



AITO rolls out new branding to reflect changing dynamic of its 120-strong tour operator membership – AITO is now *The Specialist Travel Association*

17 October 2018

AITO today modifies its branding to reflect the changing dynamic of its membership and will now be known as *The Specialist Travel Association*.

Since AITO was established 42 years ago, in 1976, it has been known as the Association of Independent Tour Operators. However, after extensive consultation with AITO members, it was agreed that 'Specialist' explained more precisely what AITO members offered to consumers and also that the word 'Specialist' was a far more motivating and easily-understood proposition than 'Independent'.

Kate Kenward, AITO Executive Director, says: "Times have changed and, over the years, so have AITO members. Specialist holidays and experiences are now members' main focus and essentially form their stand-out offering in what is a very noisy and competitive travel landscape."

AITO's Chairman, Derek Moore, comments: "We will be keeping the AITO acronym for the foreseeable future; it would be a shame to lose the 40-year heritage that comes with the name, but all agree that *The Specialist Travel Association* tagline better describes what our members do. Quite simply, they provide a huge range of special interest holidays for their customers to all corners of the world."

Other brands within the AITO family, such as AITO Specialist Travel Agents and AITO Affiliates, have also been adapted in look and feel to reflect the modification of the parent brand.

Kenward continues: "AITO members are, quite simply, the experts in special interest travel. They have the knowledge, experience and, perhaps above all else, a passion for the destinations and themes that their businesses promote. While the online DIY market may continue to gain momentum, consumers will always seek to pursue their special interests with like-minded individuals in new and different destinations. Our members, showcased on www.AITO.com, are valued by consumers from all over the world simply because of their stand-out and much sought-after specialist knowledge."

Kenward confirms that AITO members will still abide by the current tough membership criteria, including the requirement to have 100% financial protection in place.

She adds: "AITO is currently collating consumer responses for its Annual Travel Insights Survey, which provides substantive key market indicators for Special Interest travel. Last year's survey yielded over 25,000 responses, detailing types of holiday, holiday experiences and destinations sought amongst a raft of other data on this very high-yield segment of the travel market.

"The results of AITO's 2018 Travel Insights Survey will be released at AITO's annual overseas conference in Ras Al Khaimah at the end of November."

Ends

Press: For more information on AITO's 120-plus specialist travel companies and their unrivalled collection of holiday ideas, covering every corner of the world, visit the website at www.aito.com.

All AITO members are fully bonded/offer full financial protection, comply with AITO's Quality Charter and aim to offer the best possible customer service. They also exceed current Government legislation in terms of protecting

accommodation-only sales.

For more information on AITO, The Specialist Travel Association, or AITO Specialist Travel Agents, or to request high-res photos, please contact Sue Ockwell or Jackie Franklin on 020 8891 4440 or email s.ockwell@travelpr.co.uk or j.franklin@travelpr.co.uk.

