



“Campaigning won’t stop “

[people and places](#) has been awarded ‘Best volunteering organisation’ at this year’s Virgin Holidays Responsible Tourism Awards, organised by [responsibletravel.com](#).

“As an organization that was conceived to bring about change, we are particularly pleased by the judges’ citation”, said Sallie Grayson, co founder of [people and places](#).

Citation “[people and places](#) has exercised leadership in a sector bedeviled by poor practice and established a replicable business model. Committed to reporting transparently on the money that volunteers pay, they ensure that the volunteers meet their full costs and are not a burden on the community; and carefully match the skills of volunteers to the needs of that community without replacing local labour. They have taken the ground breaking step of having their work externally audited and publishing it online. These four principles set not only a practicable standard for operators to aspire to, but offer valuable guidelines for tourists seeking legitimate and socially beneficial volunteering experiences.”

Born in a garden in The Gambia in 2005, [people and places](#) offers a unique model for volunteers and communities alike – no volunteer is placed without the informed consent of the local community; no volunteer is asked to commit to their placement until they have been matched to and accepted by that local community; the organization is transparent in all its workings.

Recent volunteer, Jean Eaton says of them:

“[people and places](#) invites questions and gives honest answers - even when those questions are controversial and challenging; they have a policy of transparency which has been evident in all my dealings with the company and this in turn develops a mutual trust.”

“We actively encourage volunteers to comment, question and criticise – and then we share that with future volunteers and the local community, warts and all. This is no perfect science, but we believe that good people, who are well-prepared and well-matched, can work together to bring about meaningful change” says co founder Kate Stefanko, responsible for matching volunteer skills to community need.

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Many organizations would rest on their laurels after receiving such an accolade as this award – but that’s not the case for [people and places](#). This pioneering organisation is even more committed to addressing the “smoke and mirrors” effect in the volunteer market, a market that is all too ready to adopt the latest marketing buzz words.

And don’t be confused – [people and places](#) is not against profit – in fact Grayson is quick to point out that she is determined that the company must be a sound business model.

“Organisations cannot be sustainable if expenses outweigh income – it’s not about whether organizations make a profit – it’s about honesty and integrity – something consumers are looking for more and more. We are thrilled that the awards recognized our leadership, and we embrace the responsibility that comes with leadership – we want to be seen as responsible for change.”

For further information about [people and places](#)

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[http://www.travel-peopleandplaces.co.uk/userfiles/RTAudit2008pandpFINAL\(2\).pdf](http://www.travel-peopleandplaces.co.uk/userfiles/RTAudit2008pandpFINAL(2).pdf) for a copy of the independent audit

<http://www.travel-peopleandplaces.co.uk/press.aspx> for press information and case studies

<http://www.travel-peopleandplaces.co.uk/userfiles/rt2009winners%20article.pdf> for the full award story

About The Virgin Holidays Responsible Tourism Awards

The Awards are the most prestigious and competitive of their kind in the world and are a collaboration between online travel directory [responsibletravel.com](#); UK media partners Telegraph Travel and Geographical Magazine and World Travel Market who host the ceremony. The central tenet of the Awards is that all types of tourism - from niche to mainstream - can and should be operated in a way that respects and benefits destinations and local people.

About [responsibletravel.com](#):

[responsibletravel.com](#) is the world’s leading travel agent for responsible holidays. The site offers over 3,500 richer, deeper and more locally distinctive travel experiences that are better for destinations and local communities.

Whether you’re after an action-packed adventure, a relaxing beach escape or a charming countryside getaway closer to home, there’s something to suit all tastes and budgets.

Co-founder, Justin Francis had the original idea for the website after meeting Jackson, a village headman in Zambia. He subsequently launched the site with backing from Dame Anita Roddick in 2001. Based in Brighton, England the company also campaigns for positive change in the travel and tourism industry.

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