

A close-up, high-angle portrait of a woman, likely from an African tribe, with her face and neck covered in traditional red ochre body paint. She is wearing multiple layers of beaded necklaces. The lighting is warm and directional, highlighting the texture of the paint and her features.

Progress in Responsible Tourism

The 2012 Virgin Holidays Responsible Tourism Awards

Editors: Harold Goodwin and Xavier Font



Progress in Responsible Tourism

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The 2012 Virgin Holidays Responsible Tourism Awards

Harold Goodwin, Professor of Responsible Tourism Management in ICRETH at Leeds Metropolitan University and Chair of the Judges of the Virgin Holiday Responsible Tourism Awards

The Responsible Tourism Awards were launched in 2004, and since 2007 they have been sponsored by Virgin Holidays¹. This is the ninth set of Awards and competition remains strong, although some categories are more fiercely contested than others. The Awards are announced each year on World Responsible Tourism Day at World Travel Market. The purpose of the Awards is to encourage people to take responsibility for making tourism more sustainable; to use tourism to benefit local people; and to conserve their natural and cultural heritage.

The announcement of the Awards in the *Metro* and on the Awards website is followed by an awareness campaign as the organisers use a variety of networks to encourage consumers, and those in the industry, to nominate examples of good practice for the judges to consider. This activity, and the publication of the results each year, contributes to spreading the message about Responsible Tourism.

Responsible Tourism is about taking responsibility for making tourism more sustainable, addressing economic, social and environmental sustainability. The Responsible Tourism Awards, like the World Travel Market's World Responsible Tourism Day,² use the 2002 Cape Town Declaration as its definition of what Responsible Tourism means: it is about making "better places for people to live in and for people to visit"³, in that order.

Details of the categories, winners and highly commendeds for each year since 2004 can be found on the Awards website⁴. The Awards are not an accreditation scheme, and they are not about certifying an organisation as responsible. The Awards are about recognising responsible practice and explaining why the judges chose to recognise them from amongst those who were nominated, we rely on others to nominate. If businesses are not nominated, and if they do not return the substantial questionnaire all those long-listed are sent, then they cannot be considered for an Award. We are looking for examples in each category that will excite interest and help us to drive the agenda forward, we particularly look for examples which will inspire and which are replicable.

The judges aim to celebrate innovation, to inspire change in the industry, and to recognise organisations that demonstrate best practice. We, the judges and the organ-

1 They were previously sponsored by First Choice Holidays

2 www.wtmwrtd.com

3 www.responsibletourismpartnership.org/whatRT.html, www.responsibletourismpartnership.org/CapeTown.html

4 www.responsibletravel.com/awards/categories

isers, want the Awards to be the place to share stories about those organisations leading the way in Responsible Tourism. Some idea of the scale of the operation can be gained from the following statistics that also show how much the awards have grown. In 2004 there were around 700 nominations in 2012 there were 1,397, for 570 unique organisations. In 2004, 107 were long-listed, in 2012, 210 long-listed individuals and organisations were sent questionnaires, 114 completed questionnaires were returned.

We look for examples of Responsible Tourism in practice that have some, or all, of the following characteristics:

- Demonstrate the application of Responsible Tourism in taking responsibility for making tourism more sustainable across the triple bottom line, addressing economic, social and environmental issues.
- Credible evidence of having exercised responsibility based on the questionnaires we send out to all those who make the long-list and the references that we take up
- Novelty –we want organisations with original ideas, innovative approaches to solving problems in sustainable tourism, and unique initiatives that drive the Responsible Tourism agenda forward.
- A track record – proven results, demonstrable achievements illustrated with real data, well recorded metrics and detailed information about investment of time, effort and resources in Responsible Tourism initiatives.
- Replicability – practices and initiatives that are inspirational and have the potential to be applied elsewhere, adaptable concepts and ideas that could have an impact beyond their own business.
- Local focus – Responsible Tourism is not limited to a tick list of key requirements, we are interested in practices that address local issues and provide solutions with the local community in mind.

The Judges have no knowledge of the sponsorship arrangements each year and they are not recompensed for their time or their travel expenses. They are genuinely independent volunteers and they come from a wide range of backgrounds, embodying a considerable range of expertise:

Chair: Harold Goodwin, Professor of Responsible Tourism Management in ICRETH at Leeds Metropolitan University

Justin Francis, Managing Director and co-founder of Responsibletravel.com

Graeme Gourlay, Owner, Circle Publishing

Dr Rebecca Hawkins, Considerate Hoteliers Association, CESH

Debbie Hindle, Managing Director, Four bgb

Sue Hurdle, Chief Executive, The Travel Foundation

Fiona Jeffery, Chairman of World Travel Market

Ian Reynolds, Chairman at Family Travel Association and Citybond Holdings Plc,
former Chief Executive ABTA

Lisa Scott, Travel Editor, Metro

Jonathan Smith, Conservationist

John de Vial, Director of ABTA, The Travel Association, Travelife and The Travel
Foundation

Mark Watson, Executive Director of Tourism Concern

Nikki White, Head of Destinations and Sustainability, ABTA

We seek nominations from the public and the industry. The nomination process is an open one, but only those nominated can be considered for an Award, and then only if they make the substantial effort required to complete the questionnaire they are sent. There are six stages in the process:

- 1 In April each year nominations are sought.
- 2 Members of the International Centre for Responsible Tourism⁵ research all the nominations – they determine a long-list. Like the judges they too are unpaid volunteers.
- 3 Long-listed businesses and individuals are then asked to complete a long questionnaire and provide referees.
- 4 In pairs the judges then review those long-listed nominations for which questionnaires have been completed. Each pair of judges makes recommendations for two categories.
- 5 On the judging day, in September, there is debate around the table about the recommendations made by the judges to the judging panel and a collective decision is reached.
- 6 Where there are particular concerns or uncertainties, the judges undertake a further stage of due diligence.

Obviously some categories are stronger than others but we persevere with categories that only have small numbers of entrants, because we are seeking to drive the agenda for change. In many categories competition is stiff. This reflects the change that has accelerated in the last five years. This makes it more challenging for the judges to select the inspirational stories that best serve as an example for the industry.

5 www.icrtourism.org

Small and large businesses win every year. Where a business or organisation is nominated for a second time they will only be awarded if they have made significant progress since the last time they were awarded.

In 2012 the judges decided to make 32 Awards and on the judging day created a new category: Best Innovation.⁶ This year there are winners and highly commended from 18 countries: Australia, Cambodia, Chile, Costa Rica, Egypt, The Gambia, Kenya, India, Lesotho, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, Pakistan, Palestine, Slovenia, South Africa, the UK and the USA.

There has been interest from winners, journalists, those who have entered and been unsuccessful, and others about the reasons for the judges' decisions. The judges can only award from amongst those who are nominated, and who make the time and effort to complete our extensive paperwork. We know that this is an onerous task. Competition in many of the categories is stiff and often the differences between the winners and highly commended, and the others who reached the final stage of the judging process, are relatively small.

Here I have sought, on behalf of the judges, to indicate what gave the edge, and the Award, to the winners and highly commended in 2012.

1 Best in responsible transport

Awarded to an airline, train, ferry or cruise operator, or other transport initiative with an innovative approach to managing environmental and cultural impacts.

Winners: Big Lemon Bus Company, UK and Green Tomato Cars, UK and Australia

This year the judges decided to award two winners in this category, partly because there were a number of strong nominations and applications this year, but also to reflect the importance of taking responsibility for reducing carbon emissions in the provision of both public and personal transport.

