 26 years of work at Phinda and the partnerships, the “impact platforms”, the collaborations necessary to successful impact. To quote andBeyond “Although we are not legally required to report and it costs a significant amount of time, money and effort to keep the Impact Review updated, we firmly believe it is well worth it in order to increase our influence on others, as well as motivate our own teams.” The judges agree and would like others to follow their example.

Wildlife & Nature Conservation

This year the judges were looking for innovative examples of tourism businesses that have made a demonstrable and significant difference locally, initiatives which we hope will inspire and encourage others and which have not been dependent on a great deal of external grant funding.

Gold: Six Senses Lamu, Maldives

www.sixsenses.com/resorts/laamu/destination

Six Senses Lamu hosts the Maldives Underwater Initiative (MUI) staffed by resort marine biologists and local NGO scientists. With the Blue Marine Foundation, Six Senses ran a social media campaign, #ProtectMaldivesSeagrass. MUI surveyed resorts in the Maldives before launching their campaign and found that 50% of those with seagrass actively remove it from their surrounding lagoons. The campaign partnered with 34 resorts, or 24% of resorts in the Maldives, and 22 organisations, including Greenpeace International. The campaign resulted in 655,000 m² of seagrass under pledged protection at resorts across the Maldives, the equivalent of 90 football fields. Seagrass meadows are often referred to as the ‘ugly duckling’ of marine conservation, cut and cleared because they impede snorkelling and diving. Seagrass acts as a natural barrier against beach erosion, a food source for the endangered green sea turtle, a nursery ground for commercially important fish species, and it absorbs carbon dioxide.

Silver: Batu Batu Resort & Tengah Island Conservation Malaysia

Batubatu.com.my

Tengahislandconservation.org

Batu Batu founded and fully funds Tengah Island Conservation (TIC), a biodiversity management initiative based at the resort, employing four full-time conservation scientists. They have released close to 16,000 critically endangered and endangered sea turtle hatchlings, patrol 21,000 acres daily to prevent poaching, they have removed over 18 tonnes of marine debris from local beaches and reefs over 2018 and 2019 and cleaned, mapped and surveyed over 1,000,000 m² of coral reef. Batu Batu and TIC have initiated the Mersing Islands Multi-Stakeholder Sustainable Tourism (MUST) Action Plan together with the local Mersing District Council and an environmental biodiversity programme in schools. This programme aims to co-create structured, informed multi-stakeholder planning for the area to avoid irreversible biodiversity damage due to uncontrolled overtourism.

Coping with Success, dealing with Overtourism

The judges were looking for examples of attractions and sites where management interventions have reduced the negative impacts on the site and neighbouring communities and improved the visitor experience. The sites may be publicly or privately owned & managed. There is still a reluctance to clearly name the problem and many initiatives are only just beginning.

Gold: Park Güell, Barcelona, Spain

<https://parkguell.barcelona/en> <https://parkguell.barcelona/en/a-park-for-everone/park-governance>

Around 6 million people visit the 20 ha park each year. In 2014, entry to the 1.7 hectares of the regulated tourist area is by ticket only although access is free for residents of the five surrounding neighbourhoods and schools. The Park, much of which is a World Heritage site, is not run as a business by the City Council, the revenue is used to maintain the Park Güell and to improve the neighbouring areas. Barcelona's Strategic Plan for the Park 2018-2022 has 198 actions and a budget of €24.9 million. The main purpose of the plan is to strengthen the relationships between residents of Barcelona and the park by promoting community use, to avoid the consequences of tourist massification, achieve a park with a living cultural heritage, improve the environment and improve access by public transport,. Since April 2019 there is a free shuttle bus included in the price of the entrance ticket to reduce congestion on public transport and the roads. In 2013, when the work began, the local communities felt excluded. Engaging them in developing the plan began to overcome this and the social recovery of the park has commenced and visitor satisfaction is improving. The visitor management is sophisticated, there is much others could learn from their example

Reducing Plastic Waste

The judges were looking for innovative examples of initiatives taken by tourism businesses, community groups or destination organisations which have significantly reduced the volume of plastic waste going to landfill and/or reduced the amount of plastic pollution across the destination.

