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## **National Geographic and ITB Berlin Announce World Legacy Awards Winners**

*Visionary companies and destinations are driving sustainable tourism transformation of the global travel industry*

WASHINGTON (March 9, 2016)—The five winners of the 2016 National Geographic World Legacy Awards were announced today during an awards ceremony held at ITB Berlin at the ITB Berlin Convention. A partnership between National Geographic Partners and ITB Berlin, the World Legacy Awards showcase the leading travel and tourism companies, organizations and destinations — ranging from large resorts to small eco-lodges and from wildlife conservancies to global geoparks — that are driving the sustainable tourism transformation of the travel industry based on National Geographic’s work of inspiring people to care about the planet.

More than 100 entries, representing 51 countries across six continents, were received. An international panel of 23 judges coordinated by Costas Christ, editor-at-large for National Geographic Traveler magazine and chairman of the World Legacy Awards, scored each entry according to globally recognized sustainable tourism criteria. The 15 finalists underwent a rigorous on-site inspection.

Christ said, “There are now more than one billion international travelers, up from 25 million in 1950, and we have more ways to reach more places on our planet than ever before. The goal of the World Legacy Awards is a simple one: Applaud, support and raise the bar for destinations and travel companies in the vanguard of sustainable tourism as a force to help alleviate poverty and safeguard the world’s natural and cultural treasures.”

George Stone, National Geographic Travel editor-in-chief, said, “From community engagement in Zambia to environmental stewardship in Mexico to cultural education in New Zealand, these winners demonstrate that well-managed tourism practices can produce tangible, beneficial, sustainable impacts around the world. The ripple effects of the travel economy can be felt across the globe, not always in good ways. These World Legacy Awards winners show how best practices in tourism today can help sustain the world’s best destinations for generations of travelers to come.”

The 2016 National Geographic World Legacy Awards winners and finalists are:

**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-emission reduction.***

### **WINNER:**

- **Mission Hills, China** — Mission Hills is a leader in advancing sustainable tourism and green operations, including establishing a high-tech field station for monitoring air quality and climate change impacts. It was among the first resort companies in China to ban shark fin, while also helping to educate Chinese travelers and the Chinese tourism industry on sustainable best practices. Incorporating solar-powered golf carts, hand-weeding and solar “pest control,” Mission Hills Haikou also earned Golf Environment Organization’s certification in 2014.

**Sense of Place — *Recognizing excellence in enhancing sense of place and authenticity, including support for the protection of historical monuments, archaeological sites, cultural events, indigenous heritage and artistic traditions.***

**WINNER:**

- **TIME Unlimited Tours, New Zealand** — TIME (To Integrate Maori Experiences) Unlimited Tours is an Auckland-based ecotourism company offering environmentally friendly tours across New Zealand. A Maori-owned company, TIME Unlimited introduces guests to both the natural and cultural heritage of New Zealand, providing a “living cultural” experience that immerses guests into the local Maori way of life, benefiting local communities while promoting sustainable tourism.

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

**WINNER:**

- **Grupo Ecológico Sierra Gorda, Mexico** — This nonprofit grassroots community organization has been instrumental in the creation and maintenance of the Sierra Gorda Biosphere Reserve, an area of rich biodiversity in central Mexico. Working with local communities, Sierra Gorda has provided new opportunities for employment, encouraging and supporting the development of small ecotourism businesses, while monitoring and tracking benefits to biodiversity conservation and economic development.

**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.***

**WINNER:**

- **The Bushcamp Company, Zambia** — As a guiding principle, The Bushcamp Company recognizes that protecting the natural environment means fully involving the local community in management and decision making. Through close collaboration, Bushcamp supports projects in the Luangwa area to help conserve critical wildlife resources and support education, health care and other community development initiatives through the “Luangwa Conservation and Community Fund.”

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

**WINNER:**

- **Burren and Cliffs of Moher Geopark, Ireland** — From the seeds of a local community project, Burren and Cliffs of Moher Geopark today represents a vibrant and successful destination-wide partnership between the private sector, local villagers and municipal authorities working together to safeguard one of Ireland’s most beautiful natural landscapes. The project demonstrates the power of well-planned and managed tourism to improve local livelihoods, provide a high-quality visitor experience and promote conservation.

The sponsors of the World Legacy Awards are Botswana Tourism Organization, Adventure World and TreadRight Foundation. For more information on the World Legacy Awards, **including the full list of 2016 finalists and interviews**, go to [www.nationalgeographic.com/worldlegacyawards/](http://www.nationalgeographic.com/worldlegacyawards/).

**About National Geographic Partners LLC**

National Geographic Partners LLC, a joint venture between National Geographic Society and 21<sup>st</sup> Century Fox, combines National Geographic television channels with National Geographic’s media and consumer-oriented assets, including National Geographic magazines; National Geographic Studios; related digital and social media platforms; books; maps; children’s media; and ancillary activities that include travel, global experiences and events, archival sales, catalog, licensing and e-commerce businesses. A portion of the proceeds from National Geographic Partners LLC will be used to fund science, exploration, conservation and education through significant ongoing contributions to the work of the National

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### **About ITB Berlin and the ITB Berlin Convention**

ITB Berlin 2016 takes place from Wednesday, March 9, to Sunday, March 13. From Wednesday to Friday ITB Berlin is open to trade visitors only. Parallel with the show, the ITB Berlin Convention, the largest event of its kind, will be held from Wednesday, March 9, to Saturday, March 12. More details are available at [www.itb-convention.com](http://www.itb-convention.com). Information on Corporate Social Responsibility at ITB Berlin can be found at [www.itb-berlin.com/csr](http://www.itb-berlin.com/csr). ITB Berlin is the global travel industry's leading trade show. In 2016 a total of 10,000 companies and organizations from 187 countries showcase their products and services in the 26 halls on the Berlin Exhibition Grounds. Overall, about 175,000 visitors are expected to attend the show, among them 115,000 trade visitors.

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