2025-2026 SATW Foundation Lowell Thomas Travel Journalism Competition Winners
Judging was overseen by the University of Missouri School of Journalism with Jennifer Rowe, Professional Practice Professor and Carol J. Loomis Faculty Fellow; Professor Heather Isherwood, and newsroom coordinator, Ellie Newberry-Wortham, coordinating 26 judges this year. There were 1,568 entries. The Winners Gallery, showing the results, judges' comments and links to winning entries, is online at the Foundation website, www.satwf.com. For questions, contact: Victoria Larson, SATW Foundation administrator, at victoria@satwfoundation.org

101 Grand Award - Lowell Thomas Travel Journalist of the Year

Gold:	Jen Rose Smith, Richmond, Vermont
Silver:	Jeff Chu, Grand Rapids, Michigan
Bronze:	Lisa Abend, Frederiksberg, Denmark
Honorable Mention:	Natalie Preddie, Toronto, Canada

102 - Travel Magazines

Gold:	Travel + Leisure, Jacqueline Gifford, Editor-in-Chief
Silver:	Condé Nast Traveler, Divia Thani, Global Editorial Director; Erin Florio, Global Features Director
Bronze:	AFAR, Julia Cosgrove, Editor-in-Chief
Honorable Mention:	National Park Trips, Mikeala Ruland, Editor-in-Chief; Hernan Sosa, Art Director

Category 103: Travel Coverage in General Magazines

Gold:	National Parks Magazine, Rona Marech, Editor-in-Chief; Nicolas Brulliard, Senior Editor; Nicole Yin, Art & Photo Director; Katherine DeGroff, Associate Editor
Silver:	Outside, Kevin Sintumuang, Editor-in-Chief; Kathleen Rellihan, Senior Travel & Culture Editor
Bronze:	Midwest Living, Kylee Krizmanic, Editor-in-Chief; Hannah Agran, Executive Editor; Julia Sayers Gokhale, Senior Travel Editor
Honorable Mention:	Garden & Gun, David DiBenedetto, Editor-in-Chief; CJ Lotz Diego, Senior Editor

104 Editorial Travel Website,

Gold:	BBC Travel, Eliot Stein**,** Deputy Editor; Ellie Cobb, Senior Editor
Silver:	Azure Road, Lauren Mowery, Founder and CEO
Bronze:	Go World Travel Magazine, Janna Graber, Managing Editor

105 Newspaper Travel Coverage

Gold:	The Wall Street Journal, Sebastian Modak, Lifestyle Editor; Bowdeya Tweh, Chicago Bureau Chief
Silver:	The Plain Dealer, Susan Glaser, Travel Editor
Bronze:	The New York Times, Amy Virshup, Travel Editor
Honorable Mention:	The Boston Globe, Chris Morris, Deputy Living & Arts Editor

106 Robert Haru Fisher Award for Travel Health/Safety Coverage

Gold: Randy Johnson, 'The Backcountry Beckons,' WNC Magazine
Silver: Samantha Leal, 'What to Do If Approached by ICE at the Airport, Border, Workplace, or Home,' Condé Nast Traveler
Bronze: Wendy Helfenbaum, 'Scents and Sensibility,' NextAvenue.org
Honorable Mention: Ruffin Prevost, '7 Things Travelers Should Never Do When They Encounter Wildlife,' AFAR

Category 107: U.S./Canada Travel

Gold: Peter Fish, 'Highway 89 Revisited,' Alta Journal
Silver: Eliot Stein, 'The Stunning Canadian Island You Can See But Not Touch,' BBC Travel
Bronze: Sarah Khan,'Boston Uncommon,' Condé Nast Traveler
Honorable Mention: Hannah Elliott, 'To Understand the U.S. in 2026, Travel to Texas,' Bloomberg Pursuits

Category 108: Foreign Travel

Gold: Chris Colin, 'Botswana by Bike and by Plane, by Boat, by Car, by Foot,' AFAR
Silver: Justin Goldman, 'Emilia-Romagna: Slow Food, Fast Cars,' Via Magazine
Bronze: Ryan Knighton, 'Senses of Place,' AFAR
Honorable Mention: Stephen Casimiro, 'The Social Backpacking Network,' Adventure Journal

