

## AITO announces winners of its members' awards at AGM in London



Photo caption (left to right): Andy Gabe, Absolute Escapes; Heather McKinlay and Robert Kidd, McKinlay Kidd; Mary Pocock, On Foot Holidays

19<sup>th</sup> April 2024

AITO, The Specialist Travel Association ([www.aito.com](http://www.aito.com)), hosted its AGM yesterday (Thursday, 18<sup>th</sup> April 2024) in London.

The AGM featured a mix of thought-provoking discussions during the afternoon business sessions, moderated by Chris Photi of White Hart Associates, including **Michael Budge from the CAA** and **Craig Belsham from the DBT** sharing their thoughts on the two big industry consultations and reforms. **Tom Pridham from FTI Consulting** led a session on the benefits of lobbying, and **Ami Naru from Travlaw** provided an update on what's changing in the employment law world. The business sessions were brought to a close by **Andy Headington from ADIDO** sharing a few secrets on using AI to advantage for AITO members.

Some 100 AITO Specialist Tour Operators, AITO Agents, Business Partners and Tourist Boards attended the event, which also incorporated with the much-anticipated AITO member awards ceremony, networking drinks and the announcement of the **AITO Overseas Conference** – which will be taking place at the **Felipe IV in Valladolid, Spain, from 21<sup>st</sup> – 24<sup>th</sup> November 2024**.

The award categories were **AITO Business Partner of the Year 2023**, **AITO Tourist Board Partner of the Year 2023**, **AITO Specialist Tour Operator of the Year 2023**, and the **Chairman's Award**.

**Executive Director of AITO, Martyn Sumners, says:** "We are pleased to be able to acknowledge the services and support provided to their customers by each of our members.

"The Tour Operator of The Year award was, as ever, a very closely-run race; AITO members always score highly with their customer feedback and we received the same high scores for a number of our members. It's particularly great to see some of AITO's smaller, specialist companies taking the top positions amongst our 100-plus tour operators. Many congratulations to one and all!"

### **2023 AITO Business Partner**

This award goes to the AITO Business Partner which provided the best service and product in 2024, as voted by AITO specialist tour operators and agents.

Gold: **James Hallam Insurance Brokers**

Silver: **White Hart Associates**

Bronze: **The Firebird Partnership**

### **2023 AITO Tourist Board Partner of the Year**

This award goes to the AITO Tourist Board partner which provided the best service and product in 2023, as voted by AITO specialist tour operators and agents.

Gold: **Greek National Tourism Organisation**

Silver: **Spanish Tourist Office**

Bronze: **Visit Portugal**

### **2023 AITO Specialist Tour Operator of the Year**

This award goes to those AITO members with exceptional client reviews on AITO.com.

Platinum:

- **Absolute Escapes**
- **On Foot Holidays**

Gold:

- **BushBaby Holidays**
- **McKinlay Kidd**
- **Mickledore Travel**

Silver:

- **Peter Sommer Travels**
- **Experience Travel Group**
- **Fleewinter**

Bronze:

- **Naturetrek**
- **Wilderness Scotland**

### **Chairman's Award 2023**

This special award is given, in recognition of an exceptional overall contribution to AITO, to **Heather McKinlay, of specialist tour operator McKinlay Kidd**

**Chris Rowles, AITO Chairman, comments:** "Heather has been a dedicated Council member for a number of years and has always gone above and beyond, being not only on the strategic review team, along with chairing the membership acquisition committee, but also ensuring that we maintained a clear focus on increasing AITO's membership, along with providing invaluable assistance with the corporate governance of AITO. This is a very well-deserved accolade."

All awards are made in respect of the calendar year from 1<sup>st</sup> January to 31<sup>st</sup> December, 2023.

**Ends**

**Press:** For further information on AITO, please see [www.aito.com](http://www.aito.com), or contact Travel PR on 020 8891 4440. Alternatively, email Gemma Minto ([g.minto@travelpr.co.uk](mailto:g.minto@travelpr.co.uk)) or Sue Ockwell ([s.ockwell@travelpr.co.uk](mailto:s.ockwell@travelpr.co.uk)).