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People Who Inspire: The Human Heart of Hospitality

From Zambia to Ireland, the Maldives to China, Anantara celebrates the individuals who preserve local heritage and turn sightseeing into meaningful encounters.



▲ People Who Inspire - World Tourism Day (Pictured from top left corner, clockwise): Derek Brennan (Anantara The Marker Dublin Hotel), Smithy (Anantara Koh Yao Yai Resort & Villas), Edward Minyoyi (The Royal Livingstone Victoria Falls Zambia Hotel by Anantara), Yan Penghan (Anantara Xishuanbanna), Sambe and Rilwan (Anantara Veli and Anantara Dhigu Maldives Resorts)

As World Tourism Day 2026 explores how artificial intelligence will transform the way destinations are managed and experienced, [Anantara Hotels & Resorts](#) marks 25 years of championing the human side of travel. Innovation may help protect the essence of hospitality, but it is the stories, rituals and connections that ensure the Anantara experience remains proudly human.

At The Royal Livingstone Victoria Falls Zambia Hotel by Anantara, storyteller **Edward Minyoyi** introduces awe-struck travellers to the majesty of Victoria Falls. Under his guidance, guests experience the thundering Mosi-oa-Tunya not simply as a sight to behold, but as a being with a soul, a history and a voice. A member of the Lozi tribe, Edward appears in ceremonial Siziba attire, a symbol of identity and belonging, and shares his own story alongside the legends of the river god Nyami Nyami, drawing even seasoned travellers in through the power of his storytelling.

Derek Anthony Brennan, guest experience and guardianship manager at Anantara The Marker Dublin Hotel, embodies Ireland's gift for storytelling, using it to protect the cultural DNA of his native land. Since 2013, Derek has evolved his role to leading a renowned Docklands Storytelling Tour that leans into Ireland's oral tradition to peel back the layers of Dublin's financial and tech hub. Drawing from a "quiver of tales" chosen to match what each guest is seeking, he ends every tour with a ritual pint of Guinness, turning strangers into friends.

On the twin Indian Ocean islands of Anantara Dhigu Maldives Resort and Anantara Veli Maldives Resort, father-and-son duo **Sambe and Rilwan** serve as cultural insiders dedicated to preserving Maldivian heritage. Sambe, who began his hospitality journey as a gardener 18 years ago, has mentored his son in the arts of Boduberu drumming and palm weaving, viewing these traditions as essential for guests to truly understand Maldivian culture. Together, they embody the *sagaafee*, those who carry their culture with pride, inviting guests into a meaningful exchange.

In Thailand, Anantara Koh Yao Yai Resort & Villas has its own insider in **Smithy**, who introduces travellers to one of the country's last unspoiled frontiers, the bucolic island of Yao Yai. Having spent years volunteering in local communities, he has an inside track to experiences grounded in sustainability and deep respect for the environment, revealing beauty in the everyday life of village coffee shops, rubber plantations and fishing villages.

In China's southern reaches, **Yan Penghan** looks after both guest safety and their cultural needs, leading the sunset ceremony at Anantara Xishuangbanna Resort. A former Theravada Buddhist abbot, he draws on his monastic training to translate the soul of Dai culture for global travellers, showing that safeguarding guests and safeguarding tradition are expressions of the same calling.

Each evening, as lanterns drift across the river carrying deeply held wishes, he offers a moment of connection between his land and those who have come to experience it.

Read their profiles below:



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Explore the 'People Who Inspire' series:

Anantara Marks International Astronomy Day by Spotlighting the Guardians of the Maldivian Night – Shalli and Saji (Anantara Kihavah Maldives Villas)

Tasting Sri Lanka with Anantara's Tea Expert – Jeeva (Anantara Peace Haven Tangalle Resort)

A Garden of Spirits: Ryan Dela Vega's Craft at AQUA Bar – Ryan Dela Vega (Anantara Siam Bangkok Hotel)

From City Streets to Jungle Paths: Dr Nissa's Life Among the Giants – Dr Nissa Mututanont (Anantara Golden Triangle Elephant Camp & Resort)

Inside Anantara's Human Approach to Wellness – Made Warnata (Anantara Ubud Bali Resort) and Kornpathu 'Earn't' Lipikorn (Layan Life at Anantara Layan Phuket Resort)

Oriana Migliaccio and the Blue Heart of the Maldives – Oriana Migliaccio (Anantara Anantara Dhigu Maldives Resort, Anantara Veli Maldives Resort and Naladhu Private Island Maldives)

Jason and the Golden Chalice: Pouring New Meaning into Indigenous Luxury – Jason Wang (Anantara Guiyang Resort)

Anantara Celebrates World Heritage Day by Honouring the Cultural Custodians

Protecting the World's Storied Landmarks – Likong Huy 'Yuki' (Anantara Angkor Resort), Tamás Gebei (Anantara New York Palace Budapest Hotel) and Fra Marcus (Ananyara Convento di Amalfi Grand Hotel)

Anantara Launches 'People Who Inspire' to Mark 25 Years of Meaningful Journeys – Yingsuphat 'Alex' Wrapho (Anantara Hua Hin Resort)

About Anantara Hotels & Resorts

A luxury hospitality brand for modern travellers, Anantara Hotels & Resorts connects guests to genuine places, people and stories in some of the world's most extraordinary destinations. Each Anantara embraces the surroundings and culture of its destination, creating unforgettable memories for every guest since 2001. From city to sea and desert to jungle, Anantara delivers heartfelt, Thai-inspired hospitality at its over 50 hotels and resorts across Asia, Europe, Africa, the Middle East and the Indian Ocean.

Anantara Hotels & Resorts is a Minor Hotels brand and recognises its guests through one unified loyalty programme, Minor DISCOVERY, part of GHA DISCOVERY.

Visit anantara.com for more information, and connect with Anantara on Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, X and YouTube.

About Minor Hotels

Minor Hotels is a global leader in the hospitality industry with more than 640 hotels, resorts and branded residences in operation and committed development across 67 countries. The group crafts innovative and insightful experiences through its hotel brands including Anantara, Elewana Collection, The Wolseley Hotels, Tivoli, Minor Reserve Collection, NH Collection, nhow, Avani, Colbert Collection, NH, Oaks, and iStay, as well as a diverse portfolio of restaurants and bars, travel experiences, and spa and wellness brands. With over four decades of expertise, Minor Hotels builds stronger brands, fosters lasting partnerships, and drives business success by always focusing on what matters most to our guests, team members and partners.

Minor Hotels is a proud member of the Global Hotel Alliance (GHA) and recognises its guests through one unified loyalty programme, Minor DISCOVERY, part of GHA DISCOVERY.

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