Gold: Ibero Star, Spain

www.iberostar.com www.waveofchange.com www.grupoiberostar.com/en/social-action

The Iberostar Group aspires to be free of single use plastics without affecting the quality of their customers' experience by replacing them with non-plastic materials or rigorously tested biodegradable alternatives. Their Wave of Change initiative had three pillars: eliminating single-use

plastics, promoting sustainable seafood consumption and improving coastal health. In 2018, Iberostar became the first hotel chain in Spain to eliminate single-use plastics in the rooms of its 36 hotels in the country. In 2019, this commitment extends to the company's portfolio of 120 hotels around the world and, by 2020, it will have completely removed single-use plastic from every area of its hotels. They are finding substitutes for bottles, amenities, pens, laundry bags, minibar snacks and bottles, slipper bags and wrist bands and providing glass bottles, water fountains, dispensers made of 100% recycled plastic and multi-use recyclables (2,700 kg/year), plant-based bags for rooms, exterior rubbish bins for the kitchens and other areas (134,619 kg/year), pencils (3,240 kg/year), laundry bags (3,000 kg/year), ecological packaging for minibar products (900 kg/year), plant-based bags for shoes (420 kg/year) and ecological wristbands (1,226 kg/year). From 2018, they replaced traditional polyester in its staff uniforms with a material made from 100% recycled plastic. This will contribute to the removal of 470,000 bottles from the oceans and landfill as well as ceasing the consumption of more than 28,000 metres of the most contaminating traditional polyester. The judges were impressed by the extent and depth of their removal of single use plastics, this when many businesses are setting their sights only on removing plastic straws.

Silver: Kilkee

www.kilkee.ie

The judges saw in *Make Kilkee Plastic Free* a large scale choice editing initiative with great potential for replication. They have chosen to focus on changing the purchasing behaviours of 25 or so businesses in the town rather than trying to change the behaviour of the thousands of visitors and residents in Kilkee. This is being achieved by incentivizing customers to bring their own reusable water bottles or take away coffee cups; providing information to businesses about reusable and compostable replacements for single use products; working to secure price reductions for replacement products for participating businesses and a pilot project for waste segregation of the street litter-bins in Kilkee. Of 33 businesses in the Chamber 25 of them are in the visitor economy, of these 23 committed to the initiative; five businesses are offering a discount for hot drinks, nine premises registered with refill.ie offering free tap water in reusable bottles and over 300 reusable cups have been sold by premises in Kilkee. One business replaced 100,000 plastic bags with brown paper ones. This initiative shows what can be achieved by businesses working together in a destination to make change, they estimate that half a million plastic items were removed from the general waste stream over the course of the 2018 season.

Silver: Soneva Maldives

www.soneva.com

Soneva has established Soneva Namoonaa in the Maldives, an initiative to provide alternatives to single-use plastic and to encourage reuse and recycling, to create a model to eliminate single-use plastic from local communities in the Maldives. They are working with the island councils of Maalhos, Dharavandhoo and Kihaadhoo to eliminate single-use plastic, end the open burning of plastic and establish a water bottling facility on each island. Soneva invested \$80,000 to set up Soneva Water as a social enterprise on Maalhos, it sells water at a lower price than that in plastic bottles. Three major clean-ups on the islands have cleared over 500 kg of ocean plastic. Soneva was early to address single-use plastic. They banned plastic straws in 1998 and plastic bottles in 2008, by bottling their own water in reusable glass bottles they have over ten years eliminated 1.5 million

plastic bottles. The judges were impressed by this initiative to share expertise with the local communities on other islands and to address plastic waste beyond the resort island.

The Judges' Awards

<https://responsibletourismpartnership.org/world-rt-awards/judges-awards/>

The Judges' Awards are given by the judges of any of the World Responsible Tourism Awards where the business is recognised as outstanding. These awards are rare and are used to recognise businesses which achieve in multiple categories and have been previously recognised a number of times. The category was created in 2018 in order that the same businesses did not win year after year. To win in successive years businesses have to have achieved something new. Only a few businesses can therefore win multiple times – those businesses are outstanding.

