



WITTI Announces Top Women in Travel Award Winners

Inaugural awards for women, by women in travel and tourism

WASHINGTON, DC – June 21, 2017 – Women in Travel and Tourism International (witti) is pleased to announce the recipients of the 2017 Women in Travel and Tourism International Awards. Announced earlier this month, the awards are the first of their kind in which women are honoring their peers for outstanding contributions to the travel and tourism industry.

“It’s important to highlight the very significant contributions of women working in travel and tourism today,” said Mandala Research CEO and witti founder Laura Mandala. “These champions of travel and tourism are not only advancing their companies and the industry, but are also mentoring and recruiting the next generation of travel professionals.”

Mandala said that witti strives to serve as a forum for increasing the low numbers of women represented at the most senior levels in the travel industry. She also stressed the importance of recognizing organizations such as the Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority (LVCVA) and Visit California, that have maintained a longtime commitment to supporting women in key leadership roles.

“Not unlike other industries, the travel industry can do more to ensure that there is a diverse set of voices and perspectives at the most senior levels of leadership,” said Kelly Craighead, who recently served as the first Deputy Assistant Secretary (for Travel and Tourism) at the U.S. Department of Commerce and is now principal at Vertimas Consulting. “The spotlight from witti on this important goal and through these new awards help demonstrate the many important contributions being made every day by women in the industry.”

Women make up the bulk of travel industry employees, ranging from travel agents and advisors to hotel managers and concierges, and yet they remain disproportionately under-represented in the most senior ranks of travel and tourism organizations.

The awards are the first in a long list of activities witti conducts as part of its commitment to supporting, educating and advocating for women who work in the travel industry. Over eighty nominations for the awards were received and the winners were chosen by a panel of their peers.

“Tourism at its core is a fundamentally welcoming and inclusive industry, both for visitors from around the globe and for those who work every day to deliver unforgettable travel experiences,” said Caroline Beteta, president and CEO of Visit California. “As we continue to embolden local communities through travel, it is critical to showcase the successes and opportunities possible for every individual – from frontline employees to national leadership – who helps bring dreams to life in destinations across the country.”

“It’s an honor to be recognized as part of the inaugural group of WITTI Award recipients, and to be able to represent women in our industry,” said Cathy Tull, senior vice president of marketing for the LVCVA. “As Senior Vice President of Marketing for the LVCVA, I get to work with one of the best teams in the industry on a daily basis, and I believe a commitment to excellence is at the core of everything we do.”

2017 witti Winners include:

Outstanding Woman in Travel Leadership

- Caroline Beteta, President & CEO, [Visit California](#)
- Angela Brav, Chief Executive, Europe, [InterContinental Hotels Group](#)
- Kelly Craighead, Principal, Vertimas Consulting, formerly the first Deputy Assistant Secretary for Travel and Tourism, [U.S. Department of Commerce](#)
- Julie Heizer, Deputy Director, Industry Relations, National Travel and Tourism Office, [U.S. Department of Commerce's National Travel and Tourism Office \(NTTO\)](#)
- Pam Inman, President, [National Tour Association](#)
- Anne Madison, Chief Strategy and Communications Officer, [Brand USA](#)
- Cathy Tull, Senior Vice President of Marketing, Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority - [LVCVA](#)

Outstanding Woman Hospitality

- Georgette Blau, President, [On Location Tours](#)
- Jenn Michaels, Vice President of Public Relations, [MGM Resorts International](#)
- Betsy O'Rourke, Vice President of Sales and Marketing, [Xanterra Parks & Resorts](#)

Outstanding Woman in Travel and Transportation

- Barbra Anderson, Founding Partner, [Destination Better](#)
- Claudia Menezes, Vice President, [Pegasus Transportation](#)
- Diane Moore, President, [Paul Gauguin Cruises](#)
- Ingrid Reisman, Senior Vice President & Chief Marketing Officer, [Las Vegas Monorail Company](#)
- Anbritt Stengele, Owner, [Sports Traveler](#)