Category 109: Cruise Travel

Gold: Robin Esrock and Jeff Topham,'Wining, Dining and Drifting: A Culinary Canal Cruise Through France's Upper Loire,' Canadian Geographic
Silver: Brandon Withrow, 'Visiting the Galapagos Means More When You Were Raised on Creationism,' Insidehook.com
Bronze: Blane Bachelor, 'What It's Like Sailing Norway With a Cruise Line That Guarantees You'll See the Northern Lights,' AFAR
Honorable Mention: Zachary Laks, 'How One Gay Couple Found Lasting Love While Cruising the World,' Out Magazine

Category 110: Adventure Travel

Gold: Cassidy Randall, 'The Longest Journey,' The Atavist Magazine
Silver: Benjamin Polley, 'They Were Lost in the Wild and On the Verge of Death. This Is How They Survived,' The Guardian US
Bronze: Stephen Eginoire,'Buried Treasure: A Vast Network of Recently Discovered and Newly Explored Caves Is Pushing the Frontiers of the Grand Canyon—and Science,' Adventure Journal
Honorable Mention: Maya Silver 'Can Tandem BASE Jumping Be a Powerful Form of Therapy?,' Outside

Category 111: Travel News/Investigative Reporting

Gold: Stephanie Pearson, 'America's Most Endangered Public Lands 2026,' RE:PUBLIC Lands Media

Silver: Ceylan Yeğinsu, 'For Victims of Sexual Assault on Cruise Ships, Justice Can Be Elusive,' The New York Times

Bronze: Lola Méndez, 'The Effort to Create the First-Ever National List of Endangered Latinx Landmarks,' Fodor's Travel

Honorable Mention: William J. McGee, 'America's Air Traffic Control Needs Fixing—Here's What to Do (and Not to Do),' Frommer Media

112 Service-Oriented Consumer Work

Gold: Taryn Shorr-McKee, 'A Month-By-Month Guide to Trip Planning,' Lonely Planet

Silver: Zac Thompson,'What Is the Best Travel Pillow for a Long Flight? Our Tests Revealed a Clear Winner,' Frommer Media

Bronze: Wing Sze Tang, 'How to Travel Like It's Your Job,' Where in the World?

Honorable Mention: Stacy Tillilie, '11 Ride-Hailing Safety Tips Every Passenger Should Know,' AAA Club Alliance's The Extra Mile Digital

Category 113: Environmental and Sustainable Tourism

Gold: Lindsey Liles, 'Saving the Venus Flytrap: How One Woman Rallied a Town Around Its Weirdest Attraction,' Garden & Gun

Silver: Anna Fiorentino, 'The Race Is On to Save the Alps' Famous Huts and Trails as Melting Permafrost Threatens to Destroy Them,' Smithsonian Magazine

Bronze: Anna Fiorentino, 'This Sacred Site Is One of the World's Oldest Nature Reserves,' National Geographic

Honorable Mention: Frances Mayes,'Voices of the Okenfenokee,' Garden & Gun

Category 114: Cultural Tourism

Gold: Naomi Tomky, 'In Search of Greece's Once-Great Jewish City,' BBC Travel

Silver: Caleb Gayle, 'On the Trail of the Exodusters,' WildSam

Bronze: Tracey Teo, 'The Thrill Is Not Gone: A Mississippi Road Trip Celebrates B.B. King's 100th Birthday and His Influence on the Blues,' AAA Explorer, Auto Club of Southern California

Honorable Mention: Natalie Preddie, 'The Truth About Being Black in the Outdoors,' Explore Magazine

Category 115: Culinary-Related Travel

Gold: Christine Muhlke, 'Over the Hills and Far Away,' Travel + Leisure

Silver: Tom Downey, 'Passion Fruit,' Smithsonian Magazine

Bronze: Mark Orwoll, 'The Real Story on Dominica Is Bush Rum. Lots of Bush Rum. For, um, Medicinal Purposes…,' Highbrow Magazine

Honorable Mention: Mark Ellwood, 'The Breakfast Test: Why the Morning Meal Is the