The Big Lemon Bus Company⁷

The Big Lemon Bus Company, founded in 2007, is a social enterprise⁸ which carries 380,000 passengers per year on its services. It runs public bus services, bus and coach hire, a festival coach service and a waste cooking oil collection service. All their vehicles run on biodiesel from locally sourced waste cooking oil, much of which they collect

⁶ See Category 14: innovation, below

⁷ www.thebiglemon.com

⁸ It is a registered CIC, a community interest company. The business is owned by members of the community, many of which are staff at The Big Lemon

themselves in Brighton and Hove. The judges were impressed by the clarity and breadth of their core community service proposition, expressed on their website: “We will use your oil to power our buses, saving CO₂ emissions, reducing waste, providing local jobs, giving people affordable transport and contributing to a happier, healthier future for us all.”

The services provided by the Big Lemon are funded almost entirely from their trading activity; profits are re-invested in the businesses services for the benefit of the community. The judges were impressed by Big Lemon’s holistic approach to the sustainability of its business activities and its self-reliance. The headline proposition is running on waste cooking oil, but they are also thorough in their approach to composting, local sourcing, recycling and reuse, all their office furniture is pre-loved waste furniture.⁹ They run a book swap on the buses to encourage the re-use of books, it is planned to extend this to clothes. On the first Sunday of each month, travel on The Big Lemon is free, passengers are asked for donations to the *Give Something Back* fund, half of which goes to the staff social fund and half to a local community project voted for by passengers and friends.

Green Tomato Cars¹⁰ UK

Founded in 2006, Green Tomato Cars in London has grown to become the second largest private hire, pre-booked taxi service in the capital.¹¹ The growth demonstrates that there is demand for a green approach to private hire and taxi services in London and that both companies and individuals express their preference by purchasing this more sustainable service. The consumer proposition is clear: because Green Tomato Cars uses low emitting vehicles customers can be confident that they are getting from A to B in the greenest way possible short of using public transport, cycling or walking. The judges were impressed by the leadership being exercised by Green Tomato Cars, this will continue in 2013 when they add 100 more cars to their fleet; Electric Vehicles and Hydrogen Fuel Cell Vehicles, both with zero exhaust pipe emissions.

With a fleet of 300 vehicles on the road Green Tomato Cars emit 238.4 g/mile less than an average black cab. Over the 18 months from January 2011 to June 2012 the Green Tomato cars travelled over 5 million miles saving an estimated 1,300 tonne of emissions. Green Tomato Cars has exerted leadership in the industry with new firms offering similar services over the last two years.¹² Green Tomato Cars use the Prius which emits

9 To download a copy of their sustainability policy: [www.thebiglemon.com/pdfs/The Big Lemon Sustainability Policy December 2011.pdf](http://www.thebiglemon.com/pdfs/The%20Big%20Lemon%20Sustainability%20Policy%20December%202011.pdf)

10 www.greentomatocars.com, www.twitter.com/greentomatocars

11 Since November 2010 it has become a wholly owned subsidiary of the Veolia Transdev Group, the world’s largest sustainable transport company.

12 Carrot Cars (www.carrotcars.co.uk) and Broccoli Cars (www.broccolicars.com/Fleet.html) in London; and Green Bean Cars (www.greenbeancars.co.uk) in Leeds.

no particulate matter or nitrous oxides, significantly contributing to improvements in air quality in London. Green Tomato Cars offset double the amount of CO₂ they emit, they are currently supporting a project in Brazil which switches ceramics factories from using heavy fuel oil to renewable biomass and waste products.

Highly Commended: Grand Canyon Railway, USA¹³

When Xanterra Parks & Resorts acquired the Grand Canyon Railway in 2007, the logistics of operating a fleet of steam and diesel locomotives within the company's sustainability guidelines presented major challenges. Each steam train round trip consumed 12,000 gallons of water, 1,200 of diesel and petroleum-based lubricants. In 2009, Grand Canyon Railway put the old steam engines 29 and 4960 back into service using 100-percent renewable waste vegetable oil collected from their restaurants at the Grand Canyon, and eliminating engine idling, a reduction in carbon emissions of 26,856 pounds per train trip has been achieved. Since 2008 Grand Canyon Railway has reduced diesel, water, and overall fossil-fuel consumption by 51%, 61%, and 34.6%. Water conservation strategies have included rainwater and snowmelt harvesting to avoid depleting the aquifer, and reusing treated waste water to generate steam. By implementing a Chemical Management Control Program, the railway has banned F-listed chlorinated solvents used for cleaning resulting in a 98% decrease of hazardous waste generation.

Highly Commended: New Forest Tour, UK¹⁴

The New Forest Tour is a network of four open top buses operating two circular routes in the New Forest National Park. The New Forest Tour operates between June and October and is instrumental in reducing congestion in the New Forest and stimulating economic growth, whilst providing a unique and memorable visitor experience for its customers. The New Forest Tour¹⁵ is funded through a combination of revenue from ticket sales and income from strategic marketing partnerships with tourism businesses in the New Forest National Park. Many initiatives taken to establish public transport in national parks fail, but in the New Forest, between the years 2006 and 2011, the number of operating days has increased from 100 to 130 and the average number of passengers per day from 90 to 259. Roughly 50% of New Forest Tour customers arrive at the point at which they join the Tour by private car. If it is assumed that had they had not joined the New Forest Tour, they would have made a journey of equivalent length by private car, and assuming an average group size of two¹⁶ this amounts to a saving of approximately 147,000 miles.

13 www.thetrain.com; www.facebook.com/grandcanyonrailway

14 www.thenewforesttour.info; www.facebook.com/newforesttour

15 The service is operated by bus operators Bluestar and Wilts & Dorset, and is delivered in partnership with the New Forest National Park Authority.

16 An assumption supported by previous research

2 Best tour operator for promoting responsible tourism

Awarded to a tour operator with an innovative approach to educating and inspiring travellers about their responsible tourism policies and practices, issues in their destination, and what they can do to be a responsible traveller

Winner: Explore, UK¹⁷

Explore was the winner of the 'Best Tour Operator' category in the Virgin Responsible Tourism Awards in 2008 and Highly Commended in the awards in 2005. The judges were impressed by the thoroughness of Explore's approach to placing Responsible Tourism principles at the core of its business model. They employ local leaders and guides, and use small, local and family-run hotels, restaurants and facilities wherever possible. This benefits the local community economically at the same time as ensuring that their customers have a more authentic travel experience.

Explore were able to demonstrate to the satisfaction of the judges that they have campaigned against the road being built through the Serengeti, offset all international flights for customers and staff, briefed customers to avoid littering beaches and trails, and briefed agents not to anchor, and customers not to stand, on reefs whilst snorkelling. On their tours in Cambodia, Myanmar and Vietnam, they provide a 20 litre cask of potable water which is filled up regularly so that customers can re-fill their own water bottles without having to buy new plastic bottles of water. In November Explore began to operate again to Myanmar after a 16-year absence. They do not use junta-owned hotels, flights or other services and they minimise traveller contact with the government as much as possible.

Explore were also able to demonstrate that they are engaging their travellers in their Responsible Tourism approach helping them to understand better what they do and how they can get involved. Their Responsible Tourism pages give information to customers about how they can make their trips more responsible both before and during their trip, as well as when they return home. They have successfully piloted 'RT cards' on their tours in India, given to customers at the beginning of their tour, the cards outline what they can do to help the local community and environment that they are visiting. They also engage with post-graduate tourism training and organise an Explore Goes Green Day to engage Explore staff, agents, suppliers and travellers all over the world.

