UNWTO Announces Winning Start-Ups for “Awake Tourism Challenge”

Madrid, Spain, 31 January 2023 - UNWTO has announced the winners of its Awake Tourism Challenge, celebrating the start-ups that are reshaping the sector in every global region.

The Challenge was the second edition of the UNWTO Global Startup Competition focusing on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Entrants were judged on how they are contributing to the development of an inclusive, resilient and sustainable tourism sector, with a focus on six core themes:

- Local Community Involvement
- Green and Blue Economies
- Ecological and Sustainable Capital Creation
- Tourism Tech for Good
- Tourism Education
- Women Empowerment

UNWTO Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili said: “Tourism startups have the power and agility to transform the sector in line with the Sustainable Development Goals. The winners of the UNWTO Awake Tourism Challenge all have the potential to help build a more inclusive and resilient sector and we look forward to supporting them as they grow in size and influence.”

Winners from every global region

The competition attracted more than 2,000 entrants from 120 countries worldwide. The most submissions were from Europe, the Americas and Africa, followed by Asia and the Pacific and the Middle East. From these, an expert jury selected 30 finalists and then 15 winners.

Reflecting the broad talent of the global tourism sector, the winning start-ups are Coastruction (the Netherlands), Noytrall (Portugal), SmArt Tourism and Hospitality Consulting (Panama), Quantum Temple (USA), Socialbnb (Germany), Instituto de Accesibilidad (Spain), Kamatjona (Namibia), Baahdy & Birdy (Norway), WeavAir (Singapore), r3charge (Germany), Impact Innovations Institute (Armenia), NomadHer (South Korea), Murmuration (France), Evelity by Okeenea Digital (France) and Accessible Qatar (Qatar). The projects were recognized for offering innovative service with high customer value, most notably with high levels of youth engagement and the involvement of local...
communities. Start-ups were also recognized for their use of technology to monitor and manage the environmental impact of tourism activity. More information on the winners and finalists can be found on the competition website.

A winning network

The winning start-ups will be offered an incubation period of three months at SPARK Crans-Montana, the innovation Hub of Les Roches from the Sommet Education group, where they will be participating in mentorships, networking activities and have access to a VR lab, Digital Studio, and a dedicated co-working space. In addition, they will also receive scholarships for the UNWTO Tourism Online Academy, be included in the UNWTO Catalogue of top innovators, be featured in a global communications campaign to showcase each winner and invited for mentorships with project partners.

The competition was organized in collaboration with Wakalua, the first global innovation hub for tourism, powered by Ávoris, and counted with great support from renowned tourism experts and partners, including: SPARK, the Innovation Hub of Les Roches from the Sommet Education group, Amadeus, IE University, NEST, KPMG, MasterCard, Telefonica, Wayra, ClarkeModet, The FarCo, BBVA, MentorDay, Finnova, Google for Startups, the Valley Digital Business School, the Future Food Institute and the Inter-American Development Bank and the Singapore Tourism Board.

Innovation as priority

In 2022, UNWTO celebrated five years of its Department of Innovation, Education, and investment. In that time, UNWTO has made innovation one of its main priorities for the sector, holding 23 competitions and challenges, as well as holding nine Tourism Tech Adventures, and creating an innovation network of more than 11,500 stakeholders drawn from every part of the diverse sector.

Related links

UNWTO Awake Tourism Challenge

UNWTO Tourism Startup Competitions