Most Revealing Way to Judge a Luxury Hotel,' AFAR

Category 116: Special-Purpose Travel

Gold: Masha Hamilton, 'I've Gone to Look for America,' The Atavist Magazine

Silver: Kim Cross, 'Out of the Wild / I Tracked a Wild Salmon from Sea to Plate - What I Learned Surprised Me,' Food & Wine

Bronze: Peter Ross, 'Into the Great Beyond,' Smithsonian Magazine

Honorable Mention: Kathryn Romeyn, 'My Dad Can't Travel Like He Used to, but Slowing Down Doesn't Mean Stopping,' Condé Nast Traveler

Category 117: Coverage of Diverse Communities

Gold: Sean Carlson, 'Painting the Last Photograph,' New England Review

Silver: Thomas Page McBee, 'Modern Gothic,' Travel + Leisure

Bronze: David Farley, 'Eating in Minneapolis Has Never Been Better, or More Vital,' Condé Nast Traveler

Honorable Mention: Maya Silver, 'Extreme Equalizers: These Moab Guides Are Making Adventure Accessible to People with Disabilities,' Outside

Category 118: Personal Comment

Gold: Jessica Lockhart, 'Grief on the Nile,' Lonely Planet

Silver: Samaa Emad, 'To Cook in Gaza,' Roads & Kingdoms

Bronze: Matt Goulding, Michael Magers, 'Dear Tony,' Roads & Kingdoms

Honorable Mention: Tim Neville, 'Keep Greenland Wild,' Outside

Category 119: Multimedia Single Work

Gold: Lale Arikoglu, Megan Spurrell, 'The Women Who Travel Power List 2026,' Condé Nast Traveler

Silver: Yutao Chen, Gabe Hiatt, Lauren Bulbin, Christine Ashack, Allie Caren, 'A Dinosaur Road Trip Through the American West,' The Washington Post

Bronze: Kevin Wagar, 'Cruising the Galapagos Islands With Kids: A Multi-Generational Family Adventure,' Wandering Wagars - Adventure Family Travel

Honorable Mention: Megan McCrea, '100 Years of the Motel,' The New York Times

Category 120: Special Packages/Series

Gold: Gabe Hiatt, Greg Schimmel, Lauren Bulbin, 'The 10 Best College Football Towns in America,' The Washington Post

Silver: Kwin Mosby, Hannah Cheney, Allison Hess, Emily Martin, Hannah Tak, 'Best of the World 2026,' National Geographic Traveler

Bronze: Hannah Sampson, Andrew Van Dam, Edward Russell, Gabe Hiatt, 'The 50 Best Airports in America, Ranked,' The Washington Post

Honorable Mention: The Staff of The New York Times and contributing writers, 'Travel Secrets,' The New York Times

Category 121: Still Photography on Travel

Gold: Erin Trieb, 'The Teahouses at the Top of the World,' Smithsonian Magazine

Silver: Lanna Apisukh, 'First Comes Retirement. Then Comes the Permanent Vacation,' The Washington Post

Bronze: Kari Medig, 'Skis, Schnapps and Lederhosen,' Range by Ensemble

Honorable Mention: Maya Visnyei, 'Lanzarote's Force of Nature,' Range by Ensemble

Category 122: Travel Book (other than guidebook)

Gold: Stephanie Elizondo Griest, 'Art Above Everything: One Woman's Global Exploration of the Joys and Torments of a Creative Life,' Beacon Press

Silver: Everett Potter, Allyson Johnson, '100 Train Journeys of a Lifetime,' National Geographic Books

Bronze: Mike Bezemek, 'Mysteries of the National Parks,' Sourcebooks

Honorable Mention: Freda Moon, Ashley Harrell, '100 Beaches of a Lifetime,' National Geographic Books

Category 123: Guidebook

Gold: Dawn Barclay, 'Vacations Can Be Murder: A True Crime Lover's Travel Guide to the Mid-Atlantic States,' Level Best Books

Silver: Jason Frye, 'Moon USA National Parks Hiking,' Avalon Travel

Bronze: Jane Wooldridge, 'Comfort in the Wild: 100+ Idyllic Nature Destinations, No Roughing It Required,' Frommer Media

