

# RESPONSIBLE TRAVEL HANDBOOK // 2006

"Whether you are traveling on your own or arranging travels for others—the Earth is your homeland. Give it the care and respect it deserves; learn about its environment and geography; spend time getting to know its people and their art, culture, history, and livelihoods. While you derive pleasure, knowledge, and understanding from your encounters, hold close the importance of preserving these treasures for those who may follow in your footsteps."



photos Jim Kane, Culture Xplorers



Special thanks to Jim Kane, president and founder of Culture Xplorers ([www.cultureexplorers.com](http://www.cultureexplorers.com)), for allowing the use of his photographs for the Responsible Travel Handbook CD, cover, and table of contents.

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# FIRST STEPS

making a positive difference

"The golden rule is more and more recognized as the first rule of travel."

—Clay Hubbs, Founder of Transitions Abroad Magazine

"I take very seriously the sense of our living these days in a global neighborhood. And the first sensible thing to do in such circumstances, as well as one of the most rewarding things, is to go and meet the neighbors, find out who they are, and what they think and feel. So travel for me is an act of discovery and of responsibility as well as a grand adventure and a constant liberation."

—Pico Iyer, Renowned Travel Writer

The Responsible Travel Handbook will help guide you along the long and winding trail that is responsible travel. This is no solitary journey, and if you wish to be a responsible traveler or a responsible travel provider, there are plenty of allies.

The instruction and guidance we present is intended to support your personal or organizational effort in researching, selecting, and ultimately participating in or creating a travel experience that most resonates with you and your understanding of traveling responsibly.

Traveling more responsibly is as much about the small, and often very simple, practical steps you can take—from choosing local guides and staying in locally-owned accommodations to respecting local mores—as it is about one's mindset to become a more conscious and conscientious traveler. As one responsible traveler wrote in response to our survey question on what it means to be a responsible traveler: "First, do no harm" (Hippocratic Oath).

Let the contents of this handbook spark your enthusiasm for posi-

tively contributing to the wellbeing of others as you discover the world around you. Whether you are traveling on your own or arranging travels for others—the Earth is your homeland. Give it the care and respect it deserves; learn about its environment and geography; spend time getting to know its people and their art, culture, history, and livelihoods. While you derive pleasure, knowledge, and understanding from your encounters, hold close the importance of preserving these treasures for those who may follow in your footsteps.

To what degree this volume will enhance responsible travel will only be evident through how you determine to travel following your perusal of its contents. The more inspired you are to integrate the suggested wisdom presented in these pages into your own travel experience, the more valuable will be the role of this handbook. The attitude with which you read it and aim to apply its contents will ultimately be revealed when an inventory of your journeys or those you provide for others is tallied. Let the passion with which you read it become the purpose of your travel. ●

## RESPONSIBLE TRAVEL HANDBOOK 2006

The Responsible Travel Handbook was prepared for the first-annual Responsible Travel Forum in partnership with The Educational Travel Conference. The Responsible Travel Forum was made possible by The Educational Travel Community, Travel Learning Connections, Inc., P.O. Box 159, Ronan, MT 59864-0159, 406-745-4800, [www.Travelearning.com](http://www.Travelearning.com). We extend special thanks to Mara DelliPriscoli of the Educational Travel Conference.

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**THE EDUCATIONAL TRAVEL CONFERENCE** is the only forum of its kind dedicated to the education, training, and networking priorities of professionals in the business of experiential learning through travel. Established in 1987, the Conference was initiated by the Conference Organizer, Mara DelliPriscoli and Travel Learning Connections, Inc., as a pioneering effort to provide highly customized educational programming, professional development and affinity-based networking forums for seasoned travel planners, as well as jumpstart training for newcomers to the field of nonprofit/educational travel. The Conference hosts over 450 delegates absorbed in 3 days of inspired sessions, first-rate social venues and educational rich “experiences” on site. The Conference is purposely kept intimate to ensure high quality networking and small group educational experiences with like-minded individuals and/or like organizations. Designed and operated from its inception as an educational resource, the Educational Travel Conference remains committed to its core objectives: Delivering “content rich” conferences and cutting edge agendas; Promoting planner-supplier partnerships through high quality networking; Building community through affinity connections; Raising the bar of industry professionalism through training; Advancing and transforming mission driven programming and responsible tourism agendas.

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**INDIGENOUS TOURISM RIGHTS INTERNATIONAL (TOURISM RIGHTS)**, is an Indigenous Peoples’ organization dedicated to collaborating with communities and networks to help protect native territories, rights and cultures. Our mission is to facilitate the exchange of local experiences in order to understand, challenge, and take control of the ways tourism affects our lives.

**Contact:** *Tourism Rights, 366 North Prior Ave., #205, Saint Paul, MN 55104, 651-644-9984; info@tourismrights.org, www.tourismrights.org.*

**PLANETA.COM** is a practical guide for everyone with a serious interest in conscientious travel and eco travel. Developed in 1994 by Ron Mader as a reporter’s notebook (a forerunner of today’s blog), Planeta pioneered online environmental and tourism reporting. Our award-winning site continues to mature as a lively public dialogue about practical ecotourism around the globe. Planeta.com is updated on a regular basis. The site provides free access to more than 10,000 pages of articles and resource guides for students, travelers and policy-makers. Planeta.com also hosts the Latin America Media Project (LAMP) to spotlight reporters working in the field and websites about this region.

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**TRANSITIONS ABROAD** was created as the antidote to tourism, a magazine with the specific goal of providing information that would enable travelers to actually meet the people of other countries, to learn about their culture, to speak their language, and to “transition” to a new level of understanding and appreciation for our fascinating world. The title was also meant to suggest the changes in our perspective—philosophically, psychologically, aesthetically, ethically, politically, etc.—that result from such immersion. Transitions Abroad was founded by Clay Hubbs, editor and publisher of the magazine and former professor and study abroad adviser at Hampshire College, Amherst, Massachusetts. Founded in 1977, Transitions Abroad remains the only publication and comprehensive web portal dedicated to work, study, living, and immersion travel abroad. Its purpose is the dissemination of practical information leading to a greater understanding of other cultures through direct participation in the daily life of the host community.

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**VOLUNTOURISM.ORG** is the source of information regarding the integration of voluntary service activities within the context of travel itineraries. Established primarily to support travel and tourism industry professionals as well as nonprofit and development organization executives, VolunTourism.org provides in-depth articles and research studies on VolunTourism through a monthly publication—“The VolunTourist.” In addition, the website covers the annual VolunTourism Forum through pre-event updates and post-forum analysis. VolunTourism.org emphasizes the potential of tourism to become a balanced socio-economic engine, intimating that the traditional economic impact of tourism can be modified by also delivering social benefits to people and destinations throughout the world.

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travel led to Frances' decision to leave mainstream tourism and to focus specifically on sustainability. Frances' long-term goals are to write a book profiling leading sustainable travel companies, destinations, attractions and associations, and to found the consumer magazine *Green Travel* with the goal of raising awareness of the importance of responsible travel. She is currently seeking investors for this project and can be reached at [ffigart@sbcglobal.net](mailto:ffigart@sbcglobal.net) or 317-423-0369.

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He has been a collaborator on dozens of business strategy, management, and biotech articles, as well as several business books. He has also worked as a proposal writer, hotel reviewer, English teacher, and ski instructor, plus more positions than he'd like to count in corporate cubicle land. For more information on Tim's book, as well as copies of his travel articles, see [www.WorldsCheapestDestinations.com](http://www.WorldsCheapestDestinations.com).

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**LOS NIÑOS** is a community development organization that aims to improve quality of life by creating opportunities for children and their families to realize their human potential through participation in the development of their communities. Los Niños believes that sustainable communities with healthy children are the foundation of a strong civil society. It provides opportunities to nurture human potential through self-reliant activities that promote community development, food security, social justice, and human dignity. Contact: Los Niños, 287 G Street, Chula Vista, CA 91910; (619) 426-9110; [information:info@losninosinternational.org](mailto:information:info@losninosinternational.org), [www.losninosinternational.org](http://www.losninosinternational.org).

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**ROB SANGSTER's** *Traveler's Tool Kit: How to Travel Absolutely Anywhere* (3rd ed., Menasha Ridge Press) is essential reading for those setting out to see the world. It contains more than 500 pages of Rob's road-tested information and advice on every aspect of independent world travel.

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**SUSTAINABLE TRAVEL INTERNATIONAL**, founded in 2002, is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization dedicated to providing education and outreach services that will lessen the toll that travel and tourism takes on the environment and local cultures. It was founded by Peter Krahenbuhl and Brian Mullis, who work closely with the STI Executive Board, the STI Advisory Board, and a team of dedicated volunteers, to devise programs that will catalyze a fundamental transformation in the travel and tourism arena.

