



Winners of the prestigious 2017 AITO Travel Writer of the Year Awards announced - along with a new AITO Directory of Members, the first in six years



18th October 2017

The Association of Independent Tour Operators (AITO, www.aito.com) has announced the results of its **21st Travel Writer of the Year awards**. This year saw the highest number of entries since the awards began in 1997, with almost 300 articles submitted, all of an exceptionally high standard.

Alongside the Travel Writer of the Year awards, **AITO is proud to launch its new Directory of Members**, the first for the past six years. Says Derek Moore, Chairman of AITO: "While print may be harder to keep up to date than online publications, AITO's Council felt strongly that a print publication listing details of all AITO members was a valuable aide memoire of its 120 members and their key holiday specialities. We shall also issue quarterly updates, and hope that not only media, but also the travel trade and the consumer, will find this Directory very helpful."

There were five Travel Writer of the Year awards presented yesterday (see below). The judges reviewed entries according to four criteria, seeking copy that is **inspirational**, that is **informative**, that is **interesting** and that is also **well-written**. The first round of marking was judged by 17 AITO members.

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 now **two separate categories for this award**: firstly, **Travel Writer of the Year (TWOTY) for articles of Under 1,500 words** (for pieces that are commissioned to be short and punchy) and, secondly,

Travel Writer of the Year for articles of Over 1,500 words, for those articles that can be longer and more descriptive, as briefed by the commissioning editor.

AITO TWOTY Over 1,500 words

The **AITO Travel Writer of the Year Over 1,500 words award** went to **Stanley Stewart** for 'The Secret Trail to Machu Picchu', a piece for **Condé Nast Traveller**. It was a first-time win for this talented writer, and all judges were in agreement that his article was of the highest quality. One judge commented: "This fine writer spins colourful tales from a series of brief encounters with the people of Peru." Another said: "He puts precisely into perspective where the Inca civilisation sits in history with a short observation; no mean feat." *Stanley received a cash award of £350 plus a magnum of champagne.*

In **second place**, for his article 'Nepal is Back' for **The Times**, was **Tom Chesshyre**, who penned an excellent piece on how holiday makers are now venturing back to Nepal, following the disastrous earthquake two years ago.

In **third place** was **Chris Leadbeater** for his piece on the treasures of Tanutamun, Sudan, in **The Sunday Telegraph**; it revealed a little-visited region with huge cultural significance, featuring over 200 pyramids.

AITO TWOTY Under 1,500 words

In **first place**, winning the coveted **AITO Travel Writer of the Year Under 1,500 words award**, for his piece on 'Mexico's Undiscovered Coast' for **The Sunday Times**, was the very talented writer - and previous winner (2006, 2008) - **Chris Haslam**. One judge described how the "quirkily humorous descriptions brought the slightly off-the-wall nature of the area completely to life". *Chris received a cash award of £350 plus a magnum of champagne.*

In **second place** was an article about the extraordinary female free divers of South Korea, featured in **SUITCASE magazine**, by **Jonathan Thompson**.

In **joint third place** were **Kerry Christiani** for her piece on Svalbard, Norway, in **Lonely Planet Traveller magazine**, and **Jane Knight** for her piece on Cambodia in **The Times**.

AITO Young Travel Writer of the Year

This award celebrates travel writing talent in the under-30s. This was a very close field of entries indeed - one of the closest ever - as all of those shortlisted were only a few marks away from being in the top three.

In **first place** was **Sophie McGrath** for her article in **Lonely Planet Traveller** on road tripping around the Great Lakes of the USA, which one judge called outstanding and another commented: "A comprehensive article laid out in bite-sized chunks, making it easy for the reader to digest. I like the way she mixes heritage with nature, artisan products and edgy city life - something for everyone." *Sophie received a cash award of £350 plus a magnum of champagne.*

In **second place** was **Guy Kelly**, with his article on 'how the future is bright for Colombia' in **The Telegraph Magazine**.

In **third place**, for his article on Cuba in **Gentleman's Journal**, was **Jonathan Wells**.

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 **Pippa Jacks** for her piece entitled 'Galapagos Galore' in **TTG**. One judge said "carefully-crafted, this piece gives a very good insight into what trips to the Galapagos will be like - perfect material for the publication's readers to use in a practical way." *Pippa received a cash award of £250 plus a magnum of champagne.*

In **second place** was **John Fitzsimons**, for his article entitled 'Tomorrow's Travellers', which was featured

in **ABTA magazine**.

In **third place** was **Jenny Southan**, who wins for her **Business Traveller** piece on Iran.

