

ATTA for Action

A new trade initiative hopes to highlight tourism's positive impact, reports **Sue Watt**

In July, the UK-based African travel trade body ATTA launched its inaugural ATTA for Action Awards, designed to honour the projects, non-profit organisations and sustainable tourism operators that make a significant impact on community empowerment and environmental conservation.

The pioneering campaign is the brainchild of Melissa Foley, ATTA's Conscious Travel Advisor, who is passionate about linking projects and NGOs to Africa's travellers through tourism.

"ATTA for Action is a new membership category within the African Travel and Tourism Association, for not-for-profit organisations and projects," she explained. "The idea is that the private sector and the tourism industry use our businesses and our voices as a conduit to directly connect travellers to high-impact projects, all vetted for membership, offering transparency and consumer choice. For the awards, we've taken the UN Social Development Goals as the basis for the categories and simplified them, shrinking them to eight concepts that correlate directly to travel."

All categories were open to all organisations, from international agents and local operators to accommodations, NGOs and grass-roots projects. Highly experienced in eco-conscious travel judges from Africa and the UK had a tough task selecting finalists and winners from the 92 entries.

As with all new initiatives, there will be some refinement as the awards gain momentum each year: "We're going to make some small tweaks to the criteria so that they're more well-rounded, because we want diversity," Foley said. "I really think we're going to have a massive response next year. The beautiful thing is that these awards are open to everybody and that they're about real, tangible impact."

Here's a synopsis of the winners of the ATTA for Action Awards 2024, which was sponsored by Botswana Tourism:



Chem Chem Safaris



Chumbe Island Coral Park



How Many Elephants



Sijwa Project



Gamewatchers Safaris and Porini Camps



Rubondo Island Camp, Asilia Africa

1 HEART FOR HERITAGE AND COMMUNITY CHAMPION:

CHEM CHEM SAFARIS, TANZANIA

Chem Chem's three safari camps lie on community-owned land reserved for conservation in the Burunge Wildlife Management Area of northern Tanzania. Judges were impressed by the level of community involvement and by their mutual efforts for conservation protection and community empowerment.

2 EARTH-FRIENDLY CUISINE:

LEMALA CAMPS AND LODGES

Based in Tanzania and Uganda, Lemala's luxury lodges, villas and tented camps earned the judges' praise for the chain's holistic approach to sustainable food initiatives, educating guests and local people. As far as possible, food is locally sourced, benefitting wider communities through tourism.

3 ECO-INNOVATION IN HOSPITALITY:

ASILIA AFRICA

With 19 camps and lodges in Kenya and Tanzania and over 1000 employees, Asilia Africa is synonymous with community commitment and conservation. This award focused on Rubondo Island Camp and its use of renewable energy, electric vehicles and its efforts in reducing emissions.

4 ETHICAL WILDLIFE EXPERIENCE:

CHUMBE ISLAND CORAL PARK, TANZANIA

Chumbe Island (CHICOP), established in 1992, was the world's first private marine park and is financed entirely by ecotourism. Lying off Zanzibar's coast, it teaches both visitors and local schoolchildren about its incredible biodiversity. Judges highlighted the knock-on benefits for local fisheries, improved livelihoods for communities and greater environmental awareness.

5 MEANINGFUL ENGAGEMENT CHAMPION:

AFRICAN MONARCH LODGES (THE SIJWA PROJECT), NAMIBIA

With two lodges in the Zambezi Region, African Monarch launched the Sijwa Project during the pandemic to focus on recycling and repurposing waste for the benefit of communities and conservation. Judges commented that "the soft power of education and community immersion is superb. African Monarch provides a best-in-class example of how tourism and communities can co-exist and both profit from a financial and emotional perspective."

6 DIGITAL STORYTELLING CHAMPION:

HOW MANY ELEPHANTS, UK

This innovative design-led campaign highlights the 35,000 elephants poached annually in Africa for the illegal ivory trade. It uses an imaginative non-gory approach and collaborates with World Female Ranger Week supporting female rangers. Judges commended founder Holly Budge's powerful presentation of both How Many Elephants and the challenges facing female rangers as well as her achievements in fundraising and building momentum.

7 COLLABORATIVE CHAMPIONS OF CLIMATE AND SOCIAL JUSTICE:

GAMEWATCHERS SAFARIS AND PORINI CAMPS, KENYA

Gamewatchers specialises in tailored safaris to small camps and lodges. Throughout its long history, it has demonstrated a strong commitment to conservation and local communities. Judges praised the company's "collaborative initiatives towards climate and social justice ...that have shown true impact" in its partnerships with the Maarifa Foundation, the Smart Learning Project, Wi-Learn, and PadMad among many others.

8 TRAVELLER EDUCATION AND AWARENESS CHAMPION:

LET'S GO TRAVEL UNIGLOBE, KENYA

Let's Go Travel Uniglobe is a sustainable travel management company in East Africa focusing on educating travellers to become better visitors and have a positive impact. Through its comprehensive social and environmental initiatives, it has raised awareness about conservation, empowering communities and fostering a new generation of sustainability champions.

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