For more information, visit [www.sustainabletravelinternational.org](http://www.sustainabletravelinternational.org).

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# RECOGNIZING RESPONSIBLE TRAVEL PROVIDERS

## all ways travel and three camels lodge

The Responsible Tourism Showcase Awards, developed by the Educational Travel Community and featured in conjunction with the annual Educational Travel Conference, recognize responsible tourism providers for their efforts. The stewardship awards attempt to strengthen the honorees' viability by providing them with exposure and introductions to major travel planners at universities, libraries, zoos, and museums.

### **WE CONGRATULATE THE 2006 SHOWCASE HONOREES: ALL WAYS TRAVEL AND THREE CAMEL LODGE.**

The 2006 Showcase Honorees share in common the following ideals:

- They generate greater economic benefits for local people and enhance the well-being of host communities and they improve working conditions and access to the industry;
- involve local people in decisions that affect their lives and life chances;
- make positive contributions to the conservation of natural and cultural heritage, to the maintenance of the world's diversity;
- provide more enjoyable experiences for tourists through more meaningful connections with local people, and a greater understanding of local cultural, social, and environmental issues;
- minimize negative economic, environmental, and social impacts;
- and are culturally sensitive, engender respect between tourists and hosts, and build local pride and confidence.

### All Ways Travel

All Ways Travel is a progressive local tour operator in the area of Lake Titikaka, Peru. It provides direct job opportunities to 23 bilingual tour-guides, 24 community-operated motorboats, 12 local transportation companies (buses-vans), 4 native local ecotourism coordinators/guides, 12 full time employees, 2 part-time training guide from the floating islands of Uros, and the families of different islands that tourists visit. bringing tourists.

All Ways Travel started its operations in 1996 with great start-up challenges such as a crowded market and tough competition with extremely low prices. The choice for a competitive strategy was limited to either cutting off prices or differentiating the company's tourism itineraries. AWT opted for a differentiation strategy and started to introduce innovative elements to the conventional tours and to develop new ecotourism products. Innovative elements such as cultural exchange activities, the involvement of local communities and tourists in the ecotourism initiatives, and an efficient operational capacity soon became an important competitive advantage for AWT in relation to the mass of other conventional local tour operators in the area. Today, All Ways Travel is engaged in different social projects such as building libraries in touristy villages, providing workshops for tourism planning and distributing books with its tourists.

The community of Anapia Island has a permanent population of less than 1000 people. They belong to the ethnic group of Aymaras and their native language is also called Aymara. However, men and

women are also fluent in Spanish. The community has a precarious subsistence economy, depending on farming, fishing, livestock, and some minor trade.

The ecotourism project in Anapia Island started in February of 1997. By this time, the island was not even included on the tourism map of conventional itineraries. The ecotourism development project started with the implementation of open consultation forums with the local community. Local people, travelers, tour guides and the tourism authorities were invited to express their point of views about tourism development in the area. After the consultation period, capacity-building workshops were implemented. The local people were advised and encouraged to create small businesses, such as homestays, eateries, guiding services, and boat rentals. The discussions and forums emphasized the importance of understanding the risks and opportunities of ecotourism development on the island.

The project was implemented only with the investment of time, expertise, limited capital, and the goodwill of the travel agency staff, travelers, tour guides from the city, and the local community members. Thanks to its soundness and demonstrable positive outcomes, the Peruvian Government Board of Tourism has contributed to marketing, though word-of-mouth and recommendations have also been key to positioning All Ways Travel.

The cultural exchange program of the community of Anapia Island is today well-known and renowned as an authentic cultural exchange experience among the international, national, and local tour operators. During these eight years of tourism visits, the community has been able to build its own local conference room and children's library with the help of tourists. This library is slowly being filled with donated books. Young students from England have put together two playgrounds for the children of the island, and other tourists have helped repair and paint the schools, as well as provide English classes.

To date, the community has 20 houses available to host travelers, 11 motor boats that provide transportation, 40 sailboats, 4 natives guides, and a women's association that provides food and prepares traditional picnics for groups of tourists. Tourism leaves a \$20 income per family per tourist visit compared to the \$3 income for the same service on the traditional tourism islands.

Most importantly, the project empowers the local people. They are able and willing to express their voice and impressions about ecotourism development. They can explain their vision of sustainable ecotourism, and they understand that quality of tourism visits may bring much more benefit than quantity of tourism visits. In February of 2002 during the regional preparatory workshop for the World Ecotourism Summit, ▶

the ecotourism project of Anapia Island was observed as a motivating case study of a community-based tourism initiative. Furthermore, the local native coordinator, Mr. Jose Flores, was designated to represent the voice of South American indigenous people in ecotourism issues in the Ecotourism Summit held in Quebec City in May 2002.

In September 2003, All Ways Travel and the community of Anapia won a National Award for Best Participative Community-based Project (award funded by Ford Foundation). Its cultural exchange tourism project called "The Treasure of Winaymarka-Titicaca" was recognized for truly practicing interculturality, establishing open dialogue between locals and foreigners, stimulating equal relationships among people from different cultures, demonstrating the viability of an association between private company + local community to promote social development, and showing great consultation capacity among local actors, committees, community-based organizations, and the general population.

*For more information:* Contact Eliana M. Pauca, All Ways Travel—Titicaca, Peru; 011-0051-51-353979 ; eliana@titicacaperu.com, www.titicacaperu.com.

### Three Camel Lodge

Three Camel Lodge was built in 2002 to serve as a base for tourists to explore Mongolia's Gobi Desert on eco-friendly travel principles. As Mongolia's first eco-lodge, the Lodge aims to become Asia's best model for eco-tourism and eco-lodges.

It uses both solar and wind power and local artisans crafted the roof of the buildings in accordance with Mongolian Buddhist architecture, without using a single nail. Hunting has been prohibited within a 12-mile radius, and the Lodge actively fights against unauthorized removal of dinosaur fossils from paleontological sites. The Lodge funds nature conservation clubs for children in local secondary schools and serves as a training venue for local nature conservation units and park rangers.

The Lodge's foremost commitment is to Mongolia and her people. All of the staff are dedicated to the preservation of Mongolia's natural and cultural wonders and believe that Mongolia can benefit greatly from the development of an ecologically conscientious and sustainable approach to tourism, research and exploration that could reduce the demand and need for industrial development.

The Lodge has made a significant contribution to creating jobs for the population located in the remote area of the Gobi Desert. About 70% of the full-time staff are local residents. The Lodge works with several nomadic families throughout the year who supply the camp with dairy products, meat, home-grown vegetables, and horses and camels. There is a souvenir shop in one of the main buildings that sells arts and crafts and clothes made by local artisans and families.

By promoting sustainable tourism practices, the Lodge helps to provide economic stability for many local communities and individuals, thereby reducing the necessity to relocate to cities.

The Lodge is also a member of "Ongiin River" movement, which was established to protect the Gobi's precious river Ongiin, which now has dried up in most parts due to mines polluting the river.

One of the founding ideas of the Lodge was that it would complement the natural surroundings and that it would contribute to the preservation of the wildlife and flora and fauna. The Lodge has an experimental field where it provides constant irrigation to observe

how much produce the Gobi soil can provide if water is provided constantly. It has a garden where several indigenous plants are being grown. Several rare plants were replanted in the Lodge garden, as well.

All of the Lodge's guides (all local Mongolians) are taught and trained to promote cultural interaction based on mutual respect and understanding of cultural differences. The Lodge strives to maintain a delicate balance, neither accelerating the modernization of ancient cultures, nor suppressing their natural evolution. They also receive training on conservation issues throughout the areas of the Gobi that they are exploring.

Whenever the opportunity presents itself, the Lodge works to bring in leading Mongolian and international educators and non-governmental groups, such as local museums, women's groups, naturalists, and medical researchers.

The lodge is located in the southern most part of Mongolia, in the heart of the Gobi Desert. The magnificent Gobi Gurvan Saikkhan Mountain range is within view while the lodge itself is built on the eastern tip of Bulagtai Mountain, which is home to a number of ancient burial sites belonging to different eras, some as early as 2000 years ago and are important archaeological sites since they are evidence that the Gobi was inhabited by nomads long ago.

Accommodations include gers, traditional nomadic felt tents. Made of a latticed wood structure covered with layers of felt and canvas, each ger is heated by a wood stove and furnished with beautifully painted wood-frame beds. The gers provide an authentic and memorable taste of Mongolian culture. Most travelers spend several nights at the Three Camel Lodge, using it as a base for Gobi-area tours, including trekking, paleontological digs, camel trekking, bird watching, photo safaris, winter tours, and botanical trips.

