

2024 WTMA Responsible Tourism Awards recognise and honour sustainability leaders

The recent Africa Travel Week 2024, which took place from 7 to 12 April in Cape Town at the Cape Town International Convention Centre (CTICC) saw Bangu Masisi from Transfrontier Parks Destinations unveil the recipients of the prestigious World Travel Market Africa (WTMA) Responsible Tourism Awards. These awards recognise businesses and initiatives that are making a positive impact through responsible tourism practices.



"These awards are integral to WTM Africa's responsible tourism programme, and spotlighting those that have truly made a difference is important for the encouragement of others to do the same," said Masisi.



Alderman James Vos opened the awards ceremony, congratulating the winners and emphasising the importance of sustainable business practices in the tourism industry. "When it comes to sustainable business practices, let's keep pushing those boundaries," said Vos.

The 2024 awards included six categories, with gold and silver winners presented with trophies created by Ngwenya Glass, five of eight global winners came from Africa in the Global Responsible Tourism Awards in 2023.

Harold Goodwin, WTM Africa's responsible tourism advisor and one of the judges, said, "Congratulations to the winners. I am also very excited about those acknowledged as 'ones to watch' in the awards. Those are often new ideas from new people, and it's very exciting to see these businesses come to the fore."

The winners of the World Travel Market Africa (WTMA) Responsible Tourism Awards 2024 are:

1. Nature positive

Gold: Denis Private Island – Seychelles

Denis Private Island was recognised for its holistic approach to sustainable tourism, which prioritises the restoration and conservation of the island's natural habitats and wildlife. The eco-lodge's operations fund this work and are driven by the owners' deep commitment to the Seychelles' environmental heritage.

Silver: !Khwa ttu San Culture and Education Centre – South Africa

One to Watch: HBD Príncipe - São Tomé and Príncipe

One to Watch: Plett Ocean – South Africa

2. Employing and upskilling local communities

Gold: Grootbos Lodge & the Green Futures College – South Africa

The Grootbos Foundation won a Responsible Tourism Award for leveraging tourism to drive sustainable development.

Funded by the business and donors, the foundation has provided training to over 200 graduates, entrepreneurship support to nearly 1,000 individuals, and empowered female biodiversity stewards. These initiatives demonstrate the foundation's commitment to investing in local communities and conserving the unique fynbos ecosystem.

Silver: Save Wildlife - Uganda

One to Watch: Matoke Tours – Uganda

One to Watch HBD: Príncipe - São Tomé and Príncipe



3. Making travel inclusive

Gold: Warrior on Wheels Foundation – South Africa

Warrior on Wheels won a Responsible Tourism Award for its work providing empowering sport and adventure experiences for children with disabilities, changing perceptions and bridging gaps between able-bodied and differently-abled communities. As a not-for-profit reliant on sponsorships and partnerships, Warrior on Wheels has hosted over 89 experiences for more than 100 families since its founding eight years ago.

One to Watch: Bontel Adventures – Kenya



4. Increasing local sourcing - creating shared valued

Gold: Okavango Gin

Okavango Gin won a Responsible Tourism Award for its sustainable and community-focused practices. The gin uses locally sourced ingredients, is distilled off-grid, and incorporates recycled materials - creating an authentic product that supports the local economy. The company's innovative approach has driven 75% revenue growth and now employs six people directly, with additional jobs in the supply chain. The judges were impressed by how Okavango Gin captures the essence of the Okavango Delta while delivering a positive impact.

Silver: Muhabura Cultural Experience and Craft Centre – Uganda



5. What are you doing about climate change?

Gold: Ecodrop – Zimbabwe

Ecodrop won a Responsible Tourism Award for its innovative solution to eliminate single-use plastic bottles in Southern Africa's tourism sector. Ecodrop provides reverse osmosis water dispensers and reusable bottles, removing over 72,000 plastic bottles at Victoria Falls in just ten months. The judges were impressed by Ecodrop's scalable, destination-level system that reduces waste and petroleum demand, showcasing the viability of this model in tackling plastic pollution in tourism.



Silver: Century City Conference Centre – South Africa



One to Watch: Sunsail and The Moorings

6. Championing cultural diversity

Gold: Trip to Help - Kenya & Tanzania

Trip to Help, a travel agency in East and North Africa, won a responsible tourism award for its sustainable and ethical practices. The company's mission is to "Travel Consciously, Sustainably and Fairly," offering experiences that benefit local communities. Trip to Help ensures 80% of payments go directly to the local economy, and the people they work with earn a living wage. The company also supports over 3,000 children's access to free education, including English lessons, in Maasai areas, contributing to its industry recognition.

Silver: Traditional African Homestays - South Africa



One to Watch: Come Make We Go – Nigeria

One to Watch: Cultural Oneness Festival Ghana

The Gold winners in the WTM Africa Responsible Tourism Awards being presented here now are automatically entered into the Sabre Global Responsible Tourism Awards.

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