

An all-female first-place winners list announced at the prestigious 2018 AITO Travel Writer of the Year Awards



AITO's Travel Writers of the Year and sponsors: Back row L-R: Melissa Hirst, Pettitts; Hannah McKeand; Simon Grove, Explore; Simon Scutt, On Foot; Madeleine Bromige, InsideAsia Tours; AITO Executive Director Kate Kenward. Front row L-R: Suzanne O'Sullivan; Vanda Bauer, Classic Collection; Sarah Gilbert; AITO Chairman Derek Moore; Liz Edwards; Sarah Barrell.

17 October 2018

AITO (www.aito.com), under its newly-unveiled strapline, *The Specialist Travel Association*, has just announced the results of its 22nd Travel Writer of the Year awards. Over 250 high-calibre articles were submitted by a wide range

of writers, from freelancers to travel editors, across both trade and consumer press, print and online.

Five Travel Writer of the Year awards - with an overall winner and two runners-up in each category - were presented yesterday (see below). The judges reviewed entries according to four criteria, seeking copy that was **inspirational, informative, interesting** and **well-written**. The first round of marking was judged by 17 AITO members; the second by a team of six judges from the wider industry.

THE WINNERS

AITO Travel Writer of the Year

This is the most hotly contested award and some of the most respected travel journalists in the industry have featured on the roll of honour, which recognises excellence in the huge field of travel writing.

There are **two separate categories for this award**: firstly, **Travel Writer of the Year for articles of Over 1,500 words**, for those articles that deliver a longer read, as briefed by the commissioning editor and, secondly, **Travel Writer of the Year (TWOTY) for articles of Under 1,500 words** (for pieces that are commissioned to be shorter and punchy).

AITO TWOTY Over 1,500 words

The **AITO Travel Writer of the Year Over 1,500 words award** went to

Suzanne O'Sullivan for her piece *Going Off Grid on Indonesia's Forgotten Islands* for **The Telegraph Magazine**. One judge commented that "it gave a real feeling of the joy of exploration". Another described it as "beguiling and sensitive; a beautiful piece of writing". Suzanne received £500 in cash together with a bottle of champagne.

In **second place** was **Adrian Phillips** for his piece *The Hothouse Heart of the Jungle*, published in **National Geographic Traveller**. It was an atmospheric, evocative piece about a journey into the Yasuni National Park in Ecuador.

In **third place** was **Michelle Jana Chan** for her uplifting and incisive piece, *Primal Green*, on the gorillas of Rwanda, published in **Vanity Fair**.

AITO TWOTY Under 1,500 words

In **first place**, winning the **AITO Travel Writer of the Year Under 1,500 words award**, was **Hannah McKeand** for her piece *A World in a Grain of Sand* for **SUITCASE Magazine**. A first-time win for the polar explorer, her reflective piece on The Selima Sand Sheet, the vast desert spanning the borders between Egypt and Sudan, was described by one judge as "a heartfelt, highly personal piece, transcending the norm for travel journalism". Another judge said it was "haunting and

wonderfully descriptive". Hannah received a cash award of £500 together with a bottle of champagne.

In **second place**, for his perceptive and balanced view of modern-day Haiti, was **Ian Belcher** for his article *The Alternative to the Caribbean*, published in luxury title **Brummell Magazine**.

In **third place** was **Matt Hampton** for his article *From Paris to the Sea on Two Wheels*, published in **The Times**. It was a witty article charting the Veloscenic, a continuous cycleway stretching from Paris to Mont St Michel on the Normandy coast.

AITO Young Travel Writer of the Year

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

In **first place** was **Alicia Burrell** for her article *Emerald Miles* in **The Sunday Times Travel Magazine**, about setting off solo along the west coast of Ireland's Wild Atlantic Way. One judge said that "with a lightness of touch, this writer captures the wilderness, colours and water of Ireland's Atlantic coast". Another described it as "a well-worded, lyrical read". Alicia received a cash award of £350 together with a bottle of champagne.

In **second place**, with her article *Chile: Patagonia Indomita*, in **National Geographic Traveller**, was **Amelia Duggan**.