*For more information:*

Contact Jalsa Urubshurow, Building 76, Suite 28, 1-40 000, Peace Ave., Chingeltei-3, Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia; 011-976-11-313-396; info@threecamellodge.com, www.threecamellodge.com.

### The 2006 Showcase Honorees each received the following:

A complimentary registration at the 2006 Educational Travel Conference, Feb. 21 – 24, 2006 in Baltimore, MD, which includes organizational exhibit space (\$1,190 value) sponsored by Travel Learning Connections, and an opportunity to present the details of their exemplary responsible tourism practices, as well as online recognition at the ETC website.

### Matching funds contributed for the ETC 2006 Fund by February 2006 included:

- Duncan Beardsley, Generosity in Action - \$500
- Bert Devries and Ruth Hemphill, personal funds—\$250 each, totaling \$500
- Heifer International - \$500
- Asia Transpacific Journeys - \$500
- Lindblad Expeditions - \$500
- ETC 2004 Silent Charity Auction total funds collected - \$625
- ETC 2005 Silent Charity Auction total funds collected - \$1925

To donate matching funds to the Responsible Tourism Fund for the future, e-mail conference@travelearning.com. ●

# THE RESPONSIBLE TRAVEL MOVEMENT



photos Jim Kane, Culture Xplorers

**BY DEBORAH MCLAREN** [[www.tourismrights.org](http://www.tourismrights.org)]

Global tourism and travel has changed in the past decade to offer varied new options that help both host-country nationals and visitors alike. A growing group of consumers want their travel to be less invasive and more beneficial to host community locals and environs. At the same time, they want to better understand the culture and realities of the places they visit.

An umbrella term that encompasses this new mindset and mode of travel is "responsible tourism"—a bit of a catch-all concept that includes an array of challenges and alternatives to mass tourism.

Responsible tourism is based on ethics and human rights—from protection of service workers and labor rights for mountain porters to programs against exploitation of women and children in tourism prostitution and campaigns against tourist trade in endangered species. It also means support for community-based travelers' programs—homestays, guest cottages, ethno-museums, and educational programs that bring tourist dollars directly into communities. Agro-tours, like fair trade coffee tours, are a good example. Other forms include voluntourism, anti-poverty tourism, and ecotourism.

Fair trade, perhaps the most commonly heard buzzword associated

with responsible tourism, has been increasingly promoted by activists, farmers, business people, and even rockers like Coldplay's Chris Martin, who became a leading front man for fair trade after participating in an Oxfam trip to meet Haitian farmers. When performing he usually has variations of "Make Trade Fair" or a similar sign written on his hand. According to the group Fair Trade South Africa, "Fair trade in tourism is about ensuring that the people whose land, natural resources, labor, knowledge, and culture are used for tourism activities actually benefit from tourism." In short, it means that tourism has an ethical framework and focuses on fair wages and long-term benefits for locals.

Tourism is not as easy to certify as coffee or textiles because it provides services (not just products) which are more difficult to monitor. There are some fledgling campaigns and projects underway. There are also many tour companies and organizations that link directly with fair-trade businesses and cooperatives and arrange tours to meet with and learn more about these efforts in countries worldwide. ●

## RESPONSIBLE TOURISM

- ▶ generates greater economic benefits for local people and enhances the well-being of host communities, improves working conditions and access to the industry;
- ▶ involves local people in decisions that affect their lives and life chances;
- ▶ makes positive contributions to the conservation of natural and cultural heritage, to the maintenance of the world's diversity;
- ▶ provides more enjoyable experiences for tourists through more meaningful connections with local people, and a greater understanding of local cultural, social and environmental issues;
- ▶ minimizes negative economic, environmental, and social impacts; and
- ▶ is culturally sensitive, engenders respect between tourists and hosts, and builds local pride and confidence.

# DEFINITIONS

## dream of a common language

Responsible tourism calls travelers to a higher standard. "It is simply treating others with the same respect you would ask for in your own community. While tourism officials have long touted 'destinations'—in fact we are simply entering a 'place' that is someone else's home," says Ron Mader of Planeta.com.

This section is intended to help the reader distinguish from the vast collection of terms related to responsible tourism. The terms and definitions in the public domain are not consistent and many overlap. The following categorizations and definitions can be used as a starting point to focus your interests and efforts. They are by no means exhaustive. No matter which appeals to you, they are each a step in the direction of low-impact tourism, which focuses on the effect or result of the travel—the footprint one leaves on a place—and each is a choice toward making a positive difference through international travel.

—Compiled with much assistance from Planeta.com and SustainableTravelInternational.org

### AGROTOURISM

Agrotourism is a subcategory of ecotourism and rural tourism. It encourages visitors to experience and learn about agricultural life for periods of a day, overnight, or longer-term. Visitors may have the opportunity to work in the fields alongside farmers, coffee growers, vineyardists, or fishermen.

### COMMUNITY-BASED TOURISM

Community-based tourism is a wholistic approach to tourism that incorporates the environmental, social, cultural, and economic impacts of tourism. According to Crooked Trails, [www.crookedtrails.com](http://www.crookedtrails.com), community-based travel includes the basic goals of ecotourism but with a few enhancements:

Travel to natural destinations inhabited by indigenous cultures. Community-based travel is all about learning from and directly helping the disappearing indigenous communities around the world through cultural exchange, financial assistance, and education.

Minimize impact. Like ecotourism, community-based travel seeks to minimize the adverse effects of tourism by encouraging and supporting environmentally sensitive practices, not only by travelers but also by local people.

Build awareness. Community-based travel is about the exchange of knowledge and wisdom for both visitors and residents of host communities alike.

Provide financial benefits and empowerment to indigenous people. Like ecotourism, community-based travel seeks to benefit local people by helping them to maintain their right to self-determination by giving them decision-making authority regarding the conduct of tourism in their lands. Respect local culture. Environmental sensitivity doesn't stop with the ecosystem but extends to understanding and respecting cultures in their own context.

### CONSCIENTIOUS TOURISM

Simply put, it's traveling with one's conscience and connecting with others in a particular place. Travel encourages a deeper understanding of people and place and this concept recognizes the fact that travelers engage in various activities in the same day. For example, the adventure traveler may also be a craft buyer and a birder. Being aware of one's social and environmental footprint is a core value of the conscientious traveler.

### ECOTOURISM

The proper definition of ecotourism is ecologically sound tourism. It really is that simple," says John Shores of The Shores System, [www.geocities.com/shores\\_system](http://www.geocities.com/shores_system). "I am amused when novices and even some people who should know better talk about 'good' and 'bad' ecotourism. There can be no 'bad' ecotourism. 'Bad' ecotourism does not exist—it's precluded by the definition. What they are usually deploring is bad tourism that was marketed as ecotourism. The sad fact is really that there is no way to enforce truth in advertising in these cases. Just because a promoter calls something ecotourism doesn't mean that it is." ▶

While the details of the many definitions vary, most boil down to a special form of tourism that meets three criteria, according to Planeta.com:

1. it provides for environmental conservation
2. it includes meaningful community participation
3. it is profitable and can sustain itself.

If projects are to be considered ecotourism, they must include local participation and they must assist conservation efforts. This is not to say that tourism services that don't include these components are not "good"—they simply are not ecotourism.

#### **FAIR-TRADE TOURISM**

"These days an increasing number of consumers want to be more 'people-friendly' ... This is often called 'fair trade'. If you've seen or bought fair trade coffee or bananas you'll know what we're talking about," says Tourism Concern, [www.tourismconcern.org.uk](http://www.tourismconcern.org.uk). Fair Trade in Tourism takes fair trade one step further, into travel. This means working with the travel industry to make things fairer for people living in what are traditionally known as "destinations."

Fair trade in tourism is guiding the way toward sharing benefits more equitably between travelers, the tourism industry, governments of the countries visited, and most importantly, the host-country nationals.

#### **GEOTOURISM**

National Geographic coined geotourism: "Tourism that sustains or enhances the geographical character of a place—its environment, culture, aesthetics, heritage, and the well-being of its residents." More details via the PDF file from National Geographic—see if we want to include this and can get permission.

What 'geotourism' offers is explicit recognition and value of cultural heritage. Cities will embrace this and no doubt countries, particularly if there is a chance they can be profiled by the Society.

#### **HERITAGE TOURISM**

Tourism that respects natural and built environments, in short the heritage of the people and place, is called 'heritage tourism.' Renewed appreciation for historical milestones, the development of 'heritage trails' linking cultural landmarks produce new tourism services and products that can assist local economies.

