Aito_Association Version cropped**AITO winners of the prestigious 2014**

**Travel Writer of the Year Awards announced**



***Photo caption (left to right): AITO Travel Writer of the Year Awards winners***

*John Tangney (AITO’s Chair), Adrian Bridge (The Telegraph), Victoria Sturley (AITO), Andrew Eames (freelance/Financial Times), Oliver Smith (Lonely Planet Traveller), Mark Hodson (101 Holidays), Steve Bleach (The Sunday Times), Aaron Millar (freelance/The Times).*

***19 November 2014***

AITO has announced the results of its **18th Travel Writer of the Year awards**. **This year saw the highest number of entries ever, with 220 articles submitted, all of an exceptionally high standard.** The categories were *Travel Writer of the Year*, *Young Travel Writer of the Year* and *AITO Travel Blogger of the Year.* The awards were presented at the AITO Meets the Media event held at Central Hall Westminster on 18 November.

**AITO Travel Writer of the Year**

This award is always extremely hotly contested and, over the past 18 years, some of the most respected travel journalists in the industry have featured on the roll of honour (see below). It recognises excellence in the huge field of travel writing, and this prestigious award is always an impressive entry on any writer’s CV.

**The winner of the AITO Travel Writer of the Year 2014 award was Oliver Smith, with his Lonely Planet Traveller article entitled ‘The Other Siberian Railway’**. The article was a clear winner, with Oliver describing a fascinating journey aboard what may be the world’s loneliest railway line. One of the judges commented how “railway journeys always fascinate, and this is the mother of them all. A compelling account”. Another judge remarked:  “Political lies, bear attacks, Stalinist gulags, an asteroid exploding in the depths of Siberia and burning millions of trees to a crisp – this was a truly astonishing adventure, and made great armchair reading”.

**In second place was Aaron Millar, writing for The Times on Nevada and its wild mustang horses.** One of the judges said: “It left me breathless. I could see those wild horses and feel the pull of ancient spirits”.

**In third place was Lisa Grainger, with her article in The Telegraph’s UltraTravel magazine entitled ‘Komodo Island: set sail for dragons’.** One of the judges saidthe article had “wonderful descriptive passages to savour and re-read.”

**AITO Young Travel Writer of the Year**

This award celebrates travel writing talent in the under-30s. There was a large and interesting field of entries and the judges found it very challenging to select the overall winner.

**The winner of Young Travel Writer of the Year was Laura Goodman with her article ‘Toute Sweet’, about Paris’ exquisite food, in particular its sugar-laden delicacies.** Our judges commented on “the interesting angle approached on what is a very familiar city”, which they found to be “inventive and bright”, plus the “fresh-faced enthusiasm”, which they found “an unexpected treat”.  “The bubbly, infectious style took you along the streets, into the cafés - and the world of cakes and pastries seemed to come alive”, they said.

**AITO Travel Blogger of the Year**

This category was a new category last year, introduced to recognise the increasing influence of travel bloggers and their role within the travel writing community.

**The winner of AITO’s Travel Blogger of the Year award was Mark Hodson, of 101 Holidays, for his article on Dubai, recognised as a “love it or hate it” destination of extremes.** The judges saidthat the piece was “a properly-constructed article with humour and comment woven into the narrative”, “crisp and information-led – exactly what we look for in a blog”.

**The Deputy Chair of AITO, John Tangney, said**: “Huge congratulations to all of the entrants for such a high standard this year. We saw a record number of entries - 220 - with the AITO Young Travel Writer of the Year category proving pleasingly popular this year.

“The many entries demonstrated to us just how many truly skilled travel writers there are across a huge array of print and online publications in the UK. The specific aim of the AITO awards is to recognise writers whose copy is **inspirational, informative, interesting and well-written.**  Every single entry was judged on those four benchmarks by our judges, to whom we are most grateful.

“It’s been a mammoth but very interesting exercise for the judges – so many carefully-crafted articles, so many fascinating destinations visited, and such a brilliant demonstration of how vividly words can bring a place to life and drive demand to visit a destination, if only in our dreams and from the comfort of our armchairs.

