

## These Visionaries Are Helping to Protect the Planet for Tomorrow's Travelers

Excerpted from an [article](#) by Jennifer Flowers

Since 2016, we at AFAR have been honoring the visionaries in travel who are making the world a better place with our Vanguard awards, which are celebrated with the recipients each year in New York City. What's more, we recently attended the biennial Rolex Awards for Enterprise in Washington, D.C., in June. Since 1976, the luxury watch company has been honoring individuals who pioneer the advancement of knowledge, work toward improvement in the well-being of humanity, and strive for protection of the Earth's natural heritage.

### India: The Tiger Champion

The awards, which grant funding to recipients for their projects, were created in honor of the late Rolex founder Hans Wilsdorf, who was well known for his philanthropy. This past year, there were 957 applicants from 111 countries (and close to 40 percent of those applicants were women), with Rolex allowing the public to vote for the first time. Among this year's laureates, there are three whose work in the environment is literally helping to save the iconic places that we want to visit. Read on to learn about the amazing work these three people are doing, and then book a trip to experience the very destinations they're trying to protect and save.



Courtesy of Rolex

Krithi Karanth, a conservationist working on solutions to human-wildlife conflict in India.

One of the biggest issues facing our planet of 8 billion (and rapidly growing) people in the next century? Space. And the world's dwindling wildlife population is among the biggest casualties. Conservationist [Krithi Karanth](#) is determined to find solutions to human-wildlife conflict in her native India, home to 70 percent of the world's tigers and half of the world's Asian elephants.

“The challenge is, when you have these big animals that want to move across and live in very large spaces and we squeeze them into just the parks—and high densities of people live on the edges—people are going to always see animals come out,” says the Rolex Awards Laureate. “It’s a question of whether [people] are going to retaliate or tolerate the losses they have.”

Those losses can include crops, livestock—and in the worst-case scenarios—human lives. In 2015, she launched a program called Wild Seve, a conflict-responses system for such incidents that serves 600 villages near Bandipur and Nagarahole national parks, in the state of Karnataka. A half million villagers currently have access to a toll-free number that links them to Karanth’s response team, who arrive to help them file compensation claims with the government. So far, 14,000 claims have been filed, amounting to \$200,000 in compensations. With her funding from Rolex, Karanth plans to expand the program to three more parks and 1,000 more villages and also test other preventative measures such as predator-proof sheds and fences. She also plans to launch Wild Shaale, a conservation education program for children in 300 schools on the edges of national parks in Karnataka.

**Trip to take:** While Karanth does her work in southern India, and the [“Soul of India” itinerary from Nairobi-based luxury outfitter Micato Safaris](#) takes travelers to the north in Rajasthan, it still gives participants a taste for the areas where she’s doing her visionary work. In addition to stops at iconic places in the region such as the Taj Mahal and Varanasi, travelers go to Ranthambore National Park for close encounters with the Royal Bengal tiger.