#### **PRO POOR TOURISM**

Pro-Poor Tourism (PPT), according to [www.propoortourism.org.uk](http://www.propoortourism.org.uk), is tourism that results in increased net benefits for poor people. PPT is not a specific product or niche sector but an approach to tourism development and management. It enhances the linkages between tourism businesses and poor people, so that tourism's contribution to poverty reduction is increased and poor people are able to participate more effectively in product development. Links with many different types of 'the poor' need to be considered: staff, neighboring communities, land-holders, producers of food, fuel and other suppliers, operators of micro tourism businesses, craft-makers, other users of tourism infrastructure (roads) and resources (water) etc. There are many types of pro poor tourism strategies, ranging from increasing local employment to building mechanisms for consultation. Any type of company can be involved in pro-poor tourism—a small lodge, an urban hotel, a tour operator, an infrastructure developer. The critical factor is not the type of company or the type of tourism, but that an increase in the net benefits that go to poor people can be demonstrated.

#### **REALITY TOURISM**

Reality Tours, according to Global Exchange, promotes socially responsible travel as its participants build "people to people ties." Reality Tours are founded on the principles of experiential education and each tour focuses on important social, economic, political and environmental issues. The emphasis is on meeting the people, learning the facts firsthand, and then working toward the alleviation of global problems and enacting positive change.

#### **RURAL TOURISM**

Rural tourism provides travelers with an opportunity for recreational experiences involving visits to non-urban settings for the purpose of participating in or observing activities, events, or attractions that are a fundamental part of rural communities and environments. These are not necessarily agricultural in nature (see agro-tourism).

#### **SUSTAINABLE TOURISM**

According to United Nations Environment Programme on Tourism, [www.uneptie.org/pc/tourism/about-us/why-tourism.htm](http://www.uneptie.org/pc/tourism/about-us/why-tourism.htm), "Sustainable tourism development meets the needs of the pres- ▶

Responsible travel goes far beyond fancy packaging and eco-certification. It also goes far beyond simplistic internal hotel policies of washing sheets and towels, or accommodations simply being located in natural jungle or forest areas. Responsible tourism has to do with an everyday lifestyle that promotes cultural and biological diversity, and promotes environmental and natural resource conservation, at home and while traveling.

—**Black Sheep Inn, EcoLodge Ecuador**, [www.blacksheepinn.com](http://www.blacksheepinn.com)

Smithsonian Magazine / Tourism Cares for Tomorrow 2005 Sustainable Tourism Award in the Conservation Category

ent tourists and host regions while protecting and enhancing the opportunity for the future. It is envisaged as leading to management of all resources in such a way that economic, social and aesthetic needs can be fulfilled, while maintaining cultural integrity, essential ecological processes, biological diversity and life support systems.”

## TOURISM CERTIFICATION

Tourism certification attempts to ensure the quality of products and services beyond simple labeling. Current efforts to certify tourism include sustainable tourism certification, responsible tourism certification, and fair-trade tourism certification—the latter is unique as it focuses on the combination of sustainable development, fair labor and wages, and human rights. Tourism certification is difficult as it often promotes voluntary certification and centers on services as oppose to products (such as products like coffee that can easily be formally certified from farm to consumer). Certification is easier to verify for businesses (camping sites, youth hostels, guest houses, alpine huts, farm houses, restaurants) and more difficult for community development (local tours, cultural preservation, integrated development strategies). Certification labels serve as useful marketing tools and can motivate the industry to develop more environmentally friendly products. They can also provide consumers with valuable information on sustainable tourism products, helping them to make more informed travel choices.

## URBAN ECOTOURISM

Urban ecotourism is simply nature travel and conservation in a city environment. It is an ongoing opportunity to conserve biological and social diversity, create new jobs and improve the quality of life. It is essential to recognize urban centers as cradles of civilization, socio-political progress, examples of co-existence between diverse cultures ... and to recognize the importance of ecotourism in facilitating cultural exchange, environmental conservation, sustainable and equitable development. Common Urban Ecotourism goals:

- Restoring and conserving natural and cultural heritage including natural landscapes and biodiversity, and indigenous cultures;
- Maximizing local benefits and engaging the local community as owners, investors, hosts and guides;
- Educating visitors and residents on environmental matters, heritage resources, sustainability;
- Reducing our ecological footprint.

For more information, see: Planeta.com's 2004 Urban Ecotourism Conference: [www.planeta.com/ecotravel/tour/urban.html](http://www.planeta.com/ecotravel/tour/urban.html)

## VOLUNTEER TRAVEL

Whether you call it voluntourism, volunteerism, or service-learning, international volunteering as a short- or long-term holiday, international experience, or study abroad program includes cross-cultural interactions with local people. International volunteering affects both the volunteer and the people with whom the volunteer works. Volunteers may receive a stipend, but it is more often the case, especially with "voluntourism," "volunteer vacations," and "service-learning" that the volunteer pays a fee. The most important defining characteristic of volunteering is that the work seeks to improve people's lives through any number of services and in any area of life. ●

# COMMUNITY TRAVEL

**BY RON MADER**

Communities are taking the lead. Stimulated by the sight of tourists and growing support from government offices, development agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), communities are developing the infrastructure and services required for tourism.

Until recently, international banks and national tourism ministries have promoted development of "traditional tourism" operations, such as all-inclusive "megaresorts" that cater to the sol y playa crowd. If locals or communities are involved in the process, it was usually as contracted labor.

Now the monies are flowing to grassroots efforts, and community-based tourism operations are increasing around the globe. New synergies have arisen that connect localities with regional and international tourism partners.

## What is Community Tourism?

When we speak of community-based tourism, the most popular image tends to be a rural village far from the beaten path, and for good reason. Most are. Examples include Mexico's El Cielo and communities in the Sierra Norte. There are several projects in Costa Rica featured on the New Key website, [www.keytocostarica.com](http://www.keytocostarica.com). Also of note is Santa Lucia in Ecuador. (Additional examples are included at community tourism links, [www.planeta.com/ecotravel/tour/communitylinks.html](http://www.planeta.com/ecotravel/tour/communitylinks.html).)

Rural community tourism in Costa Rica, for example, is a showcase of conservation of large tracts of virgin rainforest, reforestation work and organic agriculture. Travelers can support this work through their visits.

In Mexico, urban-community ties are strengthened via the Oaxaca Options speaker series. The city is one of the most popular destinations on the tourist trail and the speaker series -- co-hosted by Planeta.com and the Amigos del Sol Language School -- offers an opportunity for locals to discuss the pros and cons of tourism with travelers, and vice-versa.

While it's a romantic notion to limit one's notion of community tourism to rural settlements, the concept of "community" can easily be linked to urban populations. Settlements such as San Nicolas or Axosco are located in Mexico City, the world's largest metropolis.

Canada's Toronto Ecotourism Association, [www.planeta.com/eco-travel/weaving/toronto.html](http://www.planeta.com/eco-travel/weaving/toronto.html), for example, works toward improving environmental education and restoration in one of Canada's largest cities through the publication of a city green map and guidebook.

Community is not necessarily based in a physical space. We can also speak of virtual communities -- those members of the Planeta Forum as well as other online groups. The Web has always been the tool of linking people with similar interests. That said, while community may extend beyond physical space, community tourism must be practiced within a specific locality.

## What Travelers can Do

Successful community tourism is mutually beneficial -- for the communities and for the travelers. The big question is where to go?

Independent travelers seeking experiences with communities have numerous resources to help plan their trips. Specialized magazines -- such as Transitions Abroad provide great tips. ▶

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# ARTESANIA, CRAFTS AND TOURISM

**BY RON MADER**

*Never underestimate the entertainment value of shopping.*

—Tour operator

The production of artesanía often complements the goals of responsible travel and ecotourism. Buying from locals can assist local economic development and often conservation and heritage initiatives. Shopping has great entertainment value and tourists love souvenirs.

The best reminders of a trip may not be tacky knickknacks embossed with a destination's name or Recuerdo de... but physical

objects remind the owner of the journey.

Local production of crafts or artesanía contribute to economic development. There has been impressive academic work by Robert Healy, who has researched how residents of tourism destinations -- particularly those in rural localities -- can obtain greater financial benefit from tourist visitation.

For travelers, educate yourself before you arrive. The Web is a great way to learn about a country's traditions. Buy a guidebook or surf the Web.

On the downside, not all crafts are produced by or benefit local artesans. Nor is

production always sustainable. Be wary of buying products made with feathers or animal skins if you're trying to protect nature!

## Making the Purchase

In many markets, negotiation is part of the process. Too often well-meaning tourists will drive a hard bargain to save a nickel. If you find something you like, offer what you consider a fair price rather than the lowest possible bid. ●

— COURTESY OF PLANETA.COM, 2006

Also of note was the 2002 publication of *The Good Alternative Travel Guide*, compiled by Mark Mann for Tourism Concern. The book lists hundreds of tours and guesthouses to help you arrange a responsible -- and fun! -- vacation.

