

Winners of AITO's prestigious 2025 Travel Writer of the Year Awards announced



L-R: Katerina Bomshtein (Gran Canaria) and Sarah Gillespie (The Times); the group of winners; Chris Rowles (AITO) and Charlotte Brook (Aspire)

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Last night, AITO, the Specialist Travel Association (www.aito.com), announced the winners of the AITO 2025 Travel Writer of the Year awards at its annual AITO Meets the Media event, held at the Leonardo Royal Hotel London City.

The awards, split into five different categories, were assessed according to four criteria, across two rounds of judging, seeking copy that was not only **inspirational**, **informative** and **interesting**, but that was also, of course, **well-written**.

The five Travel Writer of the Year awards – and their winning entries – are:

1. AITO Travel Writer of the Year – Over 1,500 words

The prestigious **AITO Travel Writer of the Year (TWOTY) Over 1,500 words Award** went to **Lorna Parkes** for ***Of tides & time***, a piece on Estonia for **National Geographic Traveller**. One of the judges commented that *“The writer conveyed the atmosphere of both scenery and senses extremely well – a region I’m unfamiliar with, but am certainly intrigued by now.”*

In **second place**, for her article, ***The Other Camino: Hiking the coast-to-coast Camino de Costa Rica***, for **Adventure.com**, was **Meera Dattani**.

In **third place** was Ben Lerwill for his piece, ***Karakoram Calling***, published in **National Geographic Traveller**.

2. AITO Travel Writer of the Year – Under 1,500 words

In **first place**, for her article ***I was looking to connect with my late uncle’s spirit in North Africa – instead I fell in love***, for **The Times**, was **Sarah Gillespie**. The judges said the piece was *“Engaging, informative, descriptive - and a great story”*.

In **second place** was **Helen Ochyra**, whose piece, ***Why I walked Exmoor, my mum’s favourite place, with my daughter***, was published in **The Times**.

In **third place** was **Rebecca Ann Hughes** for her article, ***Inside the quiet paradise just two hours from Venice’s crowds – from a local who knows*** for **The i Paper**.

3. AITO Young Travel Writer of the Year

This award celebrates travel writing talent in the under-30s.

In **first place** was **Leyla Rose** for her article ***Bullet trains and golden temples: This is Java by train***, for **Adventure.com**, which was described by one of the judging panel as “Humorous, original and makes me want to visit.”

In **second place** was **Christy Spring**, with her article, ***What does a city break look like at the Arctic's Edge?***, published in **Escapism**.

In **third place**, for her article titled ***A sip of hope***, was **Chiara Mapelli**, published by **Adventure.com**.

4. AITO Travel Trade Writer of the Year

This award recognises the many and varied challenges faced by travel trade writers – from a wide mix of complex travel industry issues, to briefing agents on how best to sell the huge and varied range of travel experiences available to their clients.

In **first place** was **Charlotte Brook** for her piece, ***Moving Mountains***, in **Aspire**, about which one of the judges said: “*Proper travel writing. Enthralling, well-written and really interesting*”.

In **second place** was **Lauren Jarvis** for her piece titled ***Wild and Free***, which was featured in **Selling Travel**.

In **third place** was **Bella Falk**, for her piece, ***Pass the Remote***, in **TTG Luxury**.

5. AITO Travel Blogger of the Year

This category recognises the considerable – and ever-expanding - influence of travel bloggers and their role within the travel writing community.

In **first place** was **Shafik Meghji**, for his piece ***Mapping London's South Asian History for The Runnymede Trust***. One of the judges commented: “*Richly researched and evocative, it turns the city into a living tapestry of overlooked histories*.”

In **second place** was ***A Coastal Walk***, by **Katie Macleod**, for **Stories my Suitcase could tell**.

In **third place**, for his piece ***Your ultimate guide to visiting the Iceland Highlands*** was **Mark Barnes**, for **Anywhere We Roam**.

Says Martyn Sumners, Executive Director of AITO: “We had a record number of entries for the 2025 AITO Travel Writer of the Year Awards – over 500! As ever, the standard of the travel writing was extremely high, and we would like to extend our heartfelt congratulations to the extremely worthy winners in each category – and, indeed to thank all who entered the AITO Travel Writer of the Year Awards.

“I am hugely grateful to all those who kindly gave their time to review the articles for judging and also to those who were involved in the final decision making.

“We’d also like to thank Gran Canaria and Christopher Kirker, who very kindly sponsored the awards.”

For further information on AITO’s Travel Writer of the Year Awards, visit www.aito.com/awards.

Ends

Press:

For further information on AITO and its specialist tour operator / travel agent members, please see www.aito.com or contact Travel PR on 020 8891 4440. Alternatively, please email Gemma Minto (g.minto@travelpr.co.uk) or Julia Farish (j.farish@travelpr.co.uk).

Notes to editors: For the full 2025 shortlist, please see [here](#).