Honorable Mention: Tessa Bergen, 'Sober Travel Handbook,' Microcosm Publishing

Category 124a: Travel Audio-Radio

Gold: Rick Steves, Tim Tattan, Donna Bardsley, Kasmira Hall, Travel with Rick Steves Radio Show and Podcast Episode: 'Twenty Years; The Vanishing Point; Martin Sheen's Travels,' Rick Steves Europe

Silver: Annita Thomas, 'Destination: Switzerland - A Closer Look,' Travel with Annita

Bronze: Robert J. Carey Jr, Mary W. Carey, Rudy Maxa, Valerie B. Selig, Bob F. Bucci, RMWorldTravel - America's #1 Travel Radio Show | 'Let's Go America! Tour – Maui 2025' | RMWorldTravelConnection

Honorable Mention: Annita Thomas, 'Destination: Sapelo Island Knobbed Whelks,' Travel with Annita

Category 124b: Travel Audio-Podcasts and Guides

Gold: Aislyn Greene, 'The Amazon at Night Is Dolby Sound—What It's Like to Visit Peru as a Blind Traveler,' Unpacked by AFAR

Silver: Whitney Phaneuf, Dan Miller, April Kilcrease, 'Close Encounters with UFO Hot Spots: Area 51, Roswell, and the Great ET Road Trip,' Via Magazine

Bronze: Derrik Lang, John McQueen, Angie Orth, Ginni Saraswati-Cook, 'Celebrating the Grand Ole Opry's 100th Anniversary in Nashville,

Tennessee,' Traveling with AAA, Auto Club of Southern California
Honorable Mention: Todd Christopher, 'Of Hawks and Hellcats,' National Parks Magazine

Category 125a: Travel Video Story More Than 2 Minutes
Gold: William Tang, 'Quebec Maritime Road Trip for Whales, Hikes, and Lighthouses,' Going Awesome Places
Silver: Shivya Nath, 'Slow Travel in Bali,' The Shooting Star
Bronze: Ellie Cobb, 'The Korean Food Ritual That Leads to Happiness,' BBC Travel
Honorable Mention: Bob Krist, 'Jerez: The Story of Sherry,' Bob Krist - Youtube

Category 125b: Travel Video Story 2 Minutes or Less
Gold: Natalie Compton, 'Is the Viral Day Trip Worth It? I Tested It.' The Washington Post
Silver: Deepa Lakshmin, 'Sober Travel Tips,' Lonely Planet
Bronze: Hannah Towey, Bridget Knowles, Fatama Choudhury, 'Experience the Thrill of Plane Spotting with AvGeeks in NYC,' Condé Nast Traveler
Honorable Mention: Cory Lee Woodard, 'Visiting the Vatican in a Wheelchair,' Curb Free with Cory Lee

Category 126: Travel Blog
Gold: Beth Reiber, TravelReiber
Silver: Burcu Basar, Letters from Asia
Bronze: Rosie Bell, RosieBell
Honorable Mention: William Tang, Going Awesome Places

Category 127: Instagram Storytelling
Gold: Shivya Nath, 'Conscious Travel,' @shivya
Silver: Pia Peterson, Ann Douglas Lott, Annemarie McCarthy, James Pham, Deepa Lakshmin, 'Ultimate Trip,' @LonelyPlanet
Bronze: Nneya Richards, 'Island Life Beyond the Postcards - Shaped by History, Culture and Constraint,' @Nneya
Honorable Mention: Lina Stock, 'High Arctic Svalbard,' @divergenttravelers

Category 128: Short Narrative
Gold: Stephanie Pearson, For One Perfect Day, Apostle Islands Ice Caves Re-Opened After 11 Years,' Outside
Silver: Larry Bleiberg, 'This Little Tennessee Town Welcomes a Once-in-a-Century Carousel of Dreams,' Garden & Gun
Bronze: Daliah Singer, 'The Galápagos Islands Overdeliver on Awe,' Global Traveler
Honorable Mention: Jonathan Thompson, 'This Unassuming Neighborhood Coffeeshop Was Just Named the Best in the World,' Travel + Leisure