### Understanding Failure

Community tourism is not always successful, and perhaps we could begin to see it that way, and perhaps we could begin to look at failures as pathways to success. Rural community tourism takes place in already marginalized areas. Created with good intentions, community-based tourism projects are abandoned when political pressures rise, jealousies intensify or the heralded "eco tourists" don't arrive.

Developers may talk of "integrating communities into tourism," but rarely do they visit a community and ask what it is locals want. Instead, operations are imposed in an all too familiar top-down fashion.

Likewise, many travelers may say that want to experience community tourism, but within three days they begin to complain that the services are not up to their standards. Suggestion -- take the time to get to know your hosts. It pays off with richer experiences for all concerned.

### Marketing and Promotion

Development agencies and foundations have until recently been ill-equipped with the development or promotion of community tourism initiatives. Too often marketing experts advise a community to raise their prices to rates that tourists just don't want to pay.

Information is crucial, as many of the community projects lack a simple presence in the local tourist office.

A good deal of the information we have is outdated rather quickly.

A travel agent once told me of her interest in receiving press releases and prices from community projects. "But they only contact me once a year, if then. How am I supposed to send these projects tourists if they don't provide me with current packages and prices?"

### Ngos and Communities

During the 2001 Planeta.com Ecotourism Certification Workshop, consultant Ray Ashton addressed the topic of NGOs and community tourism.

"At an ecotourism conference in Costa Rica, I was asked to chair a panel made up of representatives of communities that were involved in ecotourism projects that were funded and managed by various conservation NGOs. We had five communities selected and we spent three months in preparation. Unannounced, four of the five community representatives were replaced by representatives from the conservation NGOs. The one representative did an excellent job of describing not one but three projects which all failed within two years because they did not take into account the socio-economic realities of the community, the lack of understanding on product quality requirements, and marketability."

### Rewarding Success

Successful community-based tourism succeeds when it strives toward mutual benefits for locals and travelers. Obviously, one of the key ingredients to success is improving communication, and we outline some practical strategies in our Web Seminar, [www.planeta.com/seminars/mtw.html](http://www.planeta.com/seminars/mtw.html). ●

— COURTESY OF PLANETA.COM, 2006

# DEFINING SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

**BY RON MADER**

*The notion that tourism could be “sustainable” is part of the dialogue on sustainable development.*

[www.planeta.com/ecotravel/sustain.html](http://www.planeta.com/ecotravel/sustain.html)

The goal is that development meet the needs of the present tourists and locals while protecting future opportunities.

That said ... isn't the concept a bit presumptuous?

What examples of tourism have been around long enough that we can say that the practice is sustainable? For cynics, the term has little meaning. They say that the concept is driven top-down and has few practical examples and that it's akin to having your cake and eating it too.

That said, it's important to review the literature, starting with the World Tourism Organization.

Sustainable tourism development guidelines and management practices are applicable to all forms of tourism in all types of destinations, including mass tourism and the various niche tourism segments. Sustainability principles refer to the environmental, economic and socio-cultural aspects of tourism development, and a suitable balance must be established between these three dimensions to guarantee its long-term sustainability.

**Thus, sustainable tourism should:**

Make optimal use of environmental resources that constitute a key element in tourism development, maintaining essential ecological processes and helping to conserve natural heritage and biodiversity.

Respect the socio-cultural authenticity of host communities, conserve their built and living cultural heritage and traditional values,

and contribute to inter-cultural understanding and tolerance.

Ensure viable, long-term economic operations, providing socio-economic benefits to all stakeholders that are fairly distributed, including stable employment and income-earning opportunities and social services to host communities, and contributing to poverty alleviation.

Sustainable tourism development requires the informed participation of all relevant stakeholders, as well as strong political leadership to ensure wide participation and consensus building. Achieving sustainable tourism is a continuous process and it requires constant monitoring of impacts, introducing the necessary preventive and/or corrective measures whenever necessary.

Sustainable tourism should also maintain a high level of tourist satisfaction and ensure a meaningful experience to the tourists, raising their awareness about sustainability issues and promoting sustainable tourism practices amongst them.

**Source:** Sustainable Development of Tourism Conceptual Definition (WTO, 2004)

## Conclusion

As travelers become more demanding, we can expect a growth in niche markets that deliver more than “traditional” tourism. Why not be clear about our goals? If we are seeking tourism experiences that offer a win-win-win situation for travelers, community hosts and the environment, we are following the call to develop sustainable tourism. ●

— COURTESY OF PLANETA.COM, 2006

# DEFINING ECOTOURISM

BY RON MADER

## There are no Ecotourists.

We have few statistics about what differentiates “traditional” tourism from “ecotourism.” And the data provided by national and international sources is suspect.

While there is no 100% pure ecotourism, there are plenty of green options. Travelers who pursue the “eco” route are numerous.

So is it any wonder that one of the most frequent discussions is defining the industry lexicon. Experts know what sustainable travel and ecotourism are ... on paper. The question is whether travelers and locals recognize it in the field.

## Defining the Terms

Instead of insisting on single definitions, perhaps it’s time to review how these terms are perceived. It could be a very good thing that there is so little consensus. What policy-makers, travelers and locals consider “ecotourism” rarely has much in common with the other.

If there is no clear agreement of what constitutes wilderness or sustainability, what hope do we have on agreeing on what constitutes ecotourism or sustainable travel?

## Ecotourism

Hector Ceballos-Lascurain coined the word but there has been no agreement on a standard definition. The important question is ... does it matter? Google ‘ecotourism’ and you will find an eclectic mix of references and paid ads. Ditto Dicionary.com Looking in Spanish? Google ‘ecoturismo’

While the details vary, most definitions of ecotourism boil down to a special form of tourism that meets three criteria:

1. it provides for environmental conservation
2. it includes meaningful community participation
3. it is profitable and can sustain itself.

Imagine these goals as three overlapping circles. If a project or service met all three criteria—it would hit the bull’s eye. But what about the projects that are just a little off the mark?

This three-circle model illuminates not only what is ecotourism, but what could become ecotourism. If tourism aspires toward ecotourism, this model allows individual or specific projects to weigh strengths and weaknesses and figure out in the areas they need assistance.

Successful ecotourism requires inter-sectoral alliances, comprehension and respect. Communication and collaboration, after all, are the most effective tools.

If projects are to be considered ecotourism, they must include local participation and they must assist conservation efforts. This is not to say that tourism services that don’t include these components are not “good”—they simply are not ecotourism.

FYI—Publishers are often wary of publishing ‘ecotourism’ features. That said, several magazines highlight the niche, including World Hum and Transitions Abroad. Conde Nast Traveler has the longest running and most detailed ecotourism award.

## Evaluation and Certification

Assuming you wanted to know which are the “best” ecolodges or ecotourism services, the question must follow: How is one to judge?

Even if they agree on the big picture, conservation groups and tour agencies have decidedly different interpretations of what constitutes ecotourism. And if they agree on the basic criteria, they weigh the components differently.

Some have suggested the creation of such a third-party organization, such as the firms that certify organic coffee for the world market. However, ecotourism is not only a commodity—it is also a social process, one that is exceedingly difficult to measure or regulate successfully. Honey can be certified, but tourism?

Tourism has multiple players who share responsibility. Reliable ecotourism certification remains a long way off. Much more effective are industry awards.

## Players

We need to pay more attention to who is participating in the process. No ecolodge exists in isolation. Planeta developed a list of stakeholders based on a holistic view of the industry or culture working toward ecotourism: [www.planeta.com/ecotravel/tour/players.html](http://www.planeta.com/ecotravel/tour/players.html)

Here’s the good news. Industry leaders are taking up the cause—after all, sustainable development is preferable than the alternative. Government officials are learning to develop the niche of ‘ecotourism’ in a way that complements other sectors.

Our list of players provides a practical checklist of responsibilities and suggestions for actions each stakeholder group. ●

— COURTESY OF PLANETA.COM, 2006

# TRAVELER'S PHILANTHROPY

There are a growing number of conscientious consumers and responsible travel companies who are donating financial resources, time, talent and economic patronage to protect and positively impact the cultures and environments they visit. This voluntary movement is becoming known as Travelers' Philanthropy or Altruistic Travel.

Travelers' or Travel Philanthropy, as it's also commonly known, is helping to support community development, biodiversity conservation, and other environmental, socio-cultural and economic improvements including providing jobs, educational and professional training opportunities, health care and environmental stewardship.

## Attributes of Travel Philanthropy

Though many Travel Philanthropy programs are unrelated, most have similar attributes.

