Winners of African Responsible Tourism Awards 2017 announced

On 20 April during World Travel Market Africa 2017 at the CTICC, Cape Town, the winners of the African Responsible Tourism Awards 2017 were announced before a packed audience including tourism professionals, media, and government officials.

Heidi van der Watt, managing director of Better Tourism Africa pinpointed what makes the award winners the leaders in responsible tourism in Africa:
“Our winners have a vision that extends beyond the commercial – linking business success with the wellbeing of local communities and the longevity of their environments. They want to make profits with principles, communicate balance sheets alongside beliefs, and won’t undermine passion in the pursuit of professionalism. They are resilient, determined, humanising advocates for their destinations. They are the future of tourism in Africa.”



Blood Lions - joint overall winner

Realising the ambition of responsible tourism

Harold Goodwin, chair of the judging panel, said: “All of those longlisted should be recognised as having made a significant contribution and be proud of what they have achieved. As in the World Responsible Tourism Awards, the judges looked for winners who might educate and inspire others, challenging the industry to achieve more by demonstrating what can be done by businesses and organisations to realise the ambition of responsible tourism. That ambition is simply put: to use tourism to make better places for people to live in. This also benefits the industry: great places to live are great places to visit.

In this International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development, the industry needs to recognise that we need to be a lot more transparent about credibly reporting the positive impacts that businesses in the tourism sector have on peoples’ livelihoods and well-being – we need to up our game and prove the claims we make. This year’s global Responsible Tourism Awards will be announced next month – in this International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development there is a particular emphasis on the SDGs.



Coffee Shack Backpackers - joint overall winner

The judges were mindful of the Awards made in previous years in Africa and in the World Responsible Tourism Awards, of which these African Awards are a part. The gold and silver award winners should be particularly proud of what they have achieved; they have been recognised as being leaders in the responsible tourism movement where more is expected each year.

If when reflecting on the winners of these and the World Responsible Tourism Awards you know of others you feel should be recognised then please encourage them to enter, the judges can only choose from amongst those who enter and complete the extensive application process. We encourage them, and other businesses, to continue to take responsibility for increasing the positive and reducing the negative impacts of tourism; to communicate what they are doing to use tourism to make better places and to consider entering the Responsible Tourism Awards when there is an appropriate category for their business or organisation."

The awards were sponsored by Wesgro. Tim Harris, chief executive officer of Wesgro, said: "We are pleased to recognise the vision of the Award winners for providing leadership in their respective sectors throughout Africa, and effectively contributing to growing tourism in a sustainable manner. Today, we celebrate their commitment and achievements."

The winners are:

Overall Winners - supported by Wesgro

This year there were joint overall winners Blood Lions and Coffee Shack.

The ambition of the Responsible Tourism Awards is to educate, inspire and challenge. The Blood Lions campaign

demonstrates how awareness raising and engagement can achieve change, successfully engaging the industry though its “Born To Live Wild” campaign. Coffee Shack demonstrates the major positive impact which a small business in a remote rural area can have.

Best Accommodation for Social Inclusion - supported by Better Tourism Africa

Gold winner: Coffee Shack Backpackers (South Africa)

Silver: The Backpack (South Africa)

Silver: Wilderness Safaris Damaraland Camp (Namibia)

Best for Engaging People and Culture - supported by Transfrontier Parks Destinations

Gold: Ilha Blue Island Safaris (Mozambique)

Silver: Maboneng Arts (South Africa)

Best for Habitat and Species Conservation - supported by Cape Nature

Gold: All Out Africa (Swaziland)

Silver: Wildlife ACT (South Africa)

Best Partnership for Poverty Reduction - supported by Africa Ignite

Gold winner: Isibindi African Lodges

Silver winner: Amboseli Serena Safari Lodge

Best Responsible Event - supported by BulkSMS

Gold winner: MTN Bushfire (Swaziland)

Silver: Tour de Tuli (Botswana, South Africa and Zimbabwe)

Best Responsible Tourism Campaign - supported by Cape Town Pass

Gold: Blood Lions (South Africa)

Best Tour Operator for Impact in Urban Areas - supported by Marine Dynamics

Gold winner: Uthando (South Africa)

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