

2026

ICRT
AFRICA
AWARDS
2026



Responsible
Tourism
Awards
AFRICA

ICRT WTM AFRICA
RESPONSIBLE
TOURISM AWARDS
CITATIONS

WWW.ICRT.GLOBAL

Picture credit: Saruni Basecamp

Nature Positive

Gold: Ele Collection Zimbabwe



Ele Collection exists to protect a tourism region by removing pollution, reducing extractive pressure on nature, and implementing a system that both mitigates tourism-related environmental harm and actively protects and replenishes the natural environment by turning waste into long-term infrastructure value. Its community-based collection network pays informal waste collectors above standard informal rates, providing a stable income while incentivising the removal of plastic from sensitive ecological areas.

Ele Collection removes plastic waste from the environment and transforms it into construction-grade aggregate used in roads, paving, and building materials. It partners with hotels, lodges, safari operators, tour companies and local authorities to remove plastic waste from the environment. The plastic is collected through community collectors, clean-up initiatives, and tourism partnerships. Collected plastic is shredded and processed into a building aggregate called Plazrok. This material partially replaces quarry stone and river sand in construction, reducing pressure on natural extraction systems while providing a durable, circular solution.



Through factory tours and presentations for tourists, schools, and travel companies, Ele Collection educates visitors about the impact of plastic pollution on wildlife and ecosystems. These engagements promote meaningful, harm-free encounters with nature by encouraging responsible behaviour and demonstrating practical conservation solutions. Tourism partners use its impact data to communicate their conservation contributions transparently to guests and stakeholders.

Nature Positive

Silver: Graskop Gorge Lift Company South Africa

Graskop Gorge Lift Co (GGLC) operates a specialised nature-based tourism facility on the Panorama Route in Mpumalanga.

The primary infrastructure consists of a 51-metre glass-fronted elevator and a 1000-metre circular network of elevated timber boardwalks. This system was specifically engineered to provide ‘zero-impact’ access to a sensitive forest floor that was previously degrading due to unmanaged human encroachment.

The facility serves as an outdoor classroom, utilising interpretive signage and guided experiences to translate complex ecological processes for a general audience.



The GGLC protects a significant range of ‘Red Data’ species, including the critically endangered Graskop cliff aloe (*Aloe nubigena*), which has a highly restricted range and finds its primary refuge there.

Before intervention, the gorge was a ‘tragedy of the commons’, vulnerable to illegal plant harvesting, wood collection and opportunistic poaching. Informal scramble paths caused soil erosion, siltation of the gorge stream and destruction of delicate understory micro-habitat boundaries.

GGLC prioritises hyperlocal sourcing. 90% of its workforce is from the immediate Graskop community, and 64% of procurement spend is within a 100km radius.



Nature Positive

One To Watch: Spekboom Southern Africa



The judges were excited to see this innovative approach to raising money for conservation and hope to see it grow and be replicated.

When a guest books through Spekboom, the payment is split transparently: 87.5% goes directly to the host, 2.5% goes to a vetted conservation or community cause linked to that property, and 10% sustains the platform. This conservation fee is not optional or an add-on. It is built into the payment infrastructure through automated split payments. There is no extra cost to the guest; the contribution is embedded in the booking price.

Spekboom has generated approximately R20,000 in direct conservation contributions through the 2.5% automated fee since launch. While this figure is modest in absolute terms, it represents proof of concept for the funding model: every rand was generated automatically, without any guest opting in, without any host making a separate decision to contribute, and without any administrative overhead for the conservation organisation receiving it.



Tourism that gives back

*Regenerative tourism
that uplifts people and
place where you stay*



Nature Positive

One To Watch: TUI Turtle Aid and Project Diversity Cape Verde

TUI Turtle Aid Cape Verde protects endangered loggerhead turtles and their nesting habitats on the island of Sal through monitoring, nest protection, research and community engagement.