Highly Commended: None

The judges looked closely at the other nominations and completed application forms in this category and reluctantly decided that no other operator had demonstrated in the

¹⁷ www.explore.co.uk

application form that they had done enough to merit an award. Many of the applications reported initiatives directly connected with the preservation of their product, which, although laudable in themselves, are in their obvious business interests to support. The judges have looked for initiatives that “go the extra mile”, which we would not normally expect a company in their market, or of their size or nature to do. The judges were not convinced that any of the other applicants had achievements significant enough to merit an award. Surprisingly, given the focus of the award this year on issues in their destination and what travellers can do to be a responsible traveller, the judges felt that few companies made the most of the communications section of their applications and some misinterpreted this as an opportunity to report the ways in which they had been congratulated on their achievements in Responsible Tourism by their clients and communities.

3 Best engagement with people and cultures

Awarded to a tourism organisation with an inspiring approach to protecting, conserving and promoting the cultural heritage and traditions of local people.

Winner: South Nottingham College¹⁸ in Partnership with the Institute of Travel and Tourism of The Gambia¹⁹

The Gambia is often seen as a traditional cheap winter sun destination six hours flying time from northern Europe, but it is a great deal more than that. The Gambia has sunshine, it has little built cultural heritage, it has very good bird watching but none of the traditional game parks; what it has in abundance is a rich living cultural heritage, friendly people who enjoy engaging with tourists, it is this opportunity for engagement with the cultures of The Gambia that accounts for the high level of repeat visits. The judges were impressed by the strength of the partnership between South Nottingham College and the Institute of Travel and Tourism of The Gambia (ITTOG). Like all good partnerships it is based on mutual respect, shared values and reciprocity.

The relationship has grown since 2000 into the partnership that is ITTOG. South Nottingham College provides courses at ITTOG and played a major role in securing its establishment, winning the endorsement of the Gambian Training Authority and developing the curriculum and staffing. The curriculum team’s strategy of directly involving students in the charity work²⁰ undertaken in Gambia and in this way delivering unique, aspirational and innovative education around responsible and sustainable travel and tourism, has contributed to the success. The judges were impressed by the way in which the partnership between South Nottingham College and

18 www.snc.ac.uk/Gambia

19 www.ittog.org

20 <http://www.globalinaction.co.uk>

ITTOG has delivered benefits for both organisations and their students. The partnership has helped to deliver better results for students in both Nottinghamshire and The Gambia. This is a unique, although replicable, programme using vocational education and training in Responsible Tourism to develop the aspirations of young people to do their bit in making the world a better place. It brings socio-economic and cultural benefits to The Gambia and to Nottingham, a city ranked 20th worst in England and Wales on the index of multiple deprivation.

Highly Commended Siraj Centre, Palestine

The Siraj Center²¹ for Holy Land Studies is a Palestinian Center for Rapprochement between People. It's vision is to "enhance the image of Palestine as a safe destination for responsible experiential tourism, and not only as a pilgrimage destination, by increasing the number of conscientious visitors coming to Palestine.... our aspirations also involve impacting both local hosts and visitors through intercultural exchanges and life-enriching experiences at the grassroots level, as well as increasing economic benefits to people living in rural communities." ²²An accredited tourist and travel agency the Siraj Centre is part of the Palestinian Initiative for Responsible Tourism²³ (PIRT). Believing that both tourists and hosts can be enriched by human encounters through tourism, PIRT seeks to transform current tourism patterns in the Holy Land by encouraging pilgrims and tourists to include Palestinian cities, towns and villages in their itineraries to meet the Palestinian people and learn about their culture in order to achieve a more equal distribution of tourism revenues. Founded in 1990 the Siraj Centre had 367 guests in 2011. Pioneers of tourism they have developed walking and biking routes, volunteering, home stays, and exchanges between locals and visitors contributing to re-branding Palestine as a destination for experiential travel and human connection, they work with 140+ communities.

Highly Commended Uptuyu Adventures, Western Australia²⁴

Founded in 2002, Uptuyu Adventures is about "travelling with your mates" – about sharing the Aboriginal heritage with travellers and tourists. They offer the opportunity to take the photo of a tree and to understand what it is about, what it means.²⁵ Uptuyu Adventures is a small operator; it carried 100 guests in 2011, offering a "designer tour²⁶ ... the opportunity to have a true outback Kimberley experience with an authentic Aboriginal flavour."²⁷ In 2010 Uptuyu formed a joint venture partnership with

21 www.sirajcenter.org

22 www.sirajcenter.org

23 www.pirt.ps

24 <http://www.uptuyu.com.au>

25 www.youtube.com/watch?v=O0LGWEZJgRI

26 "your experience and chosen route of travel is Uptuyu"

27 <http://www.uptuyu.com.au/>

Aboriginal community owned Oongkalkada Wilderness Camp which provides a venue for cultural training, and hosting services for meetings and events. Uptuyu events at Oongkalkada provides for cultural inclusion in a location that has traditionally been used for training, trading, healing and decision making for many thousands of years. The partnership has created a culturally approved revenue base for the Oongkalkada Community and enabled land title to be granted to the traditional custodians, the wilderness camp and cultural training centre create opportunities for new micro industries to emerge out of the community and allow for more families to return to traditional country and practice their culture.

4 Best destination for conserving and presenting architectural heritage

Awarded to a tourism destination, heritage site or attraction that protects and promotes built cultural heritage.

Winner: St Kilda²⁸, Scotland, UK

The National Trust for Scotland owns and manages the St Kilda archipelago with the primary management objective of conserving the island's outstanding heritage. St Kilda, the remotest part of the British Isles in is Scotland's Outer Hebrides. Originally inscribed on UNESCO's World Heritage list for its natural heritage in 1986 its cultural heritage was listed in 2005. The village was abandoned in 1930 by the remaining 36 islanders when life on St Kilda became unsustainable and the buildings rapidly fell into disrepair. Between 2008 and 2010 the National Trust for Scotland, who own the island, carried out a sympathetic restoration refurbishing the manse as a visitor centre providing staff accommodation, office space, a shop and public toilets.

This is an excellent of using tourism to maintain the integrity of the natural and cultural heritage of a very special place, a place that needs to be managed to ensure that non-native species are not introduced and that climbing on the sea stacs does not disturb the nesting birds. The annual maintenance includes the re-tarring of roofs, lime washing of the manse and Factor's House, maintaining open field drains and re-turfing cleit roofs. There are over 1300 cleits (storehouses) and several kilometres of wall, maintained over the past 50 years by around 200,000 hours of labour contributed by people on working holidays. There are no tourism businesses based in St Kilda, but visitor number has grown from 1,978 in 2007 to 3,107 in 2011 and tourism to the islands makes a significant contribution to the economy of the Western Isles. The judges saw the National Trust for Scotland's work in St Kilda as a good example of the contribution which tourism can make to the maintenance of built cultural heritage in remote areas.

