



# Supporting Sustainable Tourism

## MEDIA ALERT

### Virginia Green Travel Alliance announces Winners of the **2024 Virginia Green Travel Star Awards** At the 11<sup>th</sup> Annual Virginia Green Travel Conference on April 17<sup>th</sup>!

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – April 18, 2024.

RICHMOND, VA. – The Virginia Green Travel Alliance is pleased to announce the winners of the *2024 Virginia Green Travel Star & Leader Awards*. These awards are presented annually to Virginia’s greenest tourism operators and partners for their outstanding commitments to sustainability and contributions to green tourism in Virginia. The awards were presented in conjunction with the [11<sup>th</sup> Annual Virginia Green Travel Conference](#) that was held on April 17, 2024 at Pocahontas State Park in Chesterfield County, Virginia.

This year, nine (9) Virginia tourism operators were chosen to receive the Virginia Green Travel program’s highest award, the *Virginia Green Travel Star Award*. Nine (9) additional tourism businesses were recognized with the *Virginia Green Travel Leader Award* for their continued commitments to environmental stewardship, and two individuals received the *Green Team All-Star Award* for their efforts to lead their organizations’ green programs. Four organizations also received honorable mention recognition for their continued efforts as committed Virginia Green Travel Partners.

One other individual received an award for their *Lifetime Achievement & Support* of the Virginia Green Travel program. Finally, two of these award winners were chosen in a social media contest to receive the 2<sup>nd</sup> annual *Virginia Green Travel People’s Choice Award*. The awards were all presented on April 17<sup>th</sup> during a reception and awards celebration. Please see the list below of all the award winners.

“The Virginia Green Travel Certification program works to support and recognize tourism businesses and organizations that are committed to reducing the environmental impacts of their operations,” says Tom Griffin, the Executive Director of the Virginia Green Travel Alliance. “Through the *Travel Star Awards*, we get to recognize the ‘greenest’ businesses and individuals that have demonstrated outstanding effort and achievements in the past year. We are proud to recognize these businesses as they are true partners in our efforts to promote sustainable tourism in Virginia!”

The Virginia Green Travel program is run through a partnership between the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality, the Virginia Tourism Corporation, Virginia State Parks, the Virginia Restaurant, Lodging & Travel Association, and the Virginia Green Travel Alliance. The program encourages green practices in all sectors of Virginia’s tourism industry. More than 1,200 businesses and partner organizations have voluntarily certified their green commitments through the Virginia Green Travel program.

### **The 2024 Virginia Green Travel Star Award winners are:**

- Green Attraction of the Year                      Nauticus, Norfolk
- Green Brewery of the Year                         Old Bust Head Brewery, Warrenton
- Green Restaurant of the Year                     Rocklands Barbeque & Grilling Company, Arlington
- Green Event of the Year                            *Jam Packed Craft Beer & Music Festival / Keep Virginia Beautiful, Richmond*
  
- Green Park of the Year                             Natural Bridge State Park
- Most Innovative Green Projects                 Virginia Aquarium & Marine Science Center - *Plastic Recycling*
- Most Innovative Green Projects                 John Paul Jones Arena - *Zero Waste Events*
- Most Innovative Green Projects                 Virginia Living Museum - *Environmentally Friendly Enrichment*
- Most Innovative Green Projects                 Bear Creek Lake State Park - *Replacing Gasoline-Powered Equipment*

### **The 2024 Virginia Green Travel Leader Award winners are:**

- Virginia Aquarium & Marine Science Center, Virginia Beach
- Birdsong Pleasure Garden, Luray
- Busch Gardens Williamsburg & Water Country USA, Williamsburg
- Greater Richmond Convention Center, Richmond
- JMU Dining, Harrisonburg
- Oak Grove B&B, South Boston
- COVA Brewing Company, Norfolk
- Elation Brewing, Norfolk
- Fairfield Kingsgate Property Owners Association, Williamsburg

### **The 2024 Honorable Mention Award winners are:**

- Shored Up, Hampton
- The Nature Bus, Virginia Beach
- Back INN Time B&B, Kilmarnock
- Shadow Mountain Escape, Luray

### **The 2024 Green Team All-Star Award winners are:**

- Bruce Vlk, Virginia Clean Cities
- Jessie Carter, Natural Bridge State Park

### **Life-Time Achievement & Support:**

- Industry Game Changer Award: Jack Berry, Richmond Region Tourism

### **2<sup>nd</sup> Annual People's Choice Award (tie for 1<sup>st</sup>):**

- Old Bust Head Brewery, Warrenton
- Natural Bridge State Park

### **Links & Resources**

- More about the conference can be found at <https://www.viriniagreen.net/resources/the-11th-annual-virginia-green-travel-conference-is-april-17-2024/>.
- The Virginia Tourism Corporation promotes the certified Virginia Green program partners at [www.virginia.org/green-travel](http://www.virginia.org/green-travel) and encourages visitors to plan their green vacations in Virginia.
- The Virginia Department of Environmental Quality provides technical resources and oversight of the certification process -- <https://www.deq.virginia.gov/our-programs/pollution-prevention/virginia-green>
- The Virginia Green Travel Alliance is the non-profit organization that administers the Virginia Green certification program and supports partner outreach and educational opportunities – [www.VirginiaGreen.net](http://www.VirginiaGreen.net).
- All 43 [Virginia State Parks](#) are certified in the Virginia Green Travel program, and VSP and Virginia Green Travel are working to “co-brand” and promote sustainable tourism opportunities in all regions of the Commonwealth.
- [Virginia Restaurant, Lodging & Travel Association](#) assists in promotion and development of educational opportunities for the tourism industry.

- The [Virginia Green Travel Alliance](#) is the 501c3 non-profit organization created to administer the Virginia Green Travel Certification program and promote certified partner businesses.
- [11th Annual Virginia Green Travel Conference & Travel Star Awards](#).