AITO Travel Blogger of the Year

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

In **first place**, the winning piece by **Hannah Summers** from her blog *Burgers and Bruce*, entitled 'Out in the street in Tokyo, Japan', is a blog post about which one judge said: "This is an incredibly punchy and quirky approach, which grabs you and makes you run with it." *Hannah received a cash award of £250 plus a magnum of champagne.*

In **second place** is an article entitled 'Iceland and Tourism: Where the Wild Things Were', by **Kait Reynolds**, published on her blog *Flaked Blog*.

In **third place**, for her piece on Cycling From Hanoi to Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, in her blog *Vicky Flip Flop*, is **Vicky Philpott**.

Chairman of AITO, Derek Moore, said: "Huge congratulations to all of the entrants for such a high standard yet again this year.

"As usual, it's been a mammoth but very interesting exercise for the judges. **I would like to say a special thanks to the five sponsors who contributed the most welcome cash prizes for the winners - Intravel, Pettitts Travel, On Foot Holidays, Abercrombie & Kent and InsideAsia Tours.** 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 five second-round judges, who carefully sifted through the best of the best to come up with our final winners.

"I'd also like to thank the writers. There were so many excellently written pieces, about so many fascinating destinations around the world, that reading the entries was positively inspiring. Words continue to have great power in this age of technology; they create desire to visit a destination, and deliver tourism that works for the greater good in the vast majority of cases."

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 298 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:

- Tom Chesshyre, The Times, Nepal
- Martin Hemming, The Sunday Times, New Zealand
- Geoff Hill, The Weekend Australian, Vietnam
- Michelle Jana Chan, Telegraph's Ultratravel magazine, East Greenland
- Lauren Jarvis, Spear's 100 Travel Guide, Kenya
- Jane Knight, The Times, Namibia
- Chris Leadbeater, The Sunday Telegraph, Sudan
- Duncan Madden, Escapism, Senegal
- Laura Millar, Escapism, Iran
- Aaron Millar, National Geographic Traveller, Texas
- Toby Skinner, N by Norwegian (Norwegian Air), Norway's Arctic
- Oliver Smith, Lonely Planet Traveller, Armenia
- Stanley Stewart, Condé Nast Traveller, Peru
- James Stewart, The Telegraph, Canada
- Mark Stratton, Wanderlust, South China's Himalaya

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

- Abigail Butcher, The Telegraph, Sri Lanka
- Kerry Christiani, The Lonely Planet Traveller, Norway
- Duncan Craig, The Sunday Times, Tour de France
- Danielle Demetriou, FT's How to Spend It, Japan
- Chris Haslam, The Sunday Times, Mexico
- Robert Hull, The Guardian, Iceland's Fjords
- Brian Jackman, The Sunday Telegraph, Central Sweden
- Jane Knight, The Times, Cambodia
- Monisha Rajesh, SUITCASE magazine, Tibet
- Ellie Ross, The Guardian, Sheffield
- John Simpson, BA High Life, Australia
- Nigel Tisdall, The Daily Telegraph, The Caribbean
- Jonathan Thompson, SUITCASE magazine, South Korea
- Tommy Trenchard, b.inspired (Brussels Airlines), The Congo
- Nicola Trup, Independent.co.uk, Kilimanjaro (Africa)

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

- Cathy Adams, Independent.co.uk, China
- Alex Allen, Sunday Times Travel Magazine, Umbria
- Stephanie Cavagnaro, National Geographic Traveller, Jamaica
- Helen Coffey, Independent.co.uk, Ibiza
- Will Coldwell, The Guardian, Chamonix
- Harriet Constable, Nomad magazine, Nairobi to Mombasa by train
- Ben Clatworthy, The Times, Croatia's islands
- Guy Kelly, The Telegraph magazine, Colombia
- Sophie McGrath, Lonely Planet Traveller, America's Great Lakes
- Jonathan Wells, Gentleman's Journal, Cuba

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

- John Fitzsimons, ABTA magazine, Busting myths around millennial travellers
- Laura French, Travel Weekly, Swedish Lapland
- April Hutchinson, TTG Luxury, Cambodia
- Pippa Jacks, TTG, Galapagos Islands
- Rupert Parker, Selling Travel, Morocco
- Jenny Southan, Business Traveller, Iran

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

- Lisa Gerard-Sharp, Avanti Travel Blog, The French Riviera
- Vicky Philpott, Vicky Flip Flop, Ho Chi Minh City – Vietnam
- Gabriel Power, Hidden Gabe, Dnipro – Ukraine
- Josephine Price, Country by Country, Iceland
- Kait Reynolds, Flaked Blog, Iceland
- Hannah Summers, Burgers and Bruce, Tokyo – Japan

The list of past and present winners in full:

The AITO Travel Writer of the Year award - *celebrating 21 years of excellence in travel writing*

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

- 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

- 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

2017 **Pippa Jacks** (TTG)

2016 **Joanna Booth** (Aspire)

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

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