²⁸ www.kilda.org.uk

Highly Commended: Liverpool,²⁹ UK

Liverpool is by contrast a densely populated urban area with about 30 million visitors per year. The Management Plan for Liverpool's World Heritage Site³⁰ seeks to manage it as an exemplary demonstration of sustainable development and heritage-led regeneration, and to ensure sustainable access for all. Liverpool has the largest Heritage Open Days programme in the country outside London, with over 70 venues and organisations across the city involved in the 2012 programme which has been extended to a Heritage Open Month. Liverpool's conservation estate extends beyond the World Heritage Site to 2,500 plus listed buildings, 36 conservation areas, 10 historic parks and gardens, amounting to 10% of Liverpool's built environment. Liverpool City Council has put aside of £4.6 million of public funding to encourage owners of historic buildings to conserve them and bring them back into beneficial use. The Council has taken pro-active approach to dealing with Buildings at Risk resulting in a substantial decline in the number of buildings at risk from 13% of the listed buildings to 4%, this is below the national average. A survey in 2008 showed that Liverpool's World Heritage Site status was an important or very important factor in the decision to come to Liverpool for 72% of the visitors. The visitor economy has played a significant role in maintaining Liverpool's rich architectural heritage.

5 Best carbon reduction initiative.

Awarded to an organisation or programme with a replicable and inspiring approach to reducing the carbon intensity of travel.

Winner: Sawadee Reizen,³¹ Netherlands

Sawadee Reizen is part of the PEAK Adventure Group, carrying 8,000 passengers per year on 150 trips worldwide. Sawadee has recognised that climate change is an urgent issue and that the tourism industry is both impacted by climate change and is a growing contributor to the problem. The judges were impressed by the clarity of Sawadee's understanding of the issue, their acceptance that tourism contributes to the problem, and their willingness to begin to address the issue of their carbon pollution. Sawadee chose to work with NHTV's³² Centre for Sustainable Tourism & Transport (CSTT), one of the world's leading centres of expertise on tourism and climate change to identify Sawadee's carbon footprint (CF). The bulk of Sawadee trip carbon emissions are produced by origin-destination transport (81%), followed by accommodation (11%) and local transport (8%).

²⁹ www.liverpool.gov.uk , www.visitliverpool.com

³⁰ www.liverpoolworldheritage.com

³¹ www.sawadee.nl

³² Breda University of Applied Sciences (NHTV)

Using the financial year 2010 as a baseline, Sawadee has established a target of reducing its average CF per pax per day by 6% by the financial year 2014, and is using the independent experts at NHTV's CSTT to undertake the auditing. Sawadee is moving from using indirect to direct flights, reducing the number of domestic flights used during trips, spending more days in destinations with lower carbon footprints, increasing the length of trips and encouraging extensions to reduce carbon pollution per day, and using the train to reach hub airports rather than flying to them. Sawadee have identified that changing to direct "point-to-point" flights as the most effective way of reducing the carbon footprints of trips, reducing carbon emissions by an average of 10%. The judges were also pleased to see that Sawadee's initiative has resulted in a shared project engaging with other Dutch tour operators to introduce a carbon-label across a number of brands.

Highly Commended: Beechenhill Farm,³³ UK

Beechenhill Farm is an organic dairy farm in the Peak District National Park with two en-suite B&B rooms, two self-catering cottages; and a restored Hay Barn for weddings and courses. The farm also offers renewable technology demonstration days. They have reduced their carbon footprint from 41 to 14.4 tonnes (by 64.8%) over the last three years whilst the business has continued to grow. This has been achieved by installing low energy lighting, solar photo-voltaic panels and a pellet biomass boiler. They collect guests from the local railway station, hire out electric bikes and have an electric car charging point. Their next projects are to install a small-scale bio-digester and scale up their educational efforts to run three Pilot Light Demonstration Days per year to encourage more renewable technology to be used in the Peak District. This is a small family business making a difference themselves and encouraging others to follow their lead.

Highly Commended: ITC Sonar³⁴, Kolkata, India

This is a large hotel, or Business Resort, in an urban area offering responsible luxury to over 400,000 tourists and day visitors each year. It was first hotel in the world to be registered by United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) for Carbon Emission Reductions. ITC Sonar has reduced its energy consumption through smart design, the use of low energy appliances, highly efficient ventilation and renewable energy within a management system that uses sub-metering and daily monitoring to drive carbon reduction. Over the last five years they have reduced carbon emissions by 5,368 tons of carbon dioxide, and their plan is to continue to reduce carbon emissions at 5% per annum.

³³ www.beechenhill.co.uk

³⁴ www.itchotels.in

6 Best accommodation for local communities

Awarded to a hotel, lodge or other accommodation with a positive impact on the local supply chain and local people.

Three very different properties demonstrate what can be achieved by businesses that take seriously their responsibilities to the communities in which they are located.

Winner Soria Moria,³⁵ Cambodia

Soria Moria Boutique Hotel, with 38 rooms, opened at Angkor Wat in 2007, and had more than 3,000 guests in 2011. Soria Moria was founded and established by Kristin Holdø Hansen, who still works at the hotel as the Educator and Sustainability Adviser, and Ken Oishi, the investor who made it possible. Soria Moria only employs local staff. Their training programme is designed to develop their careers; all department heads are locals. All the staff have personal accident insurance and are members of the National Social Security Fund. The hotel also provides training places for disadvantaged young adults, 16 to 21 years of age, who are paid a per-hour salary based on a normal full-time salary for their respective positions. The Soria Moria Higher Education Programme also currently supports nine students at Bachelors level and three at Masters level.

The judges were impressed by the innovative Employee Ownership Scheme through which the local employees have become partners and majority owners of the business, with 51% of the shares. The share ownership is determined based on seniority and responsibilities in the hotel. Through their share ownership the employees are able to participate in decision-making, this mechanism effectively empowers locals through responsibility and ownership; and they share in any profits made. The ambition is to build a successful business model that can be replicated elsewhere. To maximise the social impacts the long-term objective is to transfer the remaining 49% of the business to the local employees. The Soria Moria has many staff biographies on the website – a refreshing acknowledgment of their importance to the business and the guest experience.³⁶

Highly Commended: Bulungula Lodge³⁷, South Africa

Bulungula Lodge is on the Wild Coast of South Africa, with ten huts (five doubles and five small dormitories). The community of Nqileni village owns 40% of the lodge and is an integral part of daily life there. As they say on the website “No fences, no crime, no beggars, no hassles, just friendly smiles. Take a walk around the village at any time of the day or night and you’ll be invited into the mud huts for a drink and a

35 <http://thesoriamoria.com>

36 <http://thesoriamoria.com/about-us/the-soria-moria-team/>

37 www.bulungula.com

chat.”³⁸ The Lodge has helped a number of local community-owned businesses start up³⁹ horse-riding, canoeing, fishing, guiding, baking, sewing, cooking, wood-carving and the iLanga Fire Restaurant which is reputed to have the best sweet and savoury pancakes in Africa. Two women from the village have been professionally trained as masseuses and offer luxurious full body and Indian head massages. The lodge has created permanent employment for 24 people and there are 13 community owned tourism businesses creating livelihoods for 30 people, all this in area which before the founding of the lodge offered no employment opportunities. There are other welfare and health impacts to. For example, 53% of households have lost at least one baby to diarrhoea in the past, but now that the lodge provides clean drinking water for the village, there have been no further baby deaths.

Highly Commended La Villa Bethany,⁴⁰ India

La Villa Bethany is located at Landour and at 7,000ft it offers striking views of the Garhwal Himalaya. An old colonial cottage with seven rooms offering boutique homestays, close to the tourism hub of Mussoorie . Founded in 2011 the Villa has had 300, mainly long stay, guests. The objective was to conserve the colonial heritage and to employ and train underprivileged local youths. La Villa Bethany trained and now employs eight young men and women, literate and illiterate, who now have the skills required in the hospitality industry. La Villa Bethany is committed to use only local resources and developing local talent through training. All the materials used for renovating and refurbishing the property were locally sourced, and wherever possible furnishings and guest supplies are procured from local co-operatives working with women who are widows, destitute or abandoned by families. La Villa Bethany supports three independent taxi service providers who are local, vegetables, fruits and dairy products are sourced locally and they encourage guests to venture into the Landour Bazaar and Suakholi, a nearby village, to buy local handicrafts.

