



AITO ANNOUNCES THE WINNERS OF ITS ANNUAL MEMBERS' AWARDS FOR 2017 AT THE ASSOCIATION'S AGM IN LONDON



L – R: Winners of the AITO members' awards

Natalie Black (Travel & General), Claire Ingleby (MB Law), John Shaw (Travel & General), Ian Hopkinson (MB Law), Tony Bean (Vamoos), Derek Moore (AITO Chairman), Peter Sommer (Peter Sommer Travels), Antonio Padeira (Portuguese National Tourist Office), behind Antonio is Carlos Ruiz Gonzalez (Spanish Tourist Board), Deb Merrifield (Marketing Radar), Chris Edwards (Faremine), behind Chris Edwards is Chris McIntyre (Expert Africa), Kate Kenward (AITO Executive Director)

The Association of Independent Tour Operators (AITO.com) hosted its AGM on Wednesday, 21 February 2018, at the Royal Over-Seas League in central London.

Some 85 AITO Tour Operators, AITO Agents, Affiliated Business Partners and Tourist Offices attended. The business sessions featured interesting talks, including **Professor Xavier Font of Surrey University**, who gave an insightful update on AITO's Project *PROTECT*, **Claire Irvin, Head of Travel at The Daily Telegraph**, who spoke about a new media perspective, and keynote speaker **Luke Pollard, MP**, who discussed the lack of a united lobbying front on the part of the travel industry in conversation with AITO moderator Jono Vernon Powell (Nomadic Thoughts).

The afternoon concluded with AITO's Annual Awards ceremony – AITO Tour Operator of the Year, AITO Affiliate Tourist Board of the Year and AITO Affiliate Business Partner of the Year.

Executive Director of AITO, Kate Kenward, says: “The AITO Tour Operator of the Year awards were particularly hotly contested this year, with very little to separate the top three companies; each is at the top of its game. I commend all winners and entrants for their attention to detail and the quality and delivery of their customer experience.

“Our 2017 winners came from a field of 23 companies which qualified, ie had more than 50 customer reviews each on AITO.com. The award goes to the AITO member with the top-scoring reviews on the AITO website, based solely on impartial customer feedback. The top three all scored 100%, which means a score of excellent from every single customer review.

“This meant that the AITO office had to delve further and assess which would receive the Gold, Silver and Bronze winners by using each company’s Net Promotor Score (NPS), which measures genuine customer experience feedback based around the question ‘*would you recommend this company to your family, friends or colleagues?*’. Peter Sommer Travels scored a perfect 100% again, with Expert Africa and Absolute Escapes not far behind in terms of NPS scores.

2017 AITO Tour Operator of the Year

This award, based solely on impartial customer reviews, goes to the AITO members with the top-scoring reviews on AITO.com.

Gold: **Peter Sommer Travels**
Silver: **Expert Africa**
Bronze: **Absolute Escapes**

AITO.com has over 11,000 completely impartial customer reviews from those who have travelled on AITO members’ holidays. These reviews not only provide customer feedback on AITO holidays and the service levels of AITO tour operator members, but also tips and ideas to future travellers.

Chairman of AITO, Derek Moore, says: “Such high scores are astonishing in an industry where problems crop up due to the unpredictable nature of travel. I send warmest congratulations to all our winners.”

2017 AITO Affiliate Tourist Board of the Year

This award goes to the AITO Affiliate Tourist Office which provided the best service and support to members in 2017, as voted by AITO tour operators and agents.

Gold: **Portuguese National Tourist Office**
Silver: **Spanish Tourist Office**
Bronze: **Jordan Tourism Board**

Says Kate Kenward: “The Portuguese National Tourist Office clearly won in recognition of its highly successful recent AITO Conference, in the Alentejo region of Portugal, and extensive joint marketing activity with AITO and AITO members during

2017.

“These results really showcase the huge appreciation of our members for recent and past conference hosting. Our grateful thanks to all three tourist boards who won and to all our Affiliate Tourist Boards for the commitment they demonstrate to AITO and its members.”

2017 AITO Affiliate Business Partner of the Year

This award goes to the AITO Business Partner which provided the best service and support to members in 2017, as voted by AITO tour operators and agents.

Gold: **MB Law**
Silver: **Vamoos**
Bronze: A draw between three companies –
 Faremine
 Travel & General and
 Marketing Radar

Says Kate Kenward: “MB Law is to be congratulated for its success, which demonstrates how much its longstanding support to AITO and AITO members is appreciated by one and all.”

All awards are made in respect of the year running 1st January to 31st December, 2017.

Ends/26 February 2018

Press: For further information on AITO, please contact Travel PR on 020 8891 4440 or email Jackie Franklin (j.franklin@travelpr.co.uk) or Sue Ockwell (s.ockwell@travelpr.co.uk).

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