Implemented with local partner Project Biodiversity, the initiative combines beach patrols, drone surveillance and nest relocation to safeguard turtles from threats such as poaching, habitat loss, coastal development and disturbance from tourism. The project also works with tourism businesses to reduce environmental impacts through a turtle friendly certification scheme and awareness training for staff and visitors. Alongside conservation action, outreach activities including school workshops, radio programmes and beach clean-ups educate residents and tourists about marine protection.

The project has protected more than 1.2 million hatchlings and adult sea turtles through coordinated beach monitoring, nest relocation and drone surveillance of nesting sites.

- 883,396 hatchlings were protected in the first phase of the project (2017-2022) and
- 306,475 hatchlings on the recently completed second phase (2023-2025).

These figures are based on monitoring data collected during patrols and hatchery records maintained by the implementing partner.

By preventing nest disturbance, deterring poaching and relocating vulnerable nests to protected areas, the project has directly increased hatchling survival rates and safeguarded one of the world's most important loggerhead turtle populations. [Project Biodiversity – Sea Turtle Conservation Cabo Verde](#)

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

Silver: Saruni Wild Kenya

Saruni Wild is an exclusive eco-luxury camp located within the Maasai Mara ecosystem in Narok County, offering high-end, nature-based experiences including guided safaris and immersive cultural encounters.



It prioritises local employment, and staff are encouraged to wear traditional Maasai attire as part of their professional uniform, affirming cultural identity rather than diluting it.

Through the Saruni Basecamp Academy internship program, it provides structured, on-the-job training opportunities for local youth. This year's programme achieved a "50:50 representation of male and female interns, an opportunity for women, who have historically been marginalised within a strongly patriarchal cultural context. ... offering training .. actively shifting access to opportunity."



"When the camp was established in 2015, 100% of the staff were male.. ' . Today, within a team of 24 permanent staff it has a female Assistant Manager, four additional women in permanent roles, and two young women on the internship programme. This represents roughly 29% female participation across permanent and internship positions.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

One To Watch: Cape Tourist Guides Association South Africa

The Cape Tourist Guides Association actively supports the representation of guides from diverse ethnic, cultural, linguistic, gender, and socio-economic backgrounds. By doing so, it ensures that the stories and perspectives shared with visitors reflect the authentic diversity of South Africa. It actively supports the representation of guides from diverse ethnic, cultural, linguistic, gender, and socio-economic backgrounds.



Angelica Munoz-Cordoba
Chairlady

The Tourist Guides Association was formed because guides deserve a strong collective voice, and visitors and communities deserve responsible, informed, and ethical tourism experiences.

The judges hope to see a further application focused on outcomes rather than intentions.



We are committed to responsible tourism.
In everything we do, we represent your brand and business, as well as our destination, culture, religion, history, traditions, and people with professionalism and care.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

One To Watch: Jacada Travel Zimbabwe

Jacada Travel plans travel experiences around clients' personal interests and preferences, crafting a luxury journey and a story unique to each client. Judges want to recognise its Female Guides of the Future initiative, addressing gender inequality in the safari industry.



Despite women making up most of the African tourism workforce, they remain underrepresented in high-level guiding roles. In partnership with the Wilderness Trust, the project is initially supporting four candidates through their professional safari guide training.

This is a fundraising initiative, designed to increase opportunities for women to train and work as professional guides in the tourism industry... the programme aims to fund training, mentorship and career pathways that help women access higher-paid guiding roles while promoting greater gender equity in tourism.” The judges hope to see a further application when the outcomes of this initiative are clear and measurable.



Championing Cultural Diversity

Gold: Traditional African Homestays Southern Africa (TAHS-SA) South Africa

Traditional African Homestays goes beyond sightseeing and offers heritage homestays in South Africa, enabling the tourist “to become part of village life, staying in real homes and experiencing traditions that are usually passed down only within families.”

The sales proposition is strong. “By choosing to stay with local families in South Africa, you’re not just a guest; you’re a partner in preserving heritage, empowering communities, and shaping a more responsible way to travel.”