7 Best accommodation for the environment

Awarded to a hotel, lodge or accommodation run with a positive impact on the environment and biodiversity.

Winner Song Saa Private Island⁴¹, Cambodia

Located in the Koh Rong archipelago in Cambodia, Song Saa, was founded in 2006 and has 3,500 guests annually. Song Saa was identified by one of its referees as “one of

38 www.bulungula.com

39 For details of the incubator see www.bulungulaincubator.org

40 www.lavillabethany.com

41 www.songsaa.com

the only examples of a company seeking to integrate biodiversity conservation, research and protection in to a business model in Cambodia, and the only example from the marine environment”⁴² Song Saa’s strapline is “luxury that treads lightly” and in pursuit of this ambition the resort operates to a detailed Sustainable Management Plan which details both the issues and the management response. The management approach is based on the avoidance, remedying and mitigation of adverse impacts and these are identified for marine and fresh water, land, biodiversity, waste management, energy and staff and guest interaction with the environment. The judges were impressed by their thorough and holistic approach to ensuring environmental sustainability through annual conservation plans implemented by a five-strong conservation and community team.

Song Saa has created artificial reef structures to support the rehabilitation and growth of coral reef and a coral garden research programme, promoted hornbill conservation, and created a research and learning incubator for domestic and international graduate research students. The judges were particularly interested in a pioneering initiative to promote a blue carbon sequestration project using sea grass and mangroves. The Sala Song Saa, the Song Saa School, provides environmental and agricultural education on the environment and agriculture for local people living in the Prek Svay Basin and youth training on organic soil husbandry. Song Saa has also supported local families in developing small-scale irrigation systems, providing seeds and educational workshops on organic vegetable growing.

Highly Commended: Bohinj Park Eco Hotel⁴³, Slovenia

The Bohinj Park Hotel is a 5* property in the Triglav National Park. Opened in 2009 it has 20,000 guests per year. The hotel is thermally insulated and is heated with geothermal energy, also used to heat the water used in the hotel, as the geothermal water cools it is used for flushing sanitation. Waste hot water from showers and washbasins passes through heat exchangers where the energy is extracted and used for heating in winter and cooling in the summer. The hotel uses low energy light bulbs and floor heating and cooling-heating grids. In 2010 the Bohinj Park Eco Hotel initiated the “Green weekend in Bohinj” where all accommodations in the region joined together and offered 10% of their rooms as free accommodation to those guests and visitors who took part in cleaning rivers, grass, woods, pathways in the region. The local tourist organisation now manages the event.⁴⁴

42 Confidential reference from the country programme officer of an international conservation NGO.

43 www.phb.si/eng/

44 www.cipra.org/en/alpmedia/events/3922/

Highly Commended Maliba Mountain Lodge,⁴⁵ Lesotho

Founded in 2008 the lodge is located in the Ts'ehlanyane National Park. It is a 5* mountain retreat set in a pristine sub-alpine wilderness valley deep in the heart of Lesotho's mountains. The lodge was built on a rehabilitated site, originally a base-clearing site for the Katse Dam Water Project. The lodge assists the national park with fence relocation and maintenance, all black water is used to generate biogas and a botanical alpine garden has been created. The Maliba Trust, with the help of KZN Wildlife, Endangered Wildlife Trust and the community, has started a vulture restaurant⁴⁶ in the park, to assist in the protection, monitoring and conservation of vultures, particularly the Bearded Vulture, providing a valuable attraction for birders and photographers

8 Best in a mountain environment

Awarded to an organisation related to a mountain environment, such as an eco-friendly ski resort or a trip that contributes to the welfare of mountain porters.

Winner 3 Sisters Adventure Trekking and Empowering Women of Nepal⁴⁷ Nepal

Established in 1998 and with 1,000 clients each year, 3 Sisters Adventure Trekking works with their sister organisation Empowering Women of Nepal (EWN) a local grassroots non-profit organization, focused on working through tourism in Nepal to gain, gender equality, the elimination of child labour, peace and responsible economic development. They are most active in remote areas of Western Nepal, focusing on community development through tourism. EWN is funded by 20% of the profits of 3 Sisters Adventure Trekking; the remainder is funded by individual donors, and grants. One of their referees, an international consultant who knows them well, commented that the three sisters "were able to perfectly combine profit and non-profit objectives and have by that set a strong example to other profit oriented companies as well as to the NGO's in Nepal."⁴⁸ The judges were impressed by their work to empower women and by their success in combining business and social goals.

In the trekking season EWN and 3 Sisters Adventure Trekking employs approximately 200 people, mostly women, local to the area in which they live. To address child labour issues EWN provide a home and education for girl children

⁴⁵ www.maliba-lodge.com

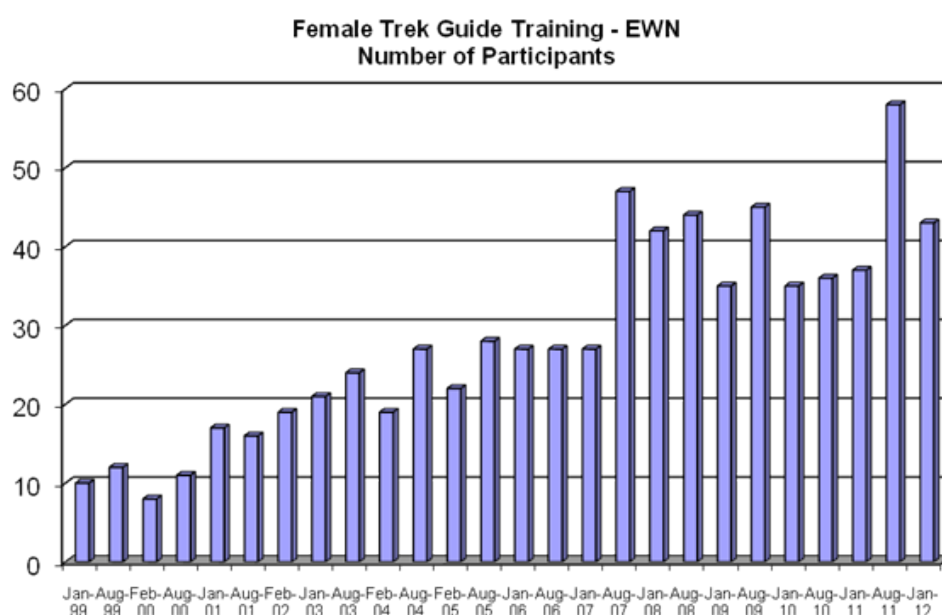
⁴⁶ A vulture restaurant is an open place where dead carcasses of domestic and/or wild mammals are placed with the intention of providing a food source for vultures

⁴⁷ www.3sistersadventure.com

⁴⁸ Confidential reference from an independent, an very experienced, consultants who has audited the organisations twice in 2010 and 2012. He concluded "they are definitely one of the most impressive examples of responsible tourism I have seen..."

