The Independent Announces the Winners of its Inaugural Independent Travel Awards

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The winners of **The Independent's first Travel Awards** were announced at a glamorous evening at The Corinthia Hotel in London on Tuesday October 7th, presented by The Independent's travel correspondent Simon Calder and head of travel Sophie Lam.

The Independent Travel Awards recognise a unique community of travel companies that have gone the extra mile for their customers and provided outstanding service as a standard. The awards combine public acclaim with expert judgement to decide who should be crowned best of the best, and has seen thousands of votes and hundreds of nominations whittled down to sixteen winners in the past few weeks.

The Reader's Choice Award saw national treasure **Michael Palin**, known for his travel documentaries, comedy-writing and acting, claim the prize.

Heathrow picked up the award in the airport category, despite the squeeze on capacity at Europe's busiest airport, while **British Airways** flew in ahead in the European airline category, recognised as “a much more civilised and relaxing experience”. The combination of innovation and value were paramount in the long-haul airline category, which saw **Air New Zealand** clinching the top spot ahead of Ethiopian Airlines and Icelandair.

The crowded travel app category saw **Citymapper** selected the most valuable app for travellers, coming in ahead of the likes of Skyscanner and booking.com, for its most user-friendly methods of travel. Meanwhile, **Herb Lester Associates** scooped the best travel guide award with enhanced city maps that bring the fun back to travel.

Elsewhere, **Caledonian MacBrayne** of Scotland was recognised ahead of strong competition from P&O Ferries and Brittany Ferries in the best ferry company category. River-cruise specialist **Viking** claimed the number one spot in the cruise line category for its “high-quality accommodation, and interesting and entertaining excursions”.

The places to stay category included three holidaying classes: luxury, family and budget. Within luxury the **Soho Farmhouse** in Oxfordshire prevailed ahead of tough competition from Indian Ocean properties, while the **Landmark Trust** claimed number-one spot ahead of Airbnb and Butlin's in the family category. Winner in the budget place to stay category was **pitchup.com**, which stood out for its range of accommodation.

Sophie Lam, head of travel at The Independent, said, “I'm delighted to be involved in launching The Independent's first Travel Awards. We wanted to celebrate the organisations that ensure travel is joyful, and it's gratifying to have received so many public nominations and to be able to champion the best of the best. ”

Simon Calder, travel correspondent at The Independent, said, “It's customary to complain about 21st–century travel, with all the stress and uncertainty involved, but there's a hugely positive side, too. The travel industry delivers great experiences and good value, and helps to spread wealth around the world. That's why it's good to celebrate the stars of the industry from Britain and abroad.”

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The Independent Travel Awards 2015

WINNERS and highly commended organisations

The Independent Travel Awards - Results

Airport: Heathrow

Highly Commended: Calgary

HC London City

European airline: British Airways

HC Aegean Airlines

HC easyJet

Long-haul airline: Air New Zealand

HC Ethiopian Airlines

HC Icelandair

Train operator: Chiltern Trains

HC Night Riviera (Great Western Railway)

HC Venice Simplon-Orient-Express

Ferry company

Caledonian MacBrayne

HC Bosphorus Ferries

Cruise line: Viking

HC Hurtigruten

HC P&O Cruises

Travel company - winter sports: Neilson

HC Crystal

Travel company – beach: Thomson

HC Original Travel

HC Sunvil

Travel company – adventure: TDA Global Cycling

HC Intrepid

HC Zegrahm

Destination innovation: Gloucester Services, M5

HC Attabad Lake tunnel, Karakorum Highway, Pakistan

HC Margate, Kent

Place to stay – luxury: Soho Farmhouse

HC Constance Tsarabanjina, Madagascar

HC Lime Wood Hotel, Hampshire

Place to stay – family: Landmark Trust

HC Butlins

HC White Point Resort, Nova Scotia

Place to stay – budget: pitchup.com

HCGenerator Hostels

HC YHA, Sydney

Best travel app: Citymapper

HC Seat Alerts from ExpertFlyer.com

HC Uber

Best travel guidebook: Herb Lester Associates

HC Best In Travel 2015 (Lonely Planet)

HC Microadventures by Alastair Humphreys

Readers' choice award: Michael Palin

Notes to editors

The judging panel was made up of some of the biggest names in travel, including last night's hosts **Simon Calder** and **Sophie Lam**. *i*'s editor, **Oliver Duff**, and editor of The Independent on Sunday, **Lisa Markwell**, were also instrumental in the judging of The Independent's first Travel Awards. They were joined by travel and tourism expert **Ufi Ibrahim**, who currently heads up the British Hospitality Association; broadcaster, traveller and adventurer **Ben Fogle**; and founder of Lonely Planet **Tony Wheeler**. Also on the judging panel were **Stephen Bayley**, **Pippa Jacks** and **Carol Marlow**.

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