

NatGeo chooses Jackson Hole as destination finalist

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Jackson Hole is being held up as one of the world's top travel destinations.

The valley has been named as one of three finalists for the Destination Leadership award in the third annual National Geographic World Legacy Awards. A winner will be announced March 8 in Germany at the prestigious travel trade show ITB Berlin.

"We, Jackson Hole, have received other recognition like this," said Timothy O'Donoghue, executive director of the Riverwind Foundation. "But this by far is the most significant."

Each year the World Legacy Awards honor the companies, organizations and destinations that drive the positive transformation of the tourism industry, showcasing leaders and visionaries in sustainable tourism.

This year 45 countries and six continents are represented. Jackson Hole was one of 100 entries in the Destination Leadership category. The Jackson Hole Chamber of Commerce and Riverwind Foundation submitted a nomination on behalf of the valley after members of the National Geographic team staying in Jackson this summer heard of the town and county's sustainability efforts and specifically suggested they apply.

It's heady stuff, O'Donoghue said, both because of NatGeo's status and because of the opportunity it presents.

"Jackson Hole's selection ... is not just recognition by one of the world's most prominent organizations and advocates for sustainable tourism," O'Donoghue said. "It is an opportunity to catalyze our sustainability efforts to the next level of community education, engagement and unification."

The World Legacy Awards offer international visibility and promotion. Winners and finalists will receive coverage in National Geographic Traveler and other National Geographic publications.

"As a finalist in the Destination Leadership category," the chamber's Director of Projects and Operation, Casey Stout, said in a release, "Jackson Hole stands apart from our competition, helping our businesses achieve an advantage and reaffirming that hard work is worth the effort."

The other two finalists are the Segera Retreat in Kenya and the Slovenian Tourist Board in Slovenia.