To date only one Judges' Award has been made to CGH Earth Hotels in India. There were two applications for the World Responsible Tourism Awards this year which the judges considered to be from businesses worthy of a judges' award.

- **Grootbos**

www.grootbos.com

Grootbos applied for the Benefiting Local People category. Grootbos is a private nature reserve committed to the conservation of the Cape Flora, one of the six Floral Kingdoms of the world, and the “upliftment of the community” through the work of the Grootbos Foundation. Grootbos develops sustainable livelihoods through enterprise development and education, addressing food insecurity, and sports development for youth. Their extensive programmes with local communities reach over 12,000 beneficiaries per annum. They established the Green Futures College in 2003, a Football Foundation, which is multi-sport, in 2008, and the Masakhane Community Farm 2016. The Grootbos Foundation Careers, Employability and Entrepreneurship programme supports learners in five high schools across the region. Grootbos were early adopters of Responsible Tourism and have grown their engagement year on year. In the 2019 Africa Responsible Tourism Awards they won in the Habitat & Species Conservation category and were overall winners. In London in 2017 they won Gold in the Best Accommodation category and in 2015 they won Silver in the Poverty Reduction in category in London. Grootbos has won multiple Responsible Tourism Awards and is widely acknowledged as a global leader worthy of a judges' award. .

- **OI Pejeta Conservancy Kenya**

www.olpejetaconservancy.org

OI Pejeta applied for the Benefiting Local People category. It is a 90,000 acre conservancy which employs, directly and indirectly, nearly 1,000 people in tourism, agriculture and ranching. They regard community benefit and wildlife conservation as of equal importance. Their Community Development Department employs 12 people in permanent jobs and 50 in part time/volunteer positions within their community, offering support in health, education and community development. They are supported with donations and expertise by partners. In 2018 tourism represented 63% of total income, ranching and farming 22% and donor funding 12%. OI Pejeta was awarded Gold for Wildlife Conservation in the Africa Responsible Tourism Awards in 2016 and Highly Commended in 2017. OI Pejeta is a strong contender in multiple categories, wildlife, community

benefit and reporting. The judges recognise that OI Pejeta is a global leader in balancing benefits for local communities and wildlife conservation and in delivering Responsible Tourism, using tourism to make better places for people to live in and ensuring the conservation of wildlife and habitat.

2019 Overall Winner

Feynan Ecolodge, Jordan

<https://ecohotels.me/Feynan>

Feynan Ecolodge has previously won awards for its positive community impacts and it was “highly commended” for Best for Poverty Reduction in the Responsible Tourism Awards in 2011. Feynan is well known for its positive social and economic impacts through employment and local sourcing, its conservation efforts and for the quality of the local Bedouin cultural experience it offers. Feynan Ecolodge has been a model for others for at least a decade. The judges selected Feynan Lodge as the overall winner this year because of the efforts they have made to further reduce their carbon emissions and the quality of their reporting of their reduced impact. They have been transparent about the numbers and the sources they have used to base their calculations on. They have reduced their carbon emissions by 11.13 tonnes per year, and that does not include the reduction in CO₂ emissions which results from serving only a vegetarian menu. Their total annual CO₂ emissions from candles, LPG and Jift is 19.12 tonnes, 3.5kg per guest and it demonstrates what a methodical and committed approach can achieve.

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Remember the judges can only select from amongst those that enter. If you know of more worthy winners then please encourage them to apply. We know that to apply takes a good deal of time and that it is best if the application is written by those who exercise responsibility on behalf of the business or destination. Where it is left or delegated to others, the applications often lack the necessary detail and fail to communicate purpose and impact. This year undoubtedly some applications were passed over because they were poor applications, not because a great deal had not been achieved by the applicant. The work done to enter the Awards should not be wasted, communicate it to your clients and partners, and it is less effort to enter if you are regularly reporting.