



Record AITO sales in 2016 announced at AITO Specialist Travel Agents' Domestic Conference 2017

The biggest issues facing the independent sector were debated at the organisation's annual domestic conference in Hinckley, Leicestershire

AITO Agents and AITO operators gathered at the weekend (7 – 8 January 2017) for the AITO Specialist Travel Agents' domestic conference - held for the second year at Jurys Inn Hinckley Island Hotel. With 170 delegates in attendance (90 agents, 61 tour operators and 19 affiliates), the conference programme included plentiful networking opportunities, business sessions and workshops, and also celebrated the achievements of AITO Agents, who were duly rewarded at the **annual All Stars Awards Ceremony**.

Chairman of AITO Agents, Gemma Antrobus, says: "The AITO Specialist Travel Agents' Domestic Conference is always the largest and most exciting event in the calendar. There is no better way to start a fantastic year of sales than when agents are busy, fully energised and seeking some fabulous new product to provide for their clients.

"We are thrilled to report that a staggering **£58.7m** (+4.8%) was recorded in sales with just 42 AITO member holidays by AITO Agents in 2016 (£56m in 2015, £53m in 2014). This is a fantastic result and we are confident that this figure will continue to grow in years to come.

"Additionally, the introduction of a computerised appointment system for our Sunday morning market place is something the Panel has been working on for some time and we hope that it will greatly enhance the valuable conference experience.

"In our snappy 24 hours together, we cover an immense amount of ground – from rewarding our top performing agents, to introducing new initiatives to encourage greater engagement in 2017. It really is an exciting time to be an independent travel company and such great attendance at this conference shows that all sides of AITO are committed to working closely together to enhance our valuable sector."

Business sessions

Headline-sponsored by AITO operator **Classic Collection Holidays**, the conference theme was 'AITO's Priceless Partnership' and the business sessions featured the AITO Agents Panel in a discussion about key industry issues.

Networking

The conference finished with a giant marketplace – one of the largest gatherings of independent agents and operators in the travel industry calendar. With AITO operators seated, and a new computerised appointment system in place, agents had the chance to network with a wide range of operators and to learn about new products, ideas and destinations for 2017.

AITO Specialist Travel Agent accolades

The most successful AITO Agents were recognised during the conference's All Stars Awards Ceremony. The **AITO All Stars incentive scheme 2016** recognised those AITO Agents who had achieved the most impressive sales figures when selling holidays offered by AITO operators.

AITO currently has 42 tour operators taking part in the scheme, representing 35% of the membership. All 104 agents take part in the All Stars scheme, and entry is simple - book AITO tour operators first and foremost. All are logged on the league table.

The winners were as follows:

Central England and the East All Star 2016:

RB Collection

Northern England, Northern Ireland and Scotland All Star 2016:

Worldwide Escapes

South of England All Star 2016:

Beaver Travel, Radlett

National All Star of the Year 2016:

Beaver Travel, Radlett

Most Improved All Star 2016 (% change in bookings based on Jan-Dec 2016 versus Jan-Dec 2015):

Carrick Travel, Leamington Spa

Shining Star 2016 (for an individual, as voted by AITO members and the Panel):

Claire Bell, Journeys à la Carte

AITO Agents also recognised AITO members at this year's Domestic Conference:

Agents' Choice Award 2016 (for best tour operator):

Lusso

Super Service Award 2016 (for outstanding service by a tour operator individual):

Stephanie Robins, Cyplon Holidays

With plenty of experts in the travel industry, who should you trust to give an honest insight into the current market? AITO Specialist Travel Agents represents over 100 of the leading independent travel agencies in the UK – all fully independent, and all in the front line of the travel industry.

Ends – 9 January 2017

Press: For more information on AITO Specialist Travel Agents or high-res images from the conference, please call Rebecca Milne, Travel PR, on 020 8891 4440 or email r.mine@travelpr.co.uk.