In **third place**, with his article *Finland's Northernmost Region*, in **The Telegraph Magazine**, was **Guy Kelly**.

AITO Travel Trade Writer of the Year

This award recognises the technical writing abilities of travel trade writers – including the understanding of complex travel industry issues that is required of them on occasion.

In **first place** was **Sarah Gilbert** for her piece entitled *Scenic Safaris* in **Travel Weekly**. Judges described the article as "a panoramic but detailed overview of wildlife conservation that allows the experts to speak; outstanding" and "inspirational." Sarah received a cash award of £250 together with a bottle of champagne.

In **joint second place** were **Jessica Pook** for her article entitled *Falling for Northern Japan*, featured in **Selling Travel**, and **Laura Gelder** for her piece *Deep Blue Something*, which described her top diving destinations and was also published in **Selling Travel**.

In **third place** was **Tamara Hinson** for her article *Singapore: Go Green*, featured in **Travel Weekly**.

AITO Travel Blogger of the Year

This category recognises the burgeoning influence of travel bloggers and their role within the travel writing community.

In **first place** was **Amelia Duggan** for her blog post, entitled *Port in the Storm*, from the ***National Geographic Traveller blog***, which took the reader on a journey through Porto. One judge said "very atmospheric: I was travelling with the writer." Amelia received a cash award of £250 together with a bottle of champagne.

In **second place** was an article entitled *An Afternoon Sail to the Shiant's with Sea Harris* by **Kathryn MacLeod**, written for her blog ***Stories My Suitcase Could Tell***.

In **third place** was **Kerry Christiani** for her piece *A Taste of Wales: stories worth savouring*, published on her blog ***Small World***.

Chairman of AITO, Derek Moore, said "There has been an incredibly high standard of winners once again this year, and we'd like to thank all of the writers who entered the awards and, of course, to congratulate the worthy winners.

"It's a tall order for the judges, but also a very rewarding exercise and a joy to read so many well-crafted examples of great of travel writing, where destinations are brought to life on a page and readers are taken on fascinating journeys and all manner of adventures.

"I would like to say a special thanks to the five sponsors who contributed the very welcome cash prizes for the first-place winners - Classic Collection, Explore, Inside Asia, On Foot Holidays and Pettitts. And thanks are also due to the 17 AITO members who kindly contributed their time and expertise to act as judges for the first round of these awards – not to mention the six second-round judges, who, in teams of two, carefully read and re-read the shortlisted entries using the chosen judging criteria to come up with the top articles."

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

Ends

Notes to editors:

Many congratulations to all winners, and thanks to all entrants, too! Shortlisted from a total of 254 entries, the names of those who scored highest are as follows, **in alphabetic order:**

AITO Travel Writer of the Year (Over 1,500 words) – top 15 in alphabetic order by first name:

- Adrian Bridge, The Daily Telegraph, Australia
- Adrian Phillips, National Geographic Traveller, Ecuador

- Alicia Miller, The Sunday Times Travel Magazine, Australia
- Chris Moss, The Daily Telegraph, Argentina
- Emma Thomson, National Geographic Traveller, Iran
- Hannah Summers, The Daily Telegraph, Mozambique
- Isabella Tree, The Economist – 1843, India
- Johan Smits, Travel Begins at 40, Tajikistan
- Michelle Jana Chan, Vanity Fair, Rwanda
- Sarah Baxter, Walk Magazine, Grenada
- Sarah Gilbert, Wanderlust, Namibia
- Steve King, Condé Nast Traveller, China
- Sue Bryant, The Sunday Times, The Galápagos
- Sue Watt, The Times, Zimbabwe
- Suzanne O’Sullivan, The Telegraph Magazine, Indonesia

AITO Travel Writer of the Year (Under 1,500 words) – top 15 in alphabetic order by first name:

