



### **Best of DEI in the travel and hospitality industry celebrated at the IWTTF Awards 2025**

*Winning companies and individual representatives from TUI Care Foundation, Audley Travel, Red Carnation Hotels, Halal Travel Network and Limitless Travel recognised*



London, 19 June 2025: Social enterprise [Women in Travel CIC](#) has announced the winners of the annual IWTTF Awards 2025, which celebrate diversity, equity and inclusion in the travel, tourism and hospitality industries.

The [International Women in Travel and Tourism Forum](#) (IWTTF) Awards reception was at full capacity in the offices of Kennedy's Law LLP, a stunning 16<sup>th</sup>-floor venue overlooking the City and the River Thames last night (18 June). The host for the evening was international journalist, broadcaster and presenter Jeanette Ceja ([www.jetsetwithjeannette.com](http://www.jetsetwithjeannette.com)), alongside Women in Travel MD and Founder Alessandra LoTufo Alonso, with a keynote speech from Executive Director of UN Women UK and former deputy leader of the Women's Equality Party UK, Tabitha Morton.

Reflecting Women in Travel CIC's work championing Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, Female Leadership, and Allyship, the award categories recognised both businesses and individuals for their awareness, achievements, initiatives and progress in the DEI space.

The winners were as follows:

#### **Apparent and Non-Apparent Disability Champion of the Year**

#### Company

**Winner:** TUI Care Foundation

**Highly Commended:** Limitless Travel

#### Individual

**Winner:** Angus Drummond, Founder, Limitless Travel

**Highly Commended:** Kelly Twichel, CEO, Access Trax

#### **Allyship Hero of the Year**

##### Company

**Winner:** wmnsWORK

**Highly Commended:** Kenya Association of Women in Tourism

##### Individual

**Winner:** Hafsa Gaher, Founder and CEO, Halal Travel Network

#### **Inclusion and Diversity Champion of the Year**

##### Company

**Winner:** Inout Hostel, Barcelona

**Highly Commended:** Destination Rainbow

##### Individual

**Winner:** Maria Nathalia Drueco, Founder & CEO belongInclusivity and Mariantha Tours

**Highly Commended:** Anita Mauraueu, Founder & CEO, Black Travel Summit

#### **Woman Leader in Travel and Tourism of the Year**

##### Corporate Individual

**Winner:** Angela Barbato, Vice President of Product Management, Peek Travel

**Highly Commended:** Meegan Marshall, Chief People & Purpose Officer, Intrepid Travel

##### Individual Entrepreneur

**Winner:** Hafsa Gaher, Founder and CEO, Halal Travel Network

**Highly Commended:** Chantal Potgieter (Founder and Director, Themba Travel) and Christine Winebrenner Irick (Founder, Lotus Sojourns and Host, Soul of Travel podcast)

### **Woman Leader in Hospitality of the Year**

#### **Corporate Individual**

**Winner:** Liz McGivern, VP People and Culture, Red Carnation Hotels

**Highly Commended:** Portia Hart, Founder and CEO, Blue Apple Beach, Colombia

#### **Individual Entrepreneur**

**Winner:** Dee Gibson, Owner, Kalukanda House

**Highly Commended:** Carolyn Ray, CEO & Founder, JourneyWoman

### **Woman Leader in Travel/ Tourism / Hospitality Technology of the Year**

#### **Corporate**

**Winner:** Haley Kim, Global Chief Business Officer, Yanolja

**Highly Commended:** Angela Barbato, Vice President of Product Management, Peek Travel

#### **Individual Entrepreneur**

**Winner:** Rita Varga, President & CEO, RaizUp

**Highly Commended:** Yasmine Moustafa, Co-Founder & CEO, ROAR

### **Woman Mentee of the Year**

#### **Corporate Individual**

**Winner:** Jo Brown, Head of Sales and Service UK, Audley Travel

**Highly Commended:** Queenie Shaikh, Travel Journalist, Intrepid Travel programme

#### **Individual Entrepreneur**

**Winner:** Elle Pinkard, Founder, Destination Rainbow

**Highly Commended:** Wella Vanqa, Independent Travel Consultant, Vanquish Travel

Judges included leaders from across the industry, from brand names such as Not in the Guide Books and Diamond Air International to UK travel industry companies such as FINN Partners, the Travel Connection Group and Atkin Jones Ltd, recruitment companies such as Gail Kenny and Antella Recruitment and media representatives such as Skift and Forbes.