Lifetime Achievement in Travel and Tourism

- Mimi Hahn, Chief Marketing Officer, [Monterey Bay Aquarium](#)
- Pilar Laguana, Director of Global Marketing, [Guam Visitors Bureau](#)
- Olga Ramudo, President and CEO, [Express Travel](#)

Outstanding Woman in Destination Management/Marketing

- Donna Allen, Vice president of Sales and Marketing [Visit Norfolk](#)
- Stephanie Klett, Secretary of [Wisconsin Department of Tourism](#)
- Gretchen Hall, President and CEO, [Little Rock Convention & Visitors Bureau](#)
- Mary Kay Vrba, President, [Dutchess Tourism, Inc.](#)

Rising Star in Travel and Tourism

- Annie Austin, PR Manager, [Oregon's Mt. Hood Territory](#)
- Jessica Blotter, CEO, Co-Founder, and Editor-in-Chief, [Kind Traveler](#)
- Ali Brewer, Member Services Manager, [American Bus Association](#)
- Lauren Cleland, Digital Content Strategist, [Visit Savannah](#)
- Julie Slagter, Founder of [Creative Travel Connections](#)

Outstanding Mentor in Travel and Tourism

- Camille Hoheb, President of [Wellness Tourism Worldwide](#)
- Andrea Ross, CEO, [Journeys Within Tour Company](#)
- Denise Thevenot, Executive Director, [Louisiana Tax Free Shopping](#)

Outstanding Woman in Travel Blogging

- Melissa Bradley, Founder & CEO, [Indagare Travel](#)
- Dayvee Sutton, Journalist and host of travel segments on USA Today and CNN Airport

Outstanding Woman in Travel Research

- Dr. Nancy McGehee, Professor, [Department of Hospitality and Tourism Management Virginia Tech](#)
- Ilene Strongin-Garry, Manager: Knowledge Management & Sharing Culture Champion, Intercontinentals Hotel Group ([IHG](#))
- Monique Wells, Co-Founder, [Discover Paris](#)

Outstanding Woman in Shopping Tourism

- Rosemary McCormick, President & CEO, [Shop America Alliance](#) and The Cultural Traveler

Outstanding Woman in Tourism Marketing

- Michelle Fee, Cruise Planners, an [American Express Travel](#) Representative
- Valerie Knoblauch, President, [Visit Finger Lakes](#)
- Ann Tok, International Communications Manager, [Philadelphia CVB](#)
- Kari Westlund, President and CEO, [Eugene, Cascades & Coast: Travel Lane County](#)

Outstanding Woman in Travel/Tourism Media

- Michal Alter, Co-Founder and CEO, [Visit.org](#)
- Melissa Bradley, Founder & CEO, [Indagare Travel](#)
- Tonya Johnson Fitzpatrick, Co-Founder and Host of [World Footprints](#)
- Ann Liguori, President, [Ann Liguori Productions](#)
- Michelle Revuelta, Vice President, Media Relations, [Choose Chicago!](#)

2017 witti Awards and brunch sponsors include, [Skift](#), [Event Transportation Systems](#), [Xanterra Parks and Resorts](#), [Louisiana Tax Free Shopping](#), [Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Association](#), and Chicago's First Lady Cruises. The awards were presented at the annual brunch of [Women in Travel and Tourism International](#) during the IPW conference of the U.S. Travel Association on June 4 in Washington, D.C. For more information about the Women in Travel and Tourism International 2017 Awards, visit its page [here](#).

About witti

witti's mission is to enhance the success of women in the travel and tourism industry through peer-to-peer networking, mentoring, lead sharing, and giving back to the global travel community in meaningful ways. The specific benefits witti offers its members include: conferences and social networking connections; opportunity for recognition at the Top Women in Travel awards; education and professional development; advocacy in promoting the visibility of women in the senior ranks of the travel industry; and research on the status of women in industry. For more information about witti, contact Laura@womenintravelandtourism.com, visit womenintravelandtourism.com, and follow @wittiorg on Twitter.

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