- Aaron Millar, The Times, Peru
- Adrian Phillips, National Geographic Traveller, Ecuador
- Amelia Duggan, National Geographic Traveller, India
- Ben Lerwill, BBC Travel Online, Armenia
- Claire Boobbyer, The Guardian, Bolivia
- Duncan Craig, The Sunday Times, South Africa
- Duncan Madden, Travel Begins at 40, Uruguay
- Gavin Haines, The Daily Telegraph, Netherlands
- Hannah McKeand, SUITCASE Magazine, Egypt and Sudan
- Ian Belcher, Brummell, Haiti
- Jeremy Lazell, The Sunday Times, St Helena
- Jonathan Thompson, Tatler, USA
- Matt Hampton, The Times, France
- Richard Mellor, Adventure.com, England
- Yvonne Gordon, Independent.co.uk, Spain

AITO Young Travel Writer of the Year – top 10 in alphabetic order by first name:

- Alicia Burrell, The Sunday Times Travel Magazine, Ireland
- Amelia Duggan, National Geographic Traveller, Chile
- Guy Kelly, The Telegraph Magazine, Finland
- India Dowley, SUITCASE Magazine, South Africa
- Jonathan Wells, Gentleman’s Journal, Morocco
- Jordan Kelly-Linden, Foodism, USA
- Lucy Thackray, The Sunday Times Travel Magazine, Argentina
- Lydia Winter, Foodism, Peru
- Peter Stewart, FRANCE Magazine, France
- Tara Isabelle Burton, The Economist – 1843, Italy

AITO Travel Trade Writer of the Year – top 6 in alphabetic order by first name:

- Jessica Pook, Selling Travel, Japan
- John Fitzsimons, ABTA Magazine, Analysis piece
- Laura French, Travel Weekly, Israel
- Laura Gelder, Selling Travel, Diving destinations
- Sarah Gilbert, Travel Weekly, Kenya

- Tamara Hinson, Travel Weekly, Singapore

AITO Travel Blogger of the Year – top 6 in alphabetic order by first name:

- Abigail King, Inside the Travel Lab, Portugal
- Amelia Duggan, National Geographic Traveller (UK) Blog, Portugal
- Kait Reynolds, Flaked, Nepal
- Kathryn MacLeod, Stories My Suitcase Could Tell, Scotland
- Kerry Christiani, Lonely Planet Online, Wales
- Phoebe Smith, Wanderlust Online, Australia

The list of past and present winners in full:

The AITO Travel Writer of the Year award - *celebrating 22 years of excellence in travel writing*

2018	Over 1,500 words - Suzanne O'Sullivan (The Telegraph Magazine)
2018	Under 1,500 words - Hannah McKeand (SUITCASE Magazine)
2017	Over 1,500 words - Stanley Stewart (Condé Nast Traveller)
2017	Under 1,500 words - Chris Haslam (The Sunday Times)
2016	Over 1,500 words - Liz Edwards (The Sunday Times Travel Magazine)
2016	Under 1,500 words – Michelle Jana Chan (The Daily Telegraph)
2015	Oliver Smith (Lonely Planet)
2014	Oliver Smith (Lonely Planet)
2013	Mark Jones (BA High Life)
2012	Oliver Smith (Lonely Planet)
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

2018	Alicia Burrell (The Sunday Times Travel Magazine)
2017	Sophie McGrath (Lonely Planet Traveller)
2016	Francesca Angelini (The Sunday Times)
2015	Maria Alafouzou (SUITCASE magazine)
2014	Laura Goodman (The Sunday Times Travel Magazine)
2013	Alasdair Baverstock (The Daily Telegraph)
2012	Rory Goulding (Lonely Planet)
2011	Nick Boulos (Wanderlust)
2010	Oliver Smith (Lonely Planet)

AITO Blogger of the Year Award

2018	Amelia Duggan (National Geographic Traveller blog)
2017	Hannah Summers (Burgers & Bruce)
2016	James Draven (Dearly Departures)

2015 **Emma Gregg** (All About Everywhere)
2014 **Mark Hodson** (101 Holidays)
2013 **Charlie Walker** (Charlie Walker Explore)

AITO Travel Trade Writer of the Year

2018 **Sarah Gilbert** (Travel Weekly)
2017 **Pippa Jacks** (TTG)
2016 **Joanna Booth** (Aspire)

Press: For further information on AITO, please contact Travel PR on 020 8891 4440 or email Jackie Franklin (j.franklin@travelpr.co.uk) or Sue Ockwell (s.ockwell@travelpr.co.uk)