Rarely is a business recognised in successive years, last year TAHS-SA won a Silver Responsible Tourism Award but the growth this year has been remarkable. Just over R 6 million has been generated with 70-80% of fee income staying within the community, the rest goes to marketing, refresher training and new homestay development. The network is being extended across Eswatini and Botswana.



Championing Cultural Diversity

Silver: Unexplored Cape Town South Africa

The immersive cultural experiences offered by Unexplored Cape Town are enticing: “Venture along unexplored routes through Cape Town’s backstreets and into community kitchens and restaurants to experience the city’s diverse food cultures authentically.”

The company welcomes guests with disabilities and special needs, supports small food businesses in marginalised communities, and demonstrates its commitment to showcasing traditions, flavours, and stories of local African and diaspora communities in South Africa.

Shop in Salt River for spices and fresh ingredients and prepare a three-course Cape Malay/African-Creole meal while exploring the history of spices and the Camisa people in South Africa. It has built a network of 15 vendors across Cape Town’s neighbourhood food economy.



Championing Cultural Diversity

Silver: Green Planet & TUI Care Foundation Egypt

Green Planet has a bold vision to “protect nature, celebrate culture, and uplift local communities.”



Culture is presented not as performance “but experienced through direct interaction with the people who live it” combining “investment, community participation, and practical implementation.” Capacity building is delivered through its Colourful Cultures project, with training programmes in hospitality, storytelling, and entrepreneurship and it connects these experiences to the market through partnerships with hotels, tour operators, and online platforms.

The TUI Colourful Cultures Programme supports Green Planet by providing funding and support empowering marginalised artists and artisans to gain access to new income opportunities and promote their cultural heritage through tourism offers. <https://baduexperiences.com/>



Championing Cultural Diversity

One to Watch: Desert & Delta Safaris Botswana

The judges were intrigued by Desert & Delta Safaris' bold objectives to empower Botswana through tourism.



The Okavango Marathon Project, a cultural tourism journey, uses running and trekking as the means of travel.

The route passes through remote communities along the Okavango Panhandle that sit entirely outside the traditional safari circuit. Participants move through villages, meet local fishermen, witness traditional practices and cross waterways by mokoro with community guides. At Tsodilo, guests are hosted by the San community, guided through the rock art sites and welcomed to a cultural evening connecting them to one of Africa's oldest living traditions.

This is an exciting new initiative, a real ground breaker. Once proven we hope to see this initiative again.



Regenerative Tourism

Gold: Saruni Basecamp Kenya

Saruni Basecamp's ambition is "through community conservancies ... To create a healthy ecosystem where business, biodiversity and humanity live in harmony."

It sees itself as "custodians of what we call the 'web of life': land, people, wildlife, flora, fauna are not separate entities, but co-existing pieces of the same puzzle."

The impact of its work on environmental conservation and socioeconomic empowerment is considerable: "Overall, Saruni Basecamp's projects have generated over \$1.5 million for communities, benefiting 6,605 landowners and conserving 414,232 hectares of land."

Saruni Basecamp runs 13 low-impact camps working in partnership with indigenous Maasai and Samburu landowners who remain custodians of their land, using tourism revenue to secure large, connected landscapes for wildlife while strengthening local livelihoods. Through long-term lease agreements and bed-night fees, tourism directly finances land conservation, enabling pastoral communities to keep their land intact rather than subdividing or converting it to agriculture.

Regenerative food systems are integrated into camp operations through organic gardens and circular waste-to-food initiatives. 10 of the 13 camps now produce vegetables and herbs on site, reducing supply chain emissions and supporting soil health. A poultry project at Basecamp Maasai Mara, converts selected kitchen waste into feed, producing organic eggs while reducing food waste and external sourcing. Cultural heritage and women's economic empowerment are supported by the Basecamp Maasai Brand, which provides market access for beadwork produced by 250 women and sold exclusively through camp gift shops, generating direct income from tourism.

