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**National Geographic and ITB Berlin Announce World Legacy Awards Winners**  
*Visionary Travel Companies and Destination Leaders*  
*Honored During United Nations International Year for Sustainable Tourism*

WASHINGTON (March 8, 2017)—Coinciding with the United Nations International Year of Sustainable Tourism Development, the five winners of the 2017 National Geographic World Legacy Awards were announced today during an awards ceremony held in the Palais am Funkturm. The World Legacy Awards, a partnership between National Geographic and ITB Berlin, showcase the leading travel and tourism companies, organizations and destinations — ranging from large resorts to small eco-lodges and from wildlife conservancies to entire countries — that are driving the sustainable tourism transformation of the global travel industry.

More than 100 entries, representing 45 countries across six continents, were submitted for these prestigious travel awards. An international panel of 26 judges coordinated by Costas Christ, a internationally recognized sustainable tourism expert and award-winning National Geographic travel writer, scored each entry according to globally recognized sustainable tourism criteria. All 15 finalists underwent a rigorous on-site inspection.

Christ said, “Sustainable tourism development is crucial for the future of travel and for the planet. The time is now for action on a global scale. The travel and tourism industry is based on promoting and selling culture and nature holiday experiences and as such, needs to take a bigger role in protecting the very resources that their business depends upon. When planned and managed well, tourism can be a tremendous force for good – from saving endangered species to heritage preservation and poverty alleviation. The World Legacy Award winners and finalists are demonstrating the way forward to a brighter travel future for people and the planet.”

“National Geographic stands for exploration, conservation and stellar storytelling. World Legacy Awards celebrate the people, places and experiences that exemplify our mission in the global travel industry,” said George Stone, National Geographic Travel editor-in-chief. “We are proud to honor these leaders in sustainability who represent the future in travel and inspire the explorer in all of us.”

The 2017 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:**

- **Cayuga Collection, Costa Rica and Nicaragua** — This innovative hotel collection combines state-of-the art sustainability with experiential travel at eight unique properties in Central America. Reduction and monitoring of energy, water, waste, composting, recycling, and other earth-friendly initiatives inspire staff and guests to make green practices part of their own lives. Innovative practices also include eliminating plastic waste (at Cayuga, even drinking straws are reusable bamboo), and guests join popular behind-the-scene tours to learn how sustainability directly touches their vacation experience.

**Finalists:**

- Finch Bay Galapagos Hotel, Ecuador
- ITC Hotels, India

**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:**

- **City of Santa Fe, New Mexico, USA** — If American pioneers from more than a century ago were to visit Santa Fe's central plaza today, they would recognize it instantly. The oldest state capital in America considers safeguarding its rich heritage a duty and a passion. The historic downtown and surrounding area protect archaeological sites and cultural authenticity, including the Santa Fe Indian Market, now almost 100 years old and still going strong. Santa Fe's annual festivals and events place Native American, Spanish, and Anglo heritage front and center, while strong sustainability initiatives also bring the past into the future.

**Finalists:**

- Adventure Canada, Canada
- Awamaki, Peru

**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:**

- **North Island, Seychelles** — With the Seychelles Islands known as the Galapagos of the East, this luxury eco-resort's innovative Noah's Ark project has successfully reintroduced some of the Seychelles' rarest and most endangered species back to nature as part of their restoration of native habitat on the former plantation island. Biologists on site monitor all aspects of the island's ecology, contributing to greater global understanding of migration patterns, sea temperatures, and the impacts of climate change in one of the world's biodiversity hotspots.

**Finalists:**

- Mark Thornton Safaris, Tanzania
- Misool, Indonesia

**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 Lodge at Chaa Creek, Belize** — Belize's pioneer jungle lodge demonstrates that putting local people first benefits employees, villagers, 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. They offer annual training and workshops to promote career development, and sponsor an Environmental Outreach Program, a free Eco-Kids summer camp, and scholarships and internships for local students.

**Finalists:**

- Andaman Discoveries, Thailand
- Chambok Community Based Eco-Tourism/Mlup Baitong, Cambodia

**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:**

- **Slovenian Tourist Board, Slovenia** — with nearly 60 percent of its land protected, 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, instilling a culture of continual improvement in the country's tourism efforts based upon benefiting local communities, protecting cultural heritage and saving nature, including revitalizing rural areas and creating authentic travel experiences for visitors.

## **Finalists:**

- **The Riverwind Foundation/Jackson Hole Chamber of Commerce, Wyoming, USA**
- **Segeza Retreat, Kenya**

The sponsors of the World Legacy Awards are **Adventure World** and **TreadRight Foundation**. To learn more about the sponsors, visit [www.adventureworld.com.au](http://www.adventureworld.com.au) and [www.treadright.org](http://www.treadright.org)

For more information on the World Legacy Awards, **including the full list of 2017 finalists and interviews**, go to [www.nationalgeographic.com/worldlegacyawards/](http://www.nationalgeographic.com/worldlegacyawards/).

## **About National Geographic Partners LLC**

National Geographic Partners LLC (NGP), a joint venture between National Geographic and 21st Century Fox, is committed to bringing the world premium science, adventure and exploration content across an unrivaled portfolio of media assets. NGP combines the global National Geographic television channels (National Geographic Channel, Nat Geo WILD, Nat Geo MUNDO, Nat Geo PEOPLE) 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, licensing and e-commerce businesses. Furthering knowledge and understanding of our world has been the core purpose of National Geographic for 129 years, and now we are committed to going deeper, pushing boundaries, going further for our consumers ... and reaching over 730 million people around the world in 172 countries and 43 languages every month as we do it. NGP returns 27 percent of our proceeds to the nonprofit National Geographic Society to fund work in the areas of science, exploration, conservation and education. For more information visit [natgeotv.com](http://natgeotv.com) or [nationalgeographic.com](http://nationalgeographic.com), or find us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#), [Google+](#), [YouTube](#), [LinkedIn](#) and [Pinterest](#).

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

ITB Berlin 2017 takes 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, is held from Wednesday, 8 to Saturday, 11 March 2017. More details are available at [www.itb-convention.com](http://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](http://www.linkedin.com).

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