Most Travel Philanthropy programs have a focus on educating travelers about local environmental, socio-cultural and economic issues. They also encourage a constructive interaction between travelers, travel companies and the communities and local people who are being visited. By taking this approach, these programs help to inspire visitors to donate financial resources or time where it's most needed.

Successful projects also determine the needs of local and indigenous people while empowering them to help manage funding resources

for community development and conservation initiatives. Often, this means establishing partnerships between travelers and the tourism industry as well as non-governmental organizations and governmental agencies, complimenting their international development and aid programs.

## The Importance of Travel Philanthropy

More than 500 million people travel for leisure each year and there is an increasing demand for travel as air travel prices fall and remote corners of the world become increasingly accessible.

Among the most severe environmental effects of travel are pollution, intensified or unsustainable use of land, the depletion of natural resources, and alteration of ecosystems. Host communities can also be adversely affected. Loss of indigenous identity and values, resource use conflicts, cultural deterioration, and land-use disputes are among the many challenges host communities face.

Travel and tourism clearly contribute to globalization. However, if estimates are accurate, charitable giving by Americans alone could exceed \$300 billion annually by 2020, providing a real opportunity to reduce the economic inequalities that exist in the world today. ●

— COURTESY OF SUSTAINABLE TRAVEL INTERNATIONAL

# VOLUNTOURISM

The “modern-day version” of VolunTourism started back in the 1960s with the PeaceCorps. From its inception, the PeaceCorps’ philosophy was that volunteers can and should serve their country by living and working in developing countries, providing aid and assisting in the peace process by interacting with local cultures.

Since then, VolunTourism has evolved into volunteer travel and volunteer vacations for the leisure travel market. (For the meetings, incentive, convention, and event (MICE) industry, it has become a mechanism for expanding social responsibility, delivering purpose-filled teambuilding activities for attendees, and providing spouses with a much needed alternative to destination shopping sprees.) Now more than ever people are craving a sense of purpose in their leisure activities. Sitting on a beach still appeals to some, but for many people a more meaningful vacation is desired. This growing trend is addressed by VolunTourism

Technically, VolunTourism is defined as: a seamlessly integrated combination of voluntary service to a destination, and the best, traditional elements of travel—arts, culture, geography, history and recreation—in that destination.

More simply put, VolunTourism is traveling to another place to directly interact with the destination and its residents with the objective of improving their well-being through socio-cultural development or environmental conservation by providing volunteer assistance and/or goods.

## Why Volunteer Travel?

The VolunTourism movement is gaining momentum for a variety of reasons. It provides volunteers with an opportunity to interact with a different culture and gain a new perspective of the world, deepening their understanding of humanity. Volunteers also receive a greater

sense of social responsibility while helping to improve the well-being of local people. But what is most valuable about this type of experiential travel is that when the journey is complete the “VolunTourist” realizes that he/she has received far more than what he/she has offered to the destination and its residents. It is this realization that raises a question in the mind of the “VolunTourist”: “Who is, in reality, the one being served?.”

## Get Your Program featured on our Web site

We are always on the lookout for VolunTourism programs that support sustainable tourism development. If your company has set up a program or charity that meets a majority of the following criteria, we would like to promote your initiative through our marketing outlets:

- Program development is undertaken and objectives are set in conjunction with local community leaders (or NGOs), taking into account their wisdom and local customs.
- Program offers opportunities for the local community to interact with foreign volunteers which is vital for the cross-cultural understanding many volunteers seek.
- Program provides environmental education for the local community and the foreign volunteers as well as opportunities for volunteers to explore the country they are visiting.
- Program provides local people with autonomy - the knowledge, skills, and the resources they need to sustain their community long after the project is complete. ●

*For more information, please contact us.*

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# ETHICAL DILEMMAS AND PRACTICAL RISKS IN TOURIST PHILANTHROPY

The following is a talk that Stanford University Professor Emeritus of Political Science David Abernethy gave at the Travelers' Philanthropy Conference held at Stanford University in 2004. Dr. Abernethy has modified the transcript of this talk to clarify some points and provide additional background information on Stanford Travel/Study programs with which he has been involved.

## BY DAVID ABERNETHY

You have a great conference on a terrific topic, and an innovative one. You are pathbreakers in a field that deserves to be 'pathbroken.' I am honored and delighted to be here with you. My goal is not to rain on your parade but maybe throw a bit of mist on it as we reflect together on the ethical worth of what you're proposing to do.

It's easy to focus on the virtues of good intentions. And indeed I'm going to posit as my starting point that we have a traveler - and since I haven't been able to recruit anyone else I will be the traveler, I'll play that role—who has the very best intentions. The traveler says, "I really want to help people in need." There is usually a variety of motives behind this desire. It could be some combination of pity, compassion, charity, good will, and guilt—perhaps guilt for being a citizen of a wealthy, powerful country, or (as is usually the case in the tourist business) being a white person. It could be paternalism, noblesse oblige.

Let's also posit that I am able to help. I have a lot of disposable income, particularly when compared to the minimal amounts people have in the places I'm visiting. Without seriously cramping my lifestyle I can transfer hundreds or even thousands of dollars to somebody who will see that it gets in the hands of people with almost no material possessions. Not only do I have the money, but if I'm retired—and many people on these trips are retired—I have the time. If I'm really seized by a community development project I support, I might spend more time on it when I get back home, maybe staying in touch with local people to see that the project comes to fruition.

In addition, I've got connections. It's not just my net worth that matters; it's my networks that matter, my ties to other people. If something on the ground gets going I can go see my friends, and we could put together \$10,000 just like that to send over to support Phase Two of an exciting project.

So I want to help. I can help. I've got the money, I've got the time, and I've got the personal connections. Moreover, as a traveler I see a specific situation that appeals to me. Yes, I'm aware of those statistics about the number of people living under two dollars a day, or the number—an estimated 1.2 billion—living under one dollar a day. But these abstract statistics don't grab me; they numb my mind and bypass my emotions. This is different: here I am in a village where I see human beings who actually live under two dollars a day, and I hear them saying, "Here's what we would like" or "Here's what we need." I visualize real faces, not just faceless poverty-stricken masses, but real faces that ask, "Could you help us?" And I say, "Well, sure."

So here I am, a tourist with generous intentions in a situation

calling for a modest transfer of resources from some of the world's wealthiest people to some of its poorest. The question is whether the decision to donate money that comes out of this situation is an ethical one. I'm going to be arbitrary and define ethical action as comprising good intentions and good consequences. You have to have the right spirit going into this. And the result of your action—driven both by the spirit and by what you and others do—needs to be close to what you had in mind when you gave the money. Good intentions are a necessary condition of ethical behavior, but they aren't sufficient. This idea is expressed in the aphorism that the road to hell is paved with good intentions. You have to look at the effects of your action independently of your motives. There needs to be a match between cause (in the sense of donor intent) and consequences (what the donor's money, time, and energy, in conjunction with the activity of recipients, produces).

Let me suggest several ways in which good intentions may not—in fact, probably will not—lead to the desired results. I want to make this argument in a value-neutral, descriptive way. I don't want to set this up as good guys vs. bad guys because I don't think that's an accurate or helpful way to think about the topic. All I ask of you is to imagine yourselves in two roles at different points in my talk: at times as the tourist and at other times as indigenous recipients of the tourist's philanthropy.

The first thing to note is a paradox: I favor the status quo when I go abroad as a tourist, yet my very presence undermines the status quo. I may seek out the status quo of nature. I want to go to an unspoiled beach, to a tropical forest whose immense trees and vines and bountiful wildlife are intact. And I want to go there quickly because in a few years that beach may be littered with Coca-Cola bottles and that primeval forest cut down. I want to get there before the way things have been for eons is overtaken by what people call progress.

I may also want to experience the status quo of indigenous culture. I want to see people before they've been seen by too many other folks from the outside world. I want to see them living in their traditional homes and wearing their traditional clothes. I don't want to see them when they have abandoned those clothes for GAP khakis, T shirts, and "cool" sunglasses. Again, I need to move quickly because in a few years people whose cultures I value as being different, exotic, may come to look a whole lot more like me. Why bother at that point to spend my tourist dollars to see parts of my own culture reflected in the mirror?

So I'm going out as an agent of the status quo, to see people and things which I believe have changed very little over the centuries, and to enjoy this peek into the world's distant past. However cor- ▶

rect or incorrect that belief may be, what can't be denied is that my very presence in a distant land is an agent of radical change.

I may be observing other people. That's why I'm there. But it turns out that other people are also observing me. Visualization goes both ways, and others see me as a paragon of the West's high-consumption lifestyle. I may not see myself that way at all, preferring to live sustainably and tread lightly on the earth. But no matter how lightly I think I tread, I'm still using up the earth's scarce resources orders of magnitude faster than people living around the edges of my eco-tourist lodge. For them, I represent the very lifestyle and values I may have chosen deliberately to reject.