who would otherwise be working and a safe place to live and grow so that they can confidently return to their remote villages and share their education and skills. They also address the issues of child labour within our small lodge management training courses and guide and porter training. The judges were particularly impressed by the success of their guide training programme for women. Most of the trainees have been lower caste Dalits, over 1,700 beneficiaries now work within 3 Sisters Trekking, EWN or other organisations throughout Nepal, having benefitted from the training and empowerment courses giving them the confidence to move on in life and fulfill their dreams.⁴⁹

Table 2: Female Trek Guide Training



Highly Commended Ecocamp Patagonia,⁵⁰ Chile

Ecocamp Patagonia has been operating since 1999 and now hosts around 2,000 guests each season from September to April. It provides eco-friendly accommodation and guided tours in Torres del Paine National Park in Chilean Patagonia. The camp was built on raised platforms to allow wild animals to pass through and flora to grow underneath the structures. Subtle solar powered lighting is used to illuminate the raised wooden walkways at night, and sightings of puma and other wildlife close to the camp at night attest to the success of this approach. The camp is constructed of domes made of galvanised iron, canvas and wood. In 2005 the camp was relocated within the park without leaving a trace. The Ecocamp uses only solar and hydro-electric power,

⁴⁹ The judges were aware of the criticism of 3 Sisters Adventure Trekking which can be found on the web. We have subsequently carefully checked the specific complaints and are satisfied that 3 Sisters have an acceptable and credible response to the allegations and that this is not sufficient reason to reverse the decision of the judges made on the judging day.

⁵⁰ www.ecocamp.travel

it uses composting toilets which need to be heated to enable the micro-organisms to do their work, and all waste is recycled or composted. Over 80% of staff are from the neighbouring town Puerto Natales or the closest city Punta Arenas. Porters are employed as freelancers but they are paid above the national minimum wage and share in the tips with the guides. Their ambition is clearly stated: “EcoCamp takes care of its guests and the environment, recognising that both are essential to a successful Responsible Tourism outcome.”⁵¹

9 Best in a marine environment

Awarded to an organisation related to a beach or other marine environment, such as turtle conservation or a marine eco-tourism trip.

Winner Moonraker Dolphin Swims,⁵² Australia

Operating in Port Philip Bay, Moonraker Dolphin Swims, founded in 1990, offer the opportunity to swim with wild Bottlenose Dolphins and Australian Fur Seals. Port Philip Bay is a UNNESCO biosphere reserve, 90 minutes south of Melbourne, is one of Australia’s last remaining homes for this genetically unique family of dolphins. With just over 150 of these Bottlenose Dolphins worldwide their conservation is of primary importance. Moonraker use a purpose built minimum impact vessel to offer visitors the opportunity to swim with the dolphins and the Australian Fur Seals in a carefully managed way. Moonraker has worked with the Dolphin Research Institute to develop codes to govern the interaction between humans and dolphins and fur seals. They have assisted in lobbying for regulatory reform of recreational boat traffic for the benefit of the seals and dolphins and helped with raising awareness of the water catchments and water runoff into Port Phillip Bay and the risks that this creates for the marine habitat and these charismatic species.

The judges recognised the work which Moonraker Dolphin Swims has done to educate the public, school children, local and visitors, about the importance of conserving both the habitat and the species and its significant contribution to fundraising to support the work of the Dolphin Research Institute; active engagement in the research and removal of rubbish including fishing lines from the sea; and the removal of the invasive and damaging Northern Pacific Sea Stars. The judges were particularly impressed by the contribution which field notes made by the crew and tour leaders make to the monitoring to the populations and their and health; and the strict operational rules which include having no more than ten guests in the water at any one time with the dolphins and that the boats only remain within 100m of the dolphins for a maximum of one hour per cruise.

51 Quoted from their response to our questionnaire for the Awards.

52 www.moonrakercharters.com.au

Highly Commended blue o two,⁵³ Egypt

Blue o two won 'Best in a Marine Environment' in 2007 and were highly commended in 2008, they tell us that this "gave us a real boost and the focus we needed to come up with new campaigns and initiatives."⁵⁴ We recognised blue o two for its pioneering work on responsible diving. In May 2011, they signed an agreement with the UK shark and marine conservation charity, Bite-Back⁵⁵ pledging to collect £10,000 a year for the charity from clients on their Red Sea fleet. This was raised by levying 20 pence per air fill through their 'Breathe Life into the Oceans' campaign. In the first 12 months they raised more than the £10,000 target, raising £13,494 by August 2012. Their HAYAH Reef clean-up itineraries promoted as 'Not for profit... for the Red Sea' are subsidised, and each of the 156 places sold receives a subsidy of £300 from blue o two. They have run a re-usable water bottle campaign and provided private medical insurance for all staff.

10 Best for conservation of wildlife and habitats

Awarded to a group or initiative working for the conservation of wildlife and/or their local habitat, such as a national park or wildlife sanctuary.

Winner Huilo Huilo Biological Reserve,⁵⁶ Chile

We have seen a number of initiatives in Africa to return commercially exploited land to conservation. The judges were particularly pleased to receive information about Huilo, Huilo which since 2000 has conserved over 100,000 hectares of Patagonian temperate rainforest previously used for logging. The owners have fundamentally changed the way in which they, and the local community, secure a living from this large piece of Patagonian forest, moving from consumptive wood extraction to conservation and sustainable tourism. Now 80% of the local economy is thought to be reliant upon tourism and the land is protected by its Foundation status. 20% of the local economy is still dependent on forestry, but forestry is now only 10% of what it was in 2000. The judges were impressed by the scale of the transformation at Huilo Huilo, the contribution it has made to the conservation of the Huemul, an endangered deer that is the national symbol of Chile, and the development of lodges with tours and expeditions operated by local people.

Huilo Huilo addresses all three pillars of sustainability. It works to conserve the forest and particular species including the seriously endangered Patagonian Huemul and the Darwin Frog; it has worked with local people to ensure that those who used to make

53 www.blueotwo.com

54 Supporting statement

55 www.bite-back.com/partners/blue-o-two/

56 www.huilohuilo.com & www.facebook.com/pages/Reserva-Biol%C3%B3gica-Huilo-Huilo/184338561624584

their living from logging and timber are now able to earn a living from tourism⁵⁷; Huilo, Huilo has been a catalyst for the creation of new enterprises creating opportunities for local people to create their own businesses⁵⁸ and fostering local culture through music and poetry workshops, two local festivals and the Ethno-Mapuche Route. Huilo is one of the founders of “Así Conserva Chile”, an organization that involves the majority of the private protected areas and areas of indigenous people and which seeks to conserve these territories for the future generations.

Highly Commended

This year the judges were not able to find, within the applications received, a group or initiative which was sufficiently impressive in its achievement to be commendable having regard to those previously Highly Commended in this category.

11 Best for poverty reduction

Awarded to an organisation that acts to reduce poverty among communities.

Winner: Reality Tours and Travel,⁵⁹ Mumbai, India

There has been a good deal of criticism in the last year or two about slum tourism and rightly so, particularly where it is little more than voyeuristic exploitation. Reality Tours demonstrates that it is possible to enable tourists to visit a slum in India in a more responsible way. Established in 2005, Reality Tours had 10,000 guests last year. They offer city and village tours in Mumbai and beyond, this award is for their educational Dharavi Slum Tours which are offered in order to raise social awareness and to break down the negative image many people have towards slums. Reality Tours highlight both the industrial and residential areas of Dharavi, one of Asia’s biggest slums, to show the strengths, opportunities, challenges and issues of this very unique community.

