



## **AITO announces the winners of its annual members' awards at the association's 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary dinner**



**Photo caption (left to right): Winners and presenters of AITO's members' awards**

*Roland Hunter (The Mountain Company), Stephen Brook (CICERONI Travel), Peter Sommer (Peter Sommer Travels), Jamil Malik (Faremine), Claire Purvis (Holiday Extras), Peter Eastaugh (Travellers World Salisbury), Barbara Kolosinska (C&M Travel Recruitment, collecting on behalf of 3For Ltd), Derek Moore (AITO's Chair), Simon Reeve (special guest speaker), Helen Hunter (The Mountain Company).*

The Association of Independent Tour Operators ([www.aito.com](http://www.aito.com)) celebrated its 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary at a special dinner last night (Tuesday 23 February) in the dazzling Library & Reading Room of the Royal Horseguards Hotel, London.

Over 150 AITO Tour Operators, AITO Agents, Affiliated Business Partners and Tourist Offices, Social and Honorary members and special guests attended. Simon Reeve – the British author, television presenter and explorer – was the special guest for the evening and delivered an inspirational speech. AITO was also delighted that Colin Murison Small, its founder and very first chairman, was able to attend the event; he and Noel Josephides were interviewed, to much merriment, by member Jono Vernon Powell (Nomadic Thoughts) about AITO past and present.

### **Chairman of AITO, Derek Moore, said:**

“Following the collapse of Court Line and the introduction of the ATOL bonding system in 1975, AITO was started in April 1976 with just 20 members. The main aim then was to achieve a 'realistic and fair level of bonding in order to discourage reckless trading and avoid the risk of a drain on the Air Travel Reserve fund by unscrupulous or incompetent tour operators'. It's ironic to see that, 40 years later, not much has changed on the UK travel landscape.

“AITO members have weathered many a storm in the last 40 years, but the original ethos has stood the test of time. Our members are passionate about their businesses, strive for a level playing field within the travel industry and deliver quality holiday experiences for their customers while also protecting their holiday funds 100%.

“I am delighted to celebrate such a momentous milestone for AITO with so many familiar faces, both old and new. AITO has come so far in the last 40 years and I can't wait to see the association go from strength to strength over the coming years.”

The evening concluded with AITO's members' awards, which have been reintroduced after a gap of a few years and are now based around client reviews on AITO.com. The categories were AITO Tour Operator of the Year, AITO Agent of the Year and AITO Affiliate of the Year.

### **2015 AITO Tour Operator of the Year**

This award goes to the member which has had exceptional customer reviews on AITO.com during 2015. The number of reviews had to be 10% or more of the total annual passengers carried to ensure a true reflection of that company's performance.

Gold: [Peter Sommer Travels](#)

Silver: [CICERONI Travel](#)

Bronze: [The Mountain Company](#)

### **2015 AITO Agent of the Year**

This award goes to the AITO Agent which has made bookings with the largest number of AITO tour operators during 2015 as voted by AITO's tour operators.

Gold: **Traveller's World Salisbury**

Silver: **Journeys à la Carte**

Bronze: **Deva Travel**

### **2015 AITO Affiliate of the Year**

This award goes to the AITO Business Partner which provided the best service and product in 2015 as voted by AITO tour operators and agents.

Joint Gold winners: **3For** and **Holiday Extras**

Bronze: **Faremine**

**Ends/24<sup>th</sup> February, 2015**

**Press:** For further information on AITO, please see [www.aito.com](http://www.aito.com), 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)).