Saruni Basecamp has built a tourism model designed to regenerate both ecosystems and local livelihoods by changing how land is used, how tourism revenue flows, and how communities participate in conservation. Cumulatively, these actions and more have resulted in tourism driving the regeneration of: "ecological systems, strengthening community land stewardship, and building diversified, resilient local economies that depend on healthy landscapes rather than extractive land use."



Regenerative Tourism

Gold: RuralRevive Namibia

“RuralRevive Building a Desert Based Economy Initiative” is conceptualised and driven by the Wolwedans Foundation.

Rural Revive, the AridEden Project in the Namib Desert, underpinned by a philosophy of balancing people, planet and profit, aims to build resilient, more sustainable and equitable tourism/ conservation economies based on five core pillars: commerce, community, conservation, culture and consciousness.

Based around Maltahöhe, in southern Namibia, it is changing the way the tourism system operates, building locally owned systems that restore livelihoods, strengthen resilience, and reconnect tourism with the people and landscapes that sustain it.

“Through climate-appropriate horticulture initiatives, we have developed greenhouses and irrigation systems, trained over 200 local farmers, strengthened food security, and enabled the supply of organic produce to tourism establishments. This reduces dependence on imported food, lowers transport-related emissions, and ensures that tourism spending benefits local producers.”

Maltahöhe, with a population of 6,000, is a former economic hub that declined following the collapse of the karakul sheep industry and the increasing severity of droughts. Once a productive agricultural centre, it is now characterised by limited economic activity, youth outmigration, and growing dependency.

Tourism was operating alongside the community rather than with it. How could tourism be restructured to actively contribute to local economic regeneration instead of reinforcing exclusion? What was needed was a regenerative approach that could rebuild local systems, restore dignity through work, and create a resilient, desert-based economy rooted in local participation. The need was identified through years of engagement with the Maltahöhe community, tourism operators, and development partners. Conversations with residents revealed shared priorities: jobs, skills, food security, and opportunities for youth and women. Engagement with tourism businesses revealed operational needs, such as laundry services, fresh produce, waste management, and transport, that could realistically be met locally if the right systems and skills were in place. This realignment between community needs and tourism demand formed the foundation of RuralRevive, designed to shift tourism from an extractive model to a regenerative one, in which value circulates locally and strengthens both people and place.



Regenerative Tourism

Silver: Imvelo Safari Lodges Zimbabwe

Imvelo Safari Lodges recognises that for years, indigenous rural communities received very little direct benefit from Zimbabwe's booming tourism industry.

For the rural villager living next to an unfenced national park like Hwange, wildlife was by no means an attraction; elephants ate their crops and lions killed their livestock.

Imvelo's regenerative tourism model seeks to build harmonious relationships between people and wildlife in an area burdened by intense human-wildlife conflicts. Tourism camps have been strategically located to deter poachers, and Imvelo maintains and manages a chain of watering holes along Hwange's 120km southern boundary to sustain thousands of animals, including huge herds of elephants, through the annual dry seasons.

A regenerative approach has resulted from piecemeal efforts to "solve" the problems arising at the human/wildlife interface, sufficient to facilitate the successful reintroduction of four white rhinos. Imvelo is a small company with a big vision: "By embedding conservation and community benefit into its operations, Imvelo seeks to demonstrate that tourism can function as a regenerative system rather than a short-term extraction of value or distant by-stander." <https://www.hwangecommunityrhino.com/>



Regenerative Tourism

Silver: Elephant-Human Relations Aid (EHRA) Namibia

Elephant Human Relations Aid (EHRA) works with communities across more than 2 million hectares of elephant landscape in Namibia's northwest to reduce conflict while ensuring that elephants remain both ecologically viable and socially accepted.

EHRA won a Gold Responsible Tourism Award in 2012 for the way it used international volunteers to strengthen water points so they can be used by both humans and elephants without getting damaged. Conflict arises when elephants damage water infrastructure while searching for water during drought periods. EHRA intervenes to protect water sources use solar lights to deter elephants and improve safety, uses GPS collaring and monitoring to enable early warning systems and digs water sources for elephants away from villages.