They donate 80% of post-tax profits to their sister NGO, Reality Gives⁶⁰ (which provides educational programmes for residents of Dharavi and supports a number of micro-enterprise and community initiatives including sports, beekeeping, and youth empowerment programmes). Their purpose is to raise social awareness and break down the negative image many people have towards slums. Guided by residents, the tourists and have the opportunity to purchase honey and candles and visit enterprises and community centres. Through their community work funded by Reality Gives they have provided English classes to 142 young adults, trained 17 local women to become

⁵⁷ 90% of Huilo, Huilo’s employees are locals.

⁵⁸ For example, beekeeping, chocolate confectionary, embroidery, wood carving and rustic furniture

⁵⁹ www.realitytoursandtravel.com, www.realitytoursandtravel.com/facebook, www.youtube.com/user/realitygives

⁶⁰ Reality Gives India is a registered NGO with the number 1704, under the Mumbai Societies Registration Act, 1860. In the UK www.realitycaresuk.org

teachers, supported a kindergarten graduating 131 students, and provided English classes in a local school for a total of 250 students in the first year of the programme.

The judges were particularly impressed by the way in which Krishna Pujari and Chris Wray have established a successful local tour operation with strong social values and combined that with charities in India and the UK funded by profits from their tour operation and donations from their guests and their friends. They not only run their own Reality Gives' Youth Empowerment Program, Muskaan Kindergarten, Curriculum Development, Project Front Foot Cricket Program, English Language Support Program and activities at the Ashayen Community Centre they also recognise that they can achieve more by working with others and mobilizing funding support for them. The judges were really impressed by this fully integrated approach to realising the social purpose of using tourism to raise awareness of the reality of slum life, good and bad, and to raise money from their business and their customers to assist the community in Dharavi to develop. They have developed a form of Responsible Tourism that deserves to be adapted and replicated elsewhere; for this reason, as well as their own substantial achievements, they were selected by the judges as the 2012 **overall winners** of the Virgin Holidays Responsible Tourism Awards.

Highly Commended Khaplu Palace,⁶¹ Pakistan

In 2008 the judges selected the Shigar Fort restoration project as the winner in the conservation of cultural heritage category. The Khaplu Palace & Residence is the latest project to be completed by the Aga Khan Cultural Service Pakistan, part of the Aga Khan Development Network. The Aga Khan Trust for Culture focuses on the physical, social, cultural and economic revitalisation of communities in the Muslim world fostering community-based cultural heritage development. They have successfully combined conservation, restoration and re-use for tourism; and the rehabilitation of cultural crafts and historical assets. They have used an entrepreneurial approach, building capacity and developing skills aimed to enhance cultural and natural tourism, improving living conditions and reviving local pride and sense of identity. The restoration work at Khaplu has taken five years, building on previous experiences at Baltit, Altit and Shigar the Aga Khan Cultural Service Pakistan has maximised the local economic impact and the judges were impressed by the detailed measurement and reporting of both the social and economic impacts of the restoration programme in the construction and operational phases. There is more detail than can be reported here but for example between 2006 and 2012 individuals from over 400 households in Khaplu were employed and trained in construction work and the hotel employs individuals from 35 households.

61 http://serenagilgitbaltistan.com/?page_id=64 & www.akdn.org/pakistan_cultural_development.asp

Highly Commended: The Sanctuary at Ol Lentille,⁶² Kenya

The Sanctuary at Ol Lentille, a joint venture between Regenesi Limited and the community's Kijabe Trust, started operations in 2005 and now has 500 guests per year. This is a high-end boutique lodge described on their website as "one of the foremost community-based conservation tourism properties on the continent, so "having fun, doing good" takes on new meaning too."⁶³ Supported by the African Wildlife Foundation the community has signed a 25 year agreement between themselves and Regenesi to manage its tourism business and its Conservancy. The judges were interested to see that at Ol Lentille the community has not let a concession, but on the contrary the community itself has designated and protects its conservation area. The community owns the fixed assets of the tourism business, as well as earning an income from it. A number of women's groups have started economic projects including an organized bead making project, an egg project and the building of the craft manyatta. The Ol Lentille Trust is a registered English charity and Kenyan NGO that attracts donations, principally from guests, and uses these funds for improvements to habitat, water provision, education, and healthcare in its neighbouring communities. The Trust has been able to fund the development of the first secondary school in the area with four classrooms and 87 pupils. Construction of a 20-bed Community Health Centre with elephant-proof fencing and solar power is underway. 85% of the funds for the poverty reduction programmes come from guest donations.

12 Best volunteering organisation

Awarded to an organisation offering volunteering opportunities, such as the chance to work on conservation or social projects.

In previous years the judges have focused on the ways in which volunteering organisations have handled the selection and placing of volunteers, the ways in which they ensure the safety of volunteers and communities and the nature of their relationships with the community where they place volunteers as well as the volunteer experience. This year the judges decided to focus on the impacts of the programmes, as it happens this year both of those recognised for the awards focus particularly on conservation.

Winner: Elephant Human Relations Aid,⁶⁴ Namibia

Founded in 2001, Elephant Human Relations Aid (EHRA) is a Namibian registered association without gain governed by a board of five directors without ownership or

⁶² www.ol-lentille.com, www.ol-lentilletrust.org

⁶³ www.ol-lentille.com

⁶⁴ www.desertelephant.org

profit. EHRA was established to respond to escalating conflict between communal farmers in the north west Namibian desert and desert dwelling elephants, mainly occasioned by scarce water resources, and it remains highly focussed. It engages in educational and research work into elephant human conflict and its mitigation; assists the conservancies with game counts, game guard training and financial planning; and engages in mitigating the conflict practically through the construction of water installation protection walls, which help to elephant-proof the people's water supply. The judges were impressed by the scale of the impact of their work.

EHRA reports that in the areas where the elephants first came into conflict with local people there are no longer reports of conflict on water issues and there is evidence that reproduction rates in the elephant herds are recovering. EHRA estimates that they have reduced conflict by around 90% in the two main areas where elephants are resident, by using 850 volunteers to construct over 110 water point protection walls, securing the water and livelihoods of approximately 3,000 communal farmers in the desert.

Highly Commended: Biosphere Expeditions⁶⁵ UK, Germany, France, USA and Germany

Biosphere Expeditions is a non-profit organisation which takes paying volunteers to work on wildlife conservation in ten destinations. The judges were impressed by the success of their short-term, one and two week, volunteering programmes, the development of their local and international scholarship programme⁶⁶ now with 14 sponsored places which has created opportunities for local people to participate in the conservation work; and their work on the global marine database which they have developed based on data from their site monitoring in Malaysia, Musandam (Oman and UAE), Honduras and the Maldives. They have also successfully engaged volunteers to assist the development of their programme of conservation work from the UK.⁶⁷

13 Best in responsible tourism writing

Awarded for an article or piece of writing making a unique and inspiring contribution to understanding issues in responsible tourism. Must have been published in the last two years.

Winner: *At Home with the Himba* by Emma Thomson⁶⁸, published in *Wanderlust*, February 2012

The judges particularly liked Emma Thomson's account of her homestay with the Himba and the makeover she had as she was re-dressed as a Himba woman. It is

⁶⁵ www.biosphere-expeditions.org

⁶⁶ www.biosphere-expeditions.org/scholarships

⁶⁷ www.biosphere-expeditions.org/scholarships

⁶⁸ www.ethomson.co.uk/#/himba-homestay/4561462269

colourful and engaging and without being preachy, explains why this more responsible form of tourism makes such a better tourist experience.