Now let me ask you to imagine yourself an indigenous person, particularly a young person, carefully observing the latest round of tourists walking around the lodge and exploring the forest around it. Here's what he or she may be thinking: "I like what these visitors

may be opposed by some local people who, it turns out, favor the status quo.

The story goes something like this. When I put money into a well, a school, a bridge, a rabbit hutch, piggery, maternity clinic, health clinic, etc., I am changing the local situation. The people there didn't have these items before I and my friends gave the money to cover costs of materials and construction. I, the tourist, view that change as an improvement. So will many local people. This is progress. It's development. It's a visible mark of the escape from poverty to modern life.

So in some sense I am a revolutionary. I'm participating in what could have profound consequences that disrupt local ways of thinking and acting. As an outsider I tend to think of local people as a community, that is, as a group that functions as a single unit, people who live happily with each other and have fairly uniform preferences. But

"It showed the tremendous value of linking tourists, as human beings, with local people, fellow human beings, in a setting allowing for mutual communication."

have, and I want what they have. That tourist over there is wearing khakis, which look a lot better than the rags I'm wearing and will probably last a lot longer, too. Another one has real nice sunglasses. I haven't seen a pair like that before, but now that I've seen them up close I would really like to own some. The tourist's eyes are looking at me, but I can't see them because her eyes are covered by those sunglasses. Sometimes I'd like to try that: to see without my eyes being seen. How can I get a pair? Should I risk offending the tourist and ask her to give me the glasses she's wearing? She may not mind. After all, she's very rich, so she can always buy another pair."

The tourist's presence in this situation accelerates the drive by indigenous people to uproot their own society, to abandon the very aspects of inherited culture which attracted the tourist to travel long distances to encounter "exotic" indigenous ways.

The same thing applies to nature. A lot of trees were cut down to transform an ancient dirt path along a stream into a road wide enough to take a Landrover to the eco-tourist lodge where I ("I" is now the tourist) am staying. Other parts of the forest in which I'm staying may have to be carved out to accommodate the extension to the lodge that's being planned because so many ecotourists want to visit this place. And of course I never consider and wouldn't mention if I did the enormous amount of jet fuel it takes to fly me from my home in the States to this "unspoiled" place. The per-person consumption of jet fuel has immense environmental costs which are usually ignored if and when we carry out our own personal environmental impact reviews.

So the fact is that to get out there and enjoy "unspoiled" culture and "unspoiled" nature I have to participate in spoiling culture and nature. There's no way to get around that fact. I'm a subversive agent of change even if I regard myself as a conservationist, dedicated to conserving remnants of the past. In such a paradoxical situation it's easy for my intentions to produce results I don't want or anticipate.

Secondly—and to turn the paradox on its head—in my charitable act I see myself as an agent of change for the better. But what I do

the use of the word 'community' is misleading. It implies everybody in a commune, everybody together, happy natives living together as if they were one.

Advanced industrial societies clearly have factions and feuds and social and economic stratification. But we idealize "the natives" as not having those characteristics. I've got news for you, friends. Everybody lives in societies fractured by factions, by disagreements, by personal struggles for power, and by stratification. Even in a village which looks like it's one group united by its poverty, there are some who have more wealth, status, power, influence, than others. In an unequal world, inequality is built into even the poorest communities.

The changes coming from outside—and let's remember that the traveler's presence and the traveler's generosity constitute external intervention—could begin to shake up the stratification system within the village. Let me take as an example digging a well, something that's often seen as an obvious project in areas which don't have much water, or where they have water but it's in a dirty river five miles away. Duncan's reference to the well Stanford travelers proposed to construct in a Zambian village comes to mind here.

The well is seen by the tourist as a public good, which is why it's such an attractive philanthropic project. Everybody stands to benefit from access to water, particularly if it's better quality than what is scooped up from a muddy, polluted river.

But to say that everyone benefits is not to say that everyone benefits equally. And here's where problems begin.

Men in the village quickly recognize that a well is going to benefit women more than men. Why? Because it's women who walk five miles to get the water and five miles to bring it back. Men don't do this. Fetching water from the river is women's work. It always has been, as long as anyone can remember, and as far as men are concerned it always will be.

And so a project seen by an outsider as helping the entire community can be seen by villagers with power, the men, as lowering their status relative to villagers lacking power, the women. Besides, ►

a well means that women will have more time because they're not spending two hours walking to the river and two hours back. What are they going to do with all that free time? Perhaps they'll get together and celebrate their raised status and demand to have it raised further. So you can see both men and women envisaging a future in which the longstanding dominance of men over women is challenged. This potentially profound revision of the village social system is triggered by the apparently innocent act of digging a hole for water. The generous tourist is clueless about all this, of course, having no idea of the symbolic significance or power implications of a new village well. But the villagers are very clued into these things, particularly those who could stand to lose their hold over social relations even if the water they drink is cleaner and healthier than they've ever known.

Think of this issue of absolute and relative gains in geographic terms. Where you locate a clinic or a school or a bridge is going to benefit some people more than others. "Why the heck did they build the clinic on the other side of the river and not on our side?" "Why did they build the bridge five miles upriver to help the people in the next village and not us?" In such situations you can easily imagine a sense of grievance developing because somebody else benefited more than I did. Before the clinic or bridge was built I didn't think I was deprived. Now I do, even when I have access to something that wasn't there before.

What happens when some people in a recipient community interpret an act of external generosity as a backward move, a threat, because it undermines the privileges they enjoy and calls into question the values supporting the local stratification system? Not surprisingly, the response is to try to prevent the project from getting off the ground. The project is seen as a "private bad," and that counts for more than it also being a public good.

What may have happened in the Zambian case, since the well-construction project didn't work out, is that somebody there who was miffed at not being consulted or who felt that his or her status was being lowered took steps to sabotage the project. It's really easy to sabotage something like this. "After all," the saboteur thinks, "the do-good travelers are here today and gone tomorrow. What do they know even when they're here? They'll know even less after they've left. But me, I'm here today; I'm here tomorrow, I'm here five years from now. I know the players on the local scene. I have power, and I have a personal interest in stopping this project. So there's no way it will get off the ground. I'll try to be subtle, of course, so the ignorant, naive foreigners will never guess why the project failed."

So, as the agent of change from the outside, the tourist may find his or her generous intentions thwarted by those who correctly see the threat to the status quo and would rather have no project than one that could conceivably hurt them compared to others in the same community. This is not to say that such people are bad. No, it just confirms that such people are human. Everywhere you have people who define their worth and their identity relative to others. If they think they're going to lose in relative terms even when they gain in an absolute sense, they're going to line up in opposition to a proposal likely to produce that result.

A third problem. As a donor I want to support something I can take a picture of. I want to see a photograph three months from now, and another three years from now, of the bridge my funds helped build. And happy people walking across the bridge when they

couldn't easily cross the river before. I want to see a health clinic and happy kids outside it showing the vaccine marks they didn't have before. Now I don't ask for much. I simply ask for the pleasure of seeing that photograph.

But implicitly I want something else. I'd like to be thanked. I'd like somebody to smile and say, in that video clip in my mind, "Thank you, kind person, for making our lives better."

Surely that's a reasonable expectation! But it might not be realized. The recipients might balk at publicly saying "Thank you." Or if they say the words, they might in their heart of hearts be grudging about it.

How could this possibly happen? The tourist is incredulous. "In exchange for my dollars, voluntarily given, are these people going to feel they have to force a happy smile for the camera? What's wrong with them? What's wrong with their culture? That would never happen in my culture, I'll tell you. That's pretty low of them to be so ungrateful."

Maybe. But maybe not. Let's look at the "maybe not" possibility. For one thing, the very presence of the traveler can generate unpleasant thoughts. A tourist in their midst makes the villager realize, "I knew there was inequality in our village, but now I realize how much greater it is in the outside world. The tourist I'm looking at may have an annual gross income equal to the whole village, maybe 500 or 600 times what I'll make this year. And all of a sudden I see myself as being poor. I didn't use to think of myself that way, but when I see someone who's rich beyond anything I ever imagined, that redefines my sense of who I am. I don't like to feel this way about myself and the other people in my village."