Over the past decade, EHRA has invested more than NAD\$13 million in coexistence infrastructure and mitigation measures, and in improving community preparedness. Reported human-elephant conflict incidents declined from 92 in 2023, to 50 in 2024, and 39 in 2025, with only 12 incidents recorded so far in 2026. No elephants were shot as 'problem animals' in 2025.

EHRA has effectively intervened at the ecosystem level to enable elephants and people to coexist, "regenerating the relationship between people, wildlife and tourism by ensuring that elephants create tangible benefits for the communities who live alongside them."



Regenerative Tourism

One to Watch: Green Safaris Zambia & Malawi

Green Safaris supported by the [Green Safaris Foundation](#) has committed to founding and supporting a multitude of projects and focuses, with an equal emphasis on education, sustainability, conservation, and sustainable community development.

It won a Silver Responsible Tourism Award in 2025 in the climate change category and Gold in 2022 for decarbonising.

Now more ambitious, its [Mukuni Organic Farm](#) is presented as a “model for regenerative agriculture, transforming 12.6 hectares of degraded land into a thriving, productive farm.” As reported on the [Foundation website](#): “Although full sustainability has not yet been achieved, there is renewed momentum.”

The ambitious regenerative approach uses cascading semi-permeable check dams in Mulendema Chiefdom, built across seasonal waterways to slow floodwater and allow infiltration into the groundwater table. Rather than diverting water, it restores natural hydrological function. The judges hope to see further applications as this new regenerative approach delivers ecosystem-level change.



Regenerative Tourism

One to Watch: TUI Care Foundation, Field to Fork Tanzania

The TUI Care Foundation currently runs its TUI Field to Fork programme across nine projects worldwide, supporting local farmers and producers through training in sustainable and regenerative agriculture, business development, and market access, while strengthening links with the tourism sector.



By promoting local sourcing, climate-resilient food production, and community-led enterprises, the programme helps restore ecosystems, improve livelihoods, and ensure tourism contributes directly to resilient local food systems and inclusive economic development. The TUI Care Foundation plans to expand its regenerative tourism work by enhancing programmes that connect sustainable food systems, local livelihoods, and tourism value chains.

Combining regenerative farming with cultural tourism and storytelling enables women not only to earn income but also to be recognised as leaders, hosts, and custodians of both land and culture. The judges look forward to seeing evidence of this approach's impact in future applications.



Local Economic Benefit

Gold: The V&A Waterfront Academy South Africa

Launched in 2023, the V&A Academy is an employment pathway initiative catalysed and funded by the V&A.

The programme connects unemployed young people from surrounding communities with entry-level jobs across the Waterfront's tourism, hospitality and retail businesses.

The Academy focuses on preparing young people for the transition to employment while supporting businesses that hire first-time workers with a particular focus on the first six months, when employment relationships are often most fragile and unstable.

Since launch, 315 young people have graduated and are now placed with 46 host employers across the Waterfront. 90% of the V&A Academy's graduates have gained full-time employment for the first time. The Academy has also supported 15 small independent businesses in the Watershed craft market.



Many businesses are hesitant to hire inexperienced employees due to the risks of onboarding and managing staff entering the workplace for the first time. Managers are often stretched and lack the capacity to invest the time required to support new workers through the early stages of employment. The V&A Academy was created to address this gap.

Local Economic Benefit

Gold: Table Mountain Aerial Cableway Company South Africa

TMACC recognised that, as one of South Africa's most visited attractions, it has both the responsibility and the opportunity to ensure tourism benefits local communities.

By prioritising local suppliers, TMACC ensures that visitor spending circulates within the local economy rather than leaking out of the destination. This approach turns tourism demand into local economic growth by prioritising local suppliers, supporting small businesses and ensuring that the economic benefits generated remain within the surrounding communities.



