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National Geographic Announces World Legacy Awards Finalists

Innovative travel companies, organizations and destinations put sustainability into action

WASHINGTON (Dec. 1, 2016)—The 15 finalists of the National Geographic World Legacy Awards were unveiled today. The World Legacy Awards, a partnership between National Geographic and ITB Berlin, showcase the leading travel and tourism companies, organizations and destinations — ranging from entire countries to small islands and from urban hotels to jungle retreats — driving the sustainable tourism transformation of the global travel industry.

This year's World Legacy Awards entries spanned the planet, representing 45 countries and six continents, showcasing how sustainable tourism has no boundaries. Finalists in five award categories were selected by an international team of more than 20 judges. A multi-step judging process also included on-site inspections of each finalist. For details on the judges, go to <http://www.nationalgeographic.com/worldlegacyawards/judging.html>

Costas Christ, Chairman of National Geographic World Legacy Awards, said, "We have reached a tipping point as more of the travel industry understands that there can be no future for tourism without sustainability, including environmentally-friendly business practices, protection of cultural and natural heritage, and tangible social and economic benefits to local people in travel destinations. Those countries and companies that understand this today will be the travel leaders of tomorrow. These 15 World Legacy Awards finalists are showing the way forward to a brighter future for people and the planet."

The 2017 National Geographic World Legacy Awards finalists are:

Conserving the Natural World — Recognizing outstanding support for the preservation of nature, restoring natural habitat, protecting rare and endangered species, whether on land or in the oceans.

- **Mark Thornton Safaris, Tanzania** — This guide-owned outfitter works to protect endangered wildlife habitat by establishing indigenous community partnerships on the Simanjiro Grazing Easement of the Maasai Steppe, a critically important wildlife migration corridor and wildebeest calving ground.
- **Misool Eco Resort, Indonesia** — Misool actively works to protect marine habitat, influence policy, and empower local communities. They manage more than 350 square miles of marine protected area in the heart of the Coral Triangle - the global center of marine biodiversity.
- **North Island, Seychelles** — Hailed as the Galapagos of the East, this eco-resort's innovative Noah's Ark project has successfully reintroduced some of the Seychelles' rarest species back to nature as part of their restoration of native habitat on the former plantation island.

Earth Changers — Recognizing cutting-edge leadership in environmentally friendly business practices and green technology, from renewable energy and water conservation to zero-waste systems and carbon-emissions reduction.

- **Cayuga Collection, Costa Rica and Nicaragua** – Reduce, reuse, recycle is a daily mantra at this ultra-green hospitality company. Innovative practices include a program to eliminate plastic waste (even drinking straws are reusable bamboo) and guests join back-of-the-house tours to learn how sustainability touches their vacation experience.

- **Finch Bay Eco Hotel, Ecuador** – Finch Bay’s closed-loop sustainable technology produces organic food for their guests with a high-yield process that conserves water, eliminates pesticides, and reduces carbon food miles. Their success is now being replicated by other Galapagos hotels.
- **ITC Hotels, India** – Demonstrating that large luxury urban hotels can set a new standard for going green, ITC’s 11 iconic city properties, spread across India, are all LEED Platinum certified – the highest level recognized by Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design.

Sense of Place — *Recognizing excellence in enhancing cultural authenticity, including implementing vernacular architecture and design, support for the protection of historic monuments, archeological sites, indigenous heritage, and artistic traditions.*

- **Adventure Canada, Canada** – Working closely with indigenous groups, this small-ship company helps native communities realize their tourism potential while protecting an authentic sense of place, including opportunities for Inuit youth to gain first-hand experience in archaeology, teaching about their heritage, and guiding.
- **Awamaki, Peru** – Located in the Sacred Valley, this non-profit rural community tourism organization works to empower indigenous women artisans and their families to alleviate poverty, while providing travelers with an experience of authentic Quechua culture in an immersive, sustainable, and respectful manner.
- **City of Santa Fe, USA** - If American pioneers from more than a century ago re-appeared in Santa Fe’s plaza today, they would recognize it instantly. The oldest state capital in America considers safeguarding its rich heritage a duty, including Fiesta de Santa Fe, the nation’s oldest continuous public celebration.

Engaging Communities — *Recognizing direct and tangible economic and social benefits that improve local livelihoods, including training and capacity building, fair wages and benefits, community development, health care, and education.*

- **Andaman Discoveries, Thailand** – Established in response to the 2004 tsunami, Andaman Discoveries immerses guests in the cultural and natural diversity of Thailand. All initiatives are local community-led: villagers decide a fair cost for their tourism services and 50 percent of profits support a foundation for community development.
- **Lodge at Chaa Creek, Belize** – Belize’s pioneer eco-resort demonstrates that putting local people first benefits employees, villages, and its own bottom line. The Lodge provides economic benefits to community projects across the nation, directing 10 percent of all room revenue to support social and environmental programs.
- **Chambok Community Based Eco Tourism/Mlup Baitong, Cambodia** - When non-profit group Mlup Baitong began, Chambok villagers were faced with unrelenting poverty, resorting to illegal logging and wildlife poaching to survive. Today, this self-sustaining ecotourism project contributes 20 percent of its profits to a local fund supporting women’s micro-enterprise initiatives and community health care.

Destination Leadership — *Recognizing destination stewardship, including cities, provinces, states, countries, and regions that are demonstrating environmental best practices, protection for cultural and natural heritage, benefits to local people, and educating travelers on the principles of sustainable tourism.*

- **Riverwind Foundation/Jackson Hole Chamber of Commerce, USA** – Working together, these two organizations actively engage public and private stakeholders to support environmental stewardship, social responsibility, and economic vitality through destination stewardship policies and planning, including an open space resolution ensuring protection of 25,000 acres, and a Sustainability Code of Conduct for visitors.
- **Segera Retreat, Kenya** – This high-end ecolodge in Laikipia acts as an incubator for innovative technologies and conservation approaches that can be tested, refined, and replicated in Africa and beyond, including successful projects to enhance local livelihoods, support health care, protect endangered species and restore natural habitat.

- **Slovenian Tourist Board, Slovenia** - With nearly 60 percent of its land forested, the country of Slovenia has successfully laid the foundation to become one of the world's most sustainable destinations. The Tourist Board unifies all stewardship initiatives through its Green Scheme, which sets guidelines and provides tools for monitoring sustainability progress.

The winners will be announced live on stage at the World Legacy Awards ceremony on 8 March, 2017, held at the Palais am Funkturm during ITB Berlin. Winners and Finalists will also be recognized by National Geographic Traveler magazine.

The sponsors of the World Legacy Awards are **Adventure World** and **TreadRight Foundation**. To learn more about the sponsors, visit www.adventureworld.com.au and www.treadright.org

For more information on the World Legacy Awards and this year's Finalists, go to www.nationalgeographic.com/worldlegacyawards/ or <http://www.itb-berlin.de/en/ITBBerlin/SocialResponsibility/WorldLegacyAwards/>.

About National Geographic Partners LLC

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About ITB Berlin and the ITB Berlin Convention

ITB Berlin 2017 will take place from Wednesday to Sunday, 8 to 12 March. From Wednesday to Friday ITB Berlin is open to trade visitors only. Parallel with the trade show, the ITB Berlin Convention, the world's largest tourism convention, will be held from Wednesday, 8 to Saturday, 11 March 2017. More details are available at www.itb-convention.com. ITB Berlin is the global travel industry's leading trade show. In 2016 a total of 10,000 companies and organizations from 187 countries exhibited their products and services to 180,000 visitors, who included 120,000 trade visitors. Join the ITB Press Network at www.linkedin.com.

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