



## PRESS RELEASE

30<sup>th</sup> September 2024

### **Belize leads net positive drive as host of inaugural World Sustainable Travel & Hospitality Awards**



The global leaders of sustainable tourism convened in [Belize](#) for a ceremony to recognise the individuals and organisations that are accelerating change in net positive tourism. The inaugural [World Sustainable Travel & Hospitality Awards](#), held on the 27<sup>th</sup> September to coincide with World Tourism Day, proved a fitting showcase for Belize and its pioneering sustainability initiatives.

The VIP reception featured the unveiling of the 21 winners of this year's programme. Recipients of the coveted titles reflected the length and breadth of the sustainable tourism sector, ranging from community artisan initiatives to global hospitality giants.

Highlights included Green Initiative named 'World's Leading Sustainable Organisation' for pioneering projects that include restoring degraded land in Costa Rica, Peru and Brazil. Meanwhile, luxury resort operator Soneva emerged as the winner of 'World's Leading Sustainable Energy

Efficiency Initiative' for ground-breaking initiatives to reduce its environmental footprint in the Maldives.

ibis RockCorps was named 'World's Leading Sustainable Partnership' for projects that encourage volunteering in communities in France in return for access to exclusive concerts. Rainforest Expeditions claimed 'World's Leading Sustainable Conservation & Biodiversity Programme' for research and conservation work in the Peruvian Amazon, resulting in the identification of 30 new species.

It proved a big night for Mandarin Oriental, which collected triple honours: 'World's Leading Sustainable Development', 'World's Leading Sustainable Employer' and 'World's Leading Sustainable Supply Chain Programme'.

Individual winners included Agnes Pierce, Global Head of Sustainability, Amadeus named 'World's Leading Sustainability Leader'. Andy De Silva, CEO, Hotel Emporium was voted 'World's Leading Sustainability Leader of Tomorrow'.

Belize's sustainable credentials were highlighted with the coveted title for 'World's Leading Sustainable Destination', plus accolades for Che'il Mayan Chocolate ('Leading Sustainable Cultural Heritage Project'), Turneffe Atoll Sustainability Association ('Leading Sustainable Marine Conservation Initiative').

The winners received a world-first unveiling of the iconic World Travel Awards winner trophy, originally cast in bronze by royal jewellers Asprey, but recreated using 3D printing technology from recycled ocean plastic, powered by renewable solar energy.

**Justin Cooke, Executive Vice-President, World Sustainable Travel & Hospitality Awards** says: "We are incredibly proud to celebrate and acknowledge the winners of the inaugural World Sustainable Travel & Hospitality Awards, each with fascinating stories of how they are positively impacting change. The standard has proved exceptional, and serves as a healthy indicator of the momentum, drive and innovation towards creating a net positive travel industry.

He adds: "The ceremony has proved a fitting climax for our winners to experience Belize in all its splendour, as well as a springboard for this enchanting nation to continue leading the world in sustainable tourism. When you set foot here, you're not just visiting a country, you're stepping

into a world of vibrant heritage, community-driven sustainability and profound respect for nature.”

**Anthony Mahler, Minister of Tourism & Diaspora Relations, Belize,** says: “We are incredibly proud of Belize’s achievements at the World Sustainable Travel and Hospitality Awards. These wins reflect our nation’s deep commitment to sustainability and responsible tourism. Belize is setting a global example of how tourism and conservation can work hand in hand for the benefit of our people and the planet.”

**Glenn Mandziuk, CEO, World Sustainable Hospitality Alliance,** expressed his excitement, saying: "I am delighted to celebrate the many deserving winners of our inaugural awards. The overwhelming number of inspiring entries from across the industry showcases the remarkable progress being made to accelerate change and lead the sector towards Net Positive Hospitality. In the months ahead, we will proudly champion these trailblazers, encouraging other businesses in our industry to intensify their sustainability efforts, paving the way for a greener future in tourism and hospitality."

The World Sustainable Travel & Hospitality Awards categories and entry criteria were agreed by an [Advisory Board](#) of thought leaders from the travel and tourism industry, academia and government. Entries were assessed by students in Sustainable Business from Nova Business School. Industry professionals, the media, and the general public voted for the nominees they consider to be leading the world in sustainable tourism.

The programme is run in partnership with the World Sustainable Hospitality Alliance, whose partners and members represent over 55,000 hotels, 7 million rooms globally, 300 brands, and 50 supply chain and strategic partners.

World Sustainable Travel & Hospitality Awards is the sister event of [World Travel Awards](#), currently celebrating its 31<sup>st</sup> anniversary.

### **Winners of 1<sup>st</sup> annual World Sustainable Travel & Hospitality Awards**

World’s Leading Sustainable Organisation 2024: **Green Initiative**  
World’s Leading Sustainable Supply Chain Programme 2024: **Mandarin Oriental**

World’s Leading Sustainable Energy Efficiency Initiative 2024: **Soneva**

World's Leading Sustainable Health & Well-being Initiative 2024: **Emaar Hospitality**

World's Leading Sustainable Circular Economy Partnership 2024: **One Tree at a Time X Six Senses Courchevel**

World's Leading Sustainable Water & Waste Innovation 2024: **Six Senses Zighy Bay**

World's Leading Sustainable Finance Initiative 2024: **Soneva & Soneva Foundation**

World's Leading Sustainable Technology 2024: **Choice Hotels & CarbinX**

World's Leading Sustainable Partnership 2024: **ibis RockCorps**

World's Leading Sustainable Conservation & Biodiversity Programme 2024: **Rainforest Expeditions**

World's Leading Sustainable Development 2024: **Mandarin Oriental**

World's Leading Sustainable Destination 2024: **Belize**

World's Leading Sustainable Female Empowerment Initiative 2024: **SASANE Sisterhood Trekking & Travels**

World's Leading Sustainable Employer 2024: **Mandarin Oriental**

World's Leading Sustainable Accessibility & Inclusion Initiative 2024: **Four Seasons Astir Palace Hotel Athens**

World's Leading Sustainability Leader 2024: **Agnes Pierce**

World's Leading Sustainability Leader of Tomorrow 2024: **Andy De Silva**

World's Leading Sustainable Education & Training Programme 2024: **Travel4Impact**

Leading Sustainable Cultural Heritage Project 2024: **Che'il Mayan Chocolate**

Leading Sustainable Marine Conservation Initiative 2024: **Turneffe Atoll Sustainability Association**

Leading Sustainable Community Engagement Programme 2024: **Belize Tourism Industry Association**

## **Notes to Editors**

### **About World Sustainable Travel & Hospitality Awards**

Launched in 2023 at COP28 in Dubai, the World Sustainable Travel & Hospitality Awards serves to recognise, celebrate, and share the stories of individuals and organisations that are accelerating change and making an impactful contribution in sustainable travel and tourism.

### **About World Sustainable Hospitality Alliance**

The World Sustainable Hospitality Alliance brings together engaged hospitality companies and the wider hospitality value chain, along with

strategic partners, to address key challenges affecting the planet, people and places around the world.

### **About Belize Tourism Board**

The Belize Tourism Board (BTB) is a statutory body within the Belize Ministry of Tourism and Civil Aviation, and it is governed by a Board of Directors appointed by the Minister of Tourism and Civil Aviation. The BTB works in conjunction with members of the private sector - including the Belize Hotel Association, Belize Tourism Industry Association, and Belize National Tour Operators Association - and is dedicated to building tourism in the most economically and environmentally sustainable manner. For more information on the BTB and its services, visit [travelbelize.org](http://travelbelize.org).

### **Contact**

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