“Until recently, interaction with tourists for the Himba – pastoralists from the arid Kunene region in northwest Namibia – was limited to an hour’s bartering over handmade jewellery. A meeting which makes both sides uncomfortable and offers little opportunity for learning. Even worse, some communities have been experiencing problems with unofficial tour guides turning up unannounced with groups and walking into homesteads and taking pictures without permission and without offering food gifts or purchasing jewellery. Reliant on the sale of jewellery to buy sacks of pap (porridge) in town, the community is hard pressed to send them away. However, a new initiative by Kunene Tours & Safaris hopes to change that. Their new four-day homestay programme aims to return power to the village. They decide when they want guests and when they don’t. It will provide not only a source of income, but also a means of preserving their way of life. Homestays revive pride in the traditional among younger generations that might otherwise been drawn to towns in search of work. For the visitor too, it’s much more rewarding.”

On the day before she leaves she is ogled by some tourists “for a brief moment, I catch a glimpse of life on the other side of the fence.”

Highly Commended: *Search of the Alternative Palestine* by Gail Simmons⁶⁹, published on Al Jazeera English

Gail Simmons’ piece draws attention to the importance of bringing more tourists to Palestine to create awareness of its heritage and to bring economic benefit. Gail deftly raises the issues of tourists failing to engage with the local community, again without being preachy.

“As we walk George, a Palestinian Christian, tells me about the problems they face in getting tourists to come and spend time – and money – in his country. “When tourists visiting Israel come to Bethlehem, the coaches stop at the shops on the Israeli side so they buy all their souvenirs, like our olive wood crafts, from there,” he says... The Masar Ibrahim is just one of the many new tourism initiatives that Palestinians are creating to provide employment in impoverished rural areas and, by encouraging tourists to interact with ordinary Palestinians, challenge assumptions about a region that receives much negative press in the mainstream media.”

69 www.aljazeera.com/photo_galleries/middleeast/201162792458432684.html

Highly Commended: *Salt of the Earth* by Caroline Eden, published in *Geographical* November 2010

Caroline Eden's piece about the Agarias, the poorly paid salt harvesters on the Little Rann of Kutch in Gujarat, captures what is special about the place: its wildlife including the gudkhur, an Indian wild ass, the large numbers of charismatic birds, and the people. Caroline writes about the " 'Agarias' – people who work in an agar (salt pan)", the way the salt is harvested and raises awareness of their way of life

"Salt production began in the Little Rann in 1872; now, more than a century later, little has changed in the way the salt is produced, and life remains cruel for the Agarias. They work for a pittance (a worker earns roughly 140 rupees – about £2 – per tonne of salt) with only mirages and the dazzling whiteness of the salt for company. There are no shops or markets, no running water. Living in makeshift huts and camps, with little shelter from the sun's glare, they rely on a mobile ration shop for food and tankers for potable water. There isn't enough of the latter to go around, however, which results in health problems. There were plans for a water pipeline, but they were blocked by the forest department, which feared that it could disturb the wildlife."

Tourism, growing since the region was given biosphere status, Gail writes, is "placing yet more pressure on the Agarias and their livelihood, and potentially, pressure on the wildlife itself."

14 Best Innovation

This year awarded by the judges because they were impressed by the innovative new approach nominated for an award on another category.

Winner: Nature Observatorio Amazing Treehouse,⁷⁰ Costa Rica

This is a new initiative with only 200 visitors in its second year of operation. This is a significant new form of eco-light tourism developed by Peter Garcar. The tree house is suspended in the canopy of a Nispero tree 25m above the forest floor. The judges were impressed by the great care taken to ensure that when the tree house is removed there will be no trace of it and the success that the Nature Observatorio has had in working with local Naso tribal tribe members as guides and the local purchasing purchase of traditional artefacts for the tree houses. By demonstrating that a living tree can be more valuable than a felled one, Nature Observatorio has been able to reforest three hectares of former pasture land, as well as adding two more hectares of primary rain forest to their private reserve from the funds generated by the initiative.

⁷⁰ www.natureobservatorio.com

Peter Garcar's description of the tourist experience is impressive:

"we don't alter anything. That includes our trails to access the tree house, from which we remove just fallen leaves. We rely on the careful and watchful eye of our guides who read the terrain to open a natural path. It takes about 40 minutes to hike along a small stream and then up to a ridge while surrounded by the beauty of untouched nature. As a snack, we bring along some dried fruit wrapped into banana leaf to avoid packaging or have locally grown fresh fruits to eat. We then arrive at the base of the tree where our Nature Observatorio tree house is suspended, having provided a totally organic experience, no stairs, no walkways, no foundations. The only visible sign of "human" integration into the habitat is the thin line hanging from the tree. All of our climbing equipment (ropes, harnesses, helmets, carabineers, gloves, etc.) we carry in and out each time, along with any other equipment or necessity that a guest might need for their stay."

"No branches have been cut, nor has a single screw or nail been used in this tree. The structure itself is not only zero impact on the tree, it collects rain water which is used for the shower and sink using 100% biodegradable soap and shampoo, allowing us to redistribute the collected water safely back to the tree, ensuring it gets the proper amount of water. The toilet is a composting toilet and a solar panel generates the energy for the lights and elevator. Recycled motorcycle tires are used as bumpers where the structure is touching the tree and a recycled fiberglass tub is used as our water tank. The rainwater collection gutters along the structure are made from bamboo, as well as the hand-rails for safety. All wood that has been used to build the structure is wood from fallen trees. The structure is as lightweight as possible, taking care, through the design, to distribute the weight along eight different nylon straps which allows zero impact on the bark of the tree."

The judges were particularly interested in the innovative fractional ownership initiative that could potentially protect, through purchase, a significant amount of forest. In exchange for one week a year in a tree house for up to four people, over 5 years Nature Observatorio can secure the conservation of 500 square metres of forest. The judges hope that the plans to open in a second location will find fertile ground and spread.

If you are reading this and thinking that you know of other, or better, potential winners of the Awards please nominate them next year, only those who are nominated and do the paper work, can be winners. There will be a similar report on the Awards in the November 2013 edition of Progress in Responsible Tourism.

Links:

www.haroldgoodwin.info

www.responsibletourismawards.com

Contributions are welcome in three categories

Practitioner Papers

Written by those actively engaged in managing tourism or implementing Responsible Tourism approaches – 2,000 to 4,000 words with references primarily to grey literature.

Academic Papers

Traditional papers with full academic referencing 5,000- 8,000 words

Work in Progress - Notes from the Field

Reports on new initiatives, work underway or brief comment pieces. Limited referencing, 400-1,500 words.

We anticipate that there will be a section listing new publications and sources relevant to Responsible Tourism.

Progress in Responsible Tourism also carries each November a report on the winners and the highly commended in the annual Virgin Holiday Responsible Tourism Awards.

Progress in Responsible Tourism will be published annually in November to coincide with World Travel Market, this reflects our intention that the journal should be of interest to the industry, academics and policymakers. Referencing: traditional footnotes, not Harvard, this is to make the papers more accessible to a non-academic readership.

Practitioner Papers will be reviewed by the editors. Academic Papers will be peer reviewed. Work in Progress and Notes from the Field will be reviewed by the editors. The Journal has an advisory board which has the same composition as the ICRT's Advisory Committee.

If you would like to contribute to the next edition to be published in summer 2013 please write with a brief abstract to Harold Goodwin or Xavier Font.

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