“We’re also pleased to announce that we’ll be introducing a new award next year, for the best article written by travel trade writers, and look forward to receiving a good selection of entries for this category in 2015.”

**AITO welcomes one entry per person for its Travel Writer of the Year Awards, and encourages travel editors to enter pieces that have been published on their pages or their sites during the course of the calendar year.**

For further information, visit [www.aito.com](http://www.aito.com).

**-Ends-**

**Notes to editors:**

Shortlisted from a total of over 220 entries, the names of those who scored highest are as follows:

**The top 10 places for the AITO Travel Writer of the Year award 2014 were as follows:**

1. Oliver Smith, Lonely Planet Traveller
2. Aaron Millar, The Times
3. Lisa Grainger, The Telegraph’s UltraTravel magazine
4. Amanda Canning, Lonely Planet Traveller
5. Andrew Eames, The Financial Times
6. Stephen Bleach, The Sunday Times
7. Paul Croughton, The Sunday Times
8. Chris Peacock, National Geographic Traveller
9. Jeremy Lazell, The Sunday Times
10. Adrian Bridge, The Daily Telegraph   ***Jointly placed***

Vince Crump, The Sunday Times      ***in 10th position***

**The top five places for the AITO Young Travel Writer of the Year award 2014 were as follows:**

1.    Laura Goodman, Sunday Times Travel Magazine

2.    Hazel Lubbock, Condé Nast Traveller

3.    Alicia Miller, Food & Travel Magazine

4.    Faris Mustafa, British Airways’ High Life Magazine

5.    Will Coldwell, The Guardian

**The top five places for the AITO Travel Blogger of the Year award 2014 are as follows:**

1.    Mark Hodson, 101 Holidays

2.    Richard Powell, Huffington Post

3.    Angus Begg, African Storybook

4.    Jane Lovatt, The Trundlers

5.    Charlie Walker, Charlie Walker Explore

**A warm thank you to everyone who entered the AITO Travel Writer of the Year awards, and many congratulations to all the winners.**

**The list of past and present winners in full:**

**The AITO Travel Writer of the Year award - *celebrating 18 years of excellence in travel writing***

2014           **Oliver Smith** (Lonely Planet Traveller)

2013           **Mark Jones** (BA High Life)

2012           **Oliver Smith** (Lonely Planet Traveller)

2011           **Stephen Bleach** (The Sunday Times)

2010           **Stephen Bleach** (The Sunday Times)

2009           **Minty Clinch** (FT/How to Spend It magazine)

2008           **Chris Haslam** (The Sunday Times)

2007           **Peter Hughes** (The Daily Telegraph)

2006           **Chris Haslam** (The Sunday Times)

2005           **Nigel Tisdall** (Ultratravel Magazine, The Daily Telegraph)

2004           **Brian Jackman** (The Daily Telegraph)

2003           **Peter Hughes** (The Daily Telegraph)

2002           **William Gray** (Wanderlust)

2001           **Matt Rudd and Stephen Bleach** (joint winners – The Sunday Times)

2000           **Max Anderson** (The Sunday Times)

1999           **Jane Bussman** (The Mail on Sunday)

1998           **David Wickers** (The Sunday Times)

1997           **Jill Crawshaw** (The Times and The Independent on Sunday)

**AITO Young Travel Writer of the Year award**

2014           **Laura Goodman** (The Sunday Times Travel magazine)

2013           **Alasdair Baverstock** (The Daily Telegraph)

2012           **Rory Goulding** (Lonely Planet Traveller)

2011           **Nick Boulos** (Wanderlust)

2010           **Oliver Smith** (Lonely Planet Traveller)

**AITO Blogger of the Year Award**

2014           **Mark Hodson** (101 Holidays)

2013           **Charlie Walker** (Charlie Walker Explore)

**Press:**  For further information on AITO, please contact Travel PR on 020 8891 4440 or email Rebecca Milne ([r.milne@travelpr.co.uk](mailto:r.milne@travelpr.co.uk)) or Sue Ockwell ([s.ockwell@travelpr.co.uk](mailto:s.ockwell@travelpr.co.uk)).