Each was carefully selected and assigned to an appropriate category to ensure integrity and relevant expertise across the board.

Alessandra LoTufo Alonso, Founder and Managing Director of Women in Travel CIC and IWTTf said:

“Every year of the IWTTf Awards I am increasingly impressed with the quality and variety of the nominations, and I am so proud to recognise and celebrate all of our deserving winners and finalists.

Many of our winners are unsung heroes and changemakers in the DEI space, whose work is often under-valued or under-recognised and yet is having real impact. In the spirit of Women in Travel CIC, we are shining a light on this great work, as it is more vital than ever for us to celebrate every step that brings us closer to a more inclusive, equitable and diverse industry.”

Tabitha Morton said in her inspiring keynote: “If travel is a vehicle for transformation, let it transform us as an industry. Let it compel us to confront injustice where we see it, and help us to move towards equality for all, because when you get equality for women, it helps men as well. Let us honour the women that built this industry and finally put them in charge of its future, because if women are the soul of this industry, then we must become its strategists, its architects and its storytellers, not some day, but today.”

Howard Salinger, Managing Director of the Travel Connection Group and one of the judges said:

“We received some outstanding nominations this year. I particularly liked the fact that submissions came from all over the globe and from people we don’t necessarily hear about. I think it is important to use these awards to share good practice and replicable actions when it comes to inclusion, equity and diversity. There are many companies and individuals doing great things in our industry, particularly to help other people, and it’s certainly important to recognise and celebrate them, especially at a time when inclusion and diversity is suffering a bit of a backlash.”

Now in their third year, the Awards are part of IWTTF 2025, which also includes a day of industry-leading sessions and conversations on a range of topics from inclusive leadership, allyship, social mobility, the intersectionality of climate, conservation and gender equity and the rise of online misogyny fuelling division.

Both the IWTTF Awards and the Forum business day were waitlisted events, with all proceeds going towards furthering Women in Travel CIC’s mission of using the travel industry as a force for good, empowering women – especially those who are marginalised, vulnerable, and underrepresented –to achieve their potential. The social enterprise partners with employers and charities to provide visibility, confidence, access to training, mentoring and allyship programmes, and eventually employment and enterprising opportunities in the travel industry.

Sponsors of IWTTF and the Awards include Founding Sponsor Intrepid Travel, host sponsors Google and Kennedys Law LLP, Eurail, DiamondAir, Visit Malta, Stay22, Atkin Jones, WTM and accommodation sponsor Georgian House.

For more information on IWTTF, please visit: [www.iwttf.com](http://www.iwttf.com)

For more information on Women in Travel’s important work, please visit [www.womenintravelcic.com](http://www.womenintravelcic.com)

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A link to images is available [here](#).

A link to the criteria of each category and the judging panel is available [here](#).

The judges said of the winners:

**Apparent and Non-Apparent Disability Champion of the Year**

Company: TUI Care Foundation

This is an organisation dedicated to do better, make a difference and create an environment where inclusion is standard practice not an exception. They are worthy winners and showcase how a large organisation can effectively tackle both regenerative tourism, accessibility and overall inclusion through projects on a wide scale.

Individual: Angus Drummond, Limitless Travel

This individual stands out for the commitment to embed accessibility into the operations of businesses and entities across the travel industry. This person truly deserves this recognition as someone who looks at all aspects of accessible travel: from physical, cognitive or mental health. The winner is an excellent example of going above and beyond in this area by providing opportunities for inclusion at every level and thinking about customer service, promotion, education and planning for future impact.

### **Allyship Hero of the Year**

Company: wmnsWORK

This company is a standout ally in tourism, intentionally centering women and non-binary entrepreneurs through an inclusive, equity-first accelerator. With strong industry partnerships and ongoing support beyond the programme, it creates real opportunities for underrepresented founders. Its impact goes beyond access, building confidence, community, and lasting change in the industry.

Individual: Hafsa Gaher, Halal Travel Network

This individual leads with quiet determination and unwavering purpose. She uses her platform to turn allyship into meaningful action creating visibility, opportunities, and long-term impact. Her work goes beyond inclusion to foster real empowerment, making her a standout advocate and ally in every sense, particularly elevating Muslim women through mentorship and global partnerships.