More than 150 local businesses are now supported. TMACC supports small businesses with mentorship, operational training and certification support. To date, 67 SMMEs have been empowered as this programme helps entrepreneurs strengthen their operations and access tourism markets. TMACC has shifted local procurement from 29% in 2017 to 89% today, and actively develops and mentors suppliers, helping them grow beyond the Cableway.

Local Economic Benefit

Silver: Lux Marijani Zanzibar

The 5* LUX Marijani has embedded local economic participation into its supply value chain to reduce economic leakage and maximise direct benefits to the surrounding community, ensuring that tourism revenue flows beyond the resort and into households, micro-enterprises and community institutions.

Suppliers include

- Azani Suppliers fresh fish 15,000USD per month; Hamza and Duruma Holdings calamari and octopus each monthly 3,000USD, Neema Mulungi, Oyster mushrooms, blueberries, strawberries and raspberries 1,500USD per month and exotic fruits from Next Level Millennium for 750USD per month. 13,400USD goes monthly to locally owned Premier Laundry Services and 7,600USD monthly for staff transport.



LUX Marijani provides beachfront access for a 15-member women's cooperative (Mama wa Pwani), enabling direct sales of spices, crafts and art to guests supported by a stipend 960USD for transport and a range of other economic relationships following the principle of partnership over charity-ensuring continuity of income flow rather than one-off support enabling community members to conduct business within the resort premises at no additional cost, creating shared value.



Local Economic Benefit

Silver: TUI Care Foundation, Futureshapers North Africa Egypt, Morocco & Tunisia

TUI Futureshapers North Africa is a regional entrepreneurship programme by the TUI Care Foundation, implemented in partnership with enpact Stiftung, that supports young entrepreneurs in Egypt, Tunisia and Morocco to build sustainable tourism businesses.



The programme provides technical assistance to more than 180 people and supports more than 30 jobs, with a focus on women and rural communities.

By enabling locally-led businesses to grow, the initiative creates jobs, strengthens local value chains and ensures tourism delivers direct economic benefits to destination communities.



ICRT WTM Africa Responsible Tourism Awards 2026



**Responsible
Tourism
Awards**
AFRICA

**ICRT
AFRICA
AWARDS
2026**

ICRT WTM Africa Judges

The judging panel for the 2026 WTM Africa Responsible Tourism Awards was chaired by Emeritus Professor **Harold Goodwin**, managing director of the Responsible: Tourism Partnership and founder of ICRT global and judges included:

Glynn O' Leary, CEO Transfrontier Parks Destinations and ICRT Southern Africa

Ruth Crichton, regional head Southern Africa the Long Run and ICRT Southern Africa

Adama Bah, Institute of Travel and Tourism of The Gambia (ITTOG) and ICRT West Africa

Martin Brackenbury, formerly IFTO and UN Advisor

Kerry Carmichael, founder of Echo

Tiomóid Foley, net zero tourism manager, business development and intermediary marketing at Visit Scotland.

2026 Global Responsible Tourism Awards sponsored by the Belize Tourism Board



Gold winners from the CRT WTM Africa Responsible Tourism Awards automatically go onto contend for a Global Responsible Tourism Award, sponsored by the Belize Tourism Board.

The African Gold winners will compete on a world stage against winners from other regional awards including

- ICRT Indian Subcontinent Responsible Tourism Awards
- ICRT Europe Responsible Tourism Awards
- ICRT Southeast Asia Responsible Tourism Awards
- ICRT LATA Responsible Tourism Awards
- ICRT Responsible Tourism Awards worldwide

The 2026 Global Responsible Tourism Award winners are announced on November 2 in London.

“The prestigious Responsible Tourism Awards were founded in 2004 to discover, recognise, and promote good practice encouraging replication contributing to the development of new solutions and replication. The winners provide inspiring models and clear evidence of impact”

Welcome to the Responsible Tourism movement



PICRT global is a non profit dedicated to sharing best practice in Responsible Tourism through short online training courses, workshops and mentoring.

[https://icrt.global/training-courses/
info@icrt.global](https://icrt.global/training-courses/info@icrt.global)