### **Inclusion and Diversity Champion of the Year**

Company: Inout Hostel Barcelona

The judges felt this was the outstanding entry in this category. Judges were all impressed by the level of commitment they showed to providing opportunities for people with disabilities, and their dedication to provide an inclusive working environment. This company demonstrates that true diversity and belonging are possible — not only in theory but in everyday operations.

Individual: Maria Nathalia Drucco, Mariantha Tours, The Inclusion Journey Consulting & BelongInclusivity

The judges overwhelmingly agreed that this individual should be the winner. As an immigrant woman of color now living in Canada, she brings a deeply personal understanding of the systemic barriers faced by marginalized communities - barriers she has not only encountered firsthand but actively works to dismantle through her businesses, advocacy, and leadership ensuring that inclusion is not just a principle, it's a practice.

### **Woman Leader in Travel and Tourism**

Company: Angela Barbato, Peek Travel

The judges agreed that the individual in question thoroughly deserves to win for inspiring and empowering women to pursue leadership roles by leading with visibility, intention, and impact in a male dominated sector of industry. Not only does she champion inclusive hiring, mentorship, and

professional development internally but also shares her insights externally mentoring emerging female leaders, driving broader change across the industry.

**Individual entrepreneur:** Hafsa Gaher, Halal Travel Network

This winner is a role model not just because of what she has built, but because of how she uplifts others as she grows. She leads with humility, empathy, and conviction— qualities that resonate deeply with younger women she mentors in tourism particularly in Africa and the UK making her impact visible in the success of those she supports.

### **Woman Leader in Hospitality of the Year**

**Company:** Liz McGivern, Red Carnation Hotels

The positive ripple effect that this individual is creating in the hospitality industry deserves to be recognized. From her commitment to actively recruiting women into top management globally and achieving an almost even 50/50 gender split, to winning over stakeholders to enact enhanced maternity leave policies, she is blazing a trail for the rest of the industry to follow!

**Individual entrepreneur:** Dee Gibson, Kalukanda House, Sri Lanka

We were impressed with this individual's commitment to the full spectrum of intersectionality in her pursuit of equity for women in her region. Employing a property team of 100% locals, retaining them even during the toughest of economic times (including a garden caretaker who lost an arm in a fishing accident and a gay yoga teacher in a country where same sex relationships are illegal), it's clear that her passion for equity is her modus operandi.

### **Woman Leader in Travel/ Tourism / Hospitality Technology of the Year**

**Company:** Haley Kim, Global Chief Business Officer, Yanolja

This individual brings a global perspective and is changing what leadership in travel tech can look like. She drives inclusive policies at her company, inspires female tech leaders, leads gender-focused initiatives. She mentors women weekly, leads with intention, and helped rebrand her company to be more inclusive and purpose-driven. Her influence stretches across continents, and she's opening doors for more women to lead in tech.

**Individual entrepreneur:** Rita Varga, President & CEO, RaizUp

This person Leads DEI programs in travel tech and AN ecosystem builder for inclusive leadership. She stands out for working with the Women in Hospitality Leadership Alliance to create something that's solving a real, ongoing problem—getting more women visible on stage, in the media, and on podcasts. She handled all the tech for the Women in Hospitality Speakers Directory which now includes over 1,500 women and is actively being used by event organizers and journalists. It's a simple idea, brilliantly executed, with lasting industry impact.

### **Woman Mentee of the Year**

**Corporate Individual:** Jo Brown, Head of Sales and Service UK, Audley Travel

A committed mentee that learns from every experience and maintains the relationship with these mentors even when they have left the business, ensuring she can call on support and guidance from a wide range of people. She is very self-aware and thrives on constructive feedback.

**Individual Entrepreneur:** Elle Pinkard, Destination Rainbow

This person recognises that the mentoring is a good space for her to work through all her ideas, and so thinks about what her priorities are ahead of the meetings. She is conscientious about following through on agreed actions, and when we did a review she was honest about what was working for her and what wasn't, so we've been able to improve the process.

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### **About Women in Travel**

Women in Travel CIC is the UK based, award winning social enterprise dedicated to empowering all women using travel, tourism and hospitality as a 'force for good', based on the belief that empowered women thrive and in turn, foster thriving communities. Women in Travel cic partners with employers and charities to provide all women – especially marginalised, vulnerable, and underrepresented – with visibility, confidence, access to training, mentoring and allyship programmes and eventually employment and enterprising opportunities.

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