One thing I can do is take out my unhappiness on the rich tourist - particularly if I see the tourist as no better morally than I am. And I begin to ask myself, "Why is it that they have so much and I have so little? Some of them seem unhappy even though they have all that money. They scowl a lot and complain a lot. I have very little. I may even feel happy more of the time than they are. So money doesn't buy happiness. Still, there's a lot of things money can buy. It makes a huge difference whether you have it or you don't. It just doesn't seem fair that the world has such massive inequality. I resent seeing the richest people in the world coming to see people like us, who are among the poorest. Besides, what did they do to get all that money? It can't be from just working hard, because I work hard too, and look how little I have. For all I know, these people didn't do anything to deserve their wealth. Certainly not the ones who inherited wealth; that's definitely not their own doing. Maybe these people are rich because we're poor: their ancestors stole land and resources from our ancestors. Whether that's true or not, I resent them for having so much money they can do whatever they want with it, including giving some of it to us."

Add to this resentment the problem of dependence. Charity generates dependence. If money comes from the outside that wasn't there before, it creates a relationship in which the recipient starts looking to the donor to help out. The recipient is now getting something from the donor, presumably with certain strings attached, notably that the money has to be accounted for and the project has to be completed. People generally don't like to be beholden to others, particularly if they live in communities that have long been self-reliant and take great pride in fending for themselves.

Until recently this community might have been utterly self-reli- ▶

ant. Why? Because it's isolated from everybody else. The community has had to make its own decisions and grow its own food, because there is no road out there. There's no bridge, there are no pontoons to get from this little self-contained community to other places. The very act of the tourist industry coming in with bulldozers and roads and eco-Lodges and all their modern amenities connects insulated communities to the outside world and breaks self-reliance permanently. It creates the objective conditions for a dependent relationship. One response to dependency is to reject it as humiliating and demeaning. Another response is the opposite: to embrace it as an opportunity to get something for nothing. In this second response, recipients start asking for a welfare handout. "You gave us money last year. So why don't you do it again this year? We've come to expect generosity from you, and when you don't pony up the second time and the third time, you're letting us down. What's wrong with you?"

It's not because the villagers are unhuman, but precisely because they are so very human that we can understand and empathize with these feelings: of resentment of unexplained income disparities, not liking the feeling that we're poor, not liking dependency—especially on strangers—or attempting to manipulate dependency and keep the money flowing in. These feelings can produce a situation where I do not want to say thank you. If that's what the donor wants, all the more reason not to give it. If I have to go in front of the camera I will say, in a droning and insincere voice, "Thank.. .you... very... much."

There's a great cartoon of Egypt's Gen. Nasser receiving a giant package labeled USAID, a U.S. CARE Package, from Uncle Sam.. And Nasser says to Uncle Sam, to the United States, "Thank you. Go to hell."

So it's quite possible that as an end result of this charity the beneficiaries won't be genuinely grateful. This in turn produces resentment on the part of guess who? On my part: me, the donor. "All I ask for is thanks. What the hell's wrong with these people? It doesn't cost them a thing to say thank you. Look, it cost me a thousand dollars to contribute to this cause. I didn't have to do this, you know. It's unfair of them to mistreat me. I know one thing for sure: that's the last money poor people out there are ever going to get." And so recipient resentment can generate donor resentment. This isn't a nice way to end a story based initially, you remember, on the best of donor intentions.

Here's another problem. The traveler, by definition, is here today and gone tomorrow. What stays behind is the traveler's contribution. The tourist and his money are soon parted. "I'm off to somewhere else in two days according to the schedule. And eventually I'll return home. But I gave a donation, and I've left that money close to where it's going to be used." The question is: with whom have I left the money?

Somebody in that area has to take it, has to be accountable for it, has to use it for the intended purpose and not put it in his or her back pocket. The holder of the money has to be responsible for implementing the project. If the road is to be built, the bridge constructed, the clinic's medicines purchased, you may have to start from practically nothing. You have to find the contractors, write the contracts, make the deal, recruit the labor. A huge amount of work is involved in implementing the project after the traveler has left.

Therefore the traveler has to have a great deal of confidence in

whoever receives the money—confidence that they'll be honest and that they have the capacity and the will to implement a complex project in situations where there may be not be contractors, there may not be people who know how to operate a bulldozer. Technically skilled workers may have to be imported, further disrupting the dynamics of the local community.

Now here, it seems to me, the traveler has essentially two options. I'm going to overstate the contrast. One is to leave it in the hands of the tour lodge or tour operator. And for the purposes of simplicity, I know that there are some exceptions, those people are white. And I am going to assume, for purposes of this discussion, that I am white.

The other option is to leave the money in indigenous hands, people who are not defined as white or European. This might be an ad hoc community group. It might be the village chief, the council of elders, the local government council responsible for various kinds of infrastructure. It might be a local grass-roots NGO [non-governmental organization]. In any case, it's somebody who is on the other side of the racial line from me. And not just on the other side of the racial line. The other side of the cultural line, the language line, the nationality line, and of course the social and economic class line.

Now for all sorts of reasons—again, not making this a good guy-bad guy scenario—the traveler is likely to leave it in the hands of the travel lodge or tour company. In other words, the money will cross geographic borders, but it will not cross racial borders. One reason is that a traveler like myself has in mind an implicitly racist notion that other white people are not going to steal from me, but it's possible that non-whites will. That's a residue of racism which, even in my own liberal progressive heart, is still there. I can trust certain kinds of people—my kind of people—and it's harder to trust people who are different from me.

But it's not just racism. There's the matter of incentives and leverage. If a tour operator or eco-lodge or tour company misuses the money, I can get back at such people. I can spread the word that these guys are untrustworthy; don't do business with them. Go to the lodge down the road. Go to a different tour operator. You've got a lot of competitors here in this very room. Go to someone else in this room. So as an individual donor I have a certain amount of influence over the white people with whom I leave the money, and they have a corresponding incentive not to misuse it. But if I leave my money with the local community my leverage is gone. There is nothing I can do to get that money back. It's been invested and basically thrown away. So I have some leverage over people who are like me, and virtually none over those who aren't. Furthermore, the deal before the traveler leaves the next morning is likely to be made over drinks after sundown. You're sitting around. The owner of the lodge comes around and says, "I hear you guys want to do something to help the local people." And I say, "Sure, sit down and have a drink." And so you get together in the most comfortable setting, you've had a great and exhilarating day out in the boonies, you're back in the lounge, the sun has just set in a glorious display of color, there are candles in the background, the guy sits down, you have drinks, you work out the arrangements for the project. It is completely natural given that we make deals under socially comfortable circumstances. The more comfortable we all are, the more likely some deal will be struck.

Now imagine the alternative of trying to pass this money and responsibility for managing it over to someone who is indigenous, who doesn't speak the tourist's language or speaks it haltingly ▶

with a pronounced non-American accent. The person doesn't have the social experience to know what to do after dinner. The person may not have even been in the lodge except being brought in occasionally for symbolic or 'feel good' purposes. This person doesn't know how things get done within a particular social class. So the likelihood of my passing on the money and the responsibility to somebody who is local, to one of the beneficiaries of the project, is very, very small. Not because I'm bad, not because the tour operators or the lodge owners are bad, not because local people are bad. It's because this is the way things happen in the society I'm familiar with. In a setting where I feel comfortable. Where I can still act on subtle racist prejudices that remain despite all the changes that have gone on in the world.

What happens if I pass the money and responsibility to the tour lodge and the tour operator, people like yourselves in this room? For one thing, it increases the income gap between the tour lodge or tour operator, who now have even more money than before, and indigenous people who are as poor as ever. Now the local people are not just dependent on me, the generous traveler, but also on the lodge. Because the owners of the lodge are going to decide when and where and how this project gets done, to whom they pass the money, with whom they write the contracts and subcontracts. Agents of the rich, powerful white world inserted into a poor, weak, peripheral non-white area now have additional power. Because they have additional resources to use according to their own will and preferences, quite apart from the intentions of the donor.

What this does of course is reinforce a stratification system in which the tour lodge, or the the tour company, is at the top, and indigenous people remain even more firmly ensconced at the bottom. What it does also, in a more subtle way, is undercut the indigenous sense of self-reliance; of autonomy, of dignity. If indigenous people got the money, they could say, "The foreigners have confidence that we can handle this thing. We could mishandle it, of course, but at least they trust us to do to what we said we wanted for ourselves." That is gone if the money is handed over to the very people who spearhead foreign intervention in this Third World human ecosystem. What is taken away is this sense that we indigenous peoples could actually be in charge of our own destiny. Foreigners are doing things to us and for us but not really with us. That nagging unhappy feeling, of being treated like a child in a neo-colonial paternalist relationship, may be another of the unintended consequences of a tourist's best intentions.

A final point is that the tourist's decision to give is often made impulsively. That's understandable. Let's say I'm in a village for two days. I have a 48-hour window to make a decision about something I knew nothing of before I arrived there. How else can I make it but quickly, "on the spot"? I see a child walking down the road, and we exchange greetings. I ask why she isn't in school, and she says she'd like to attend but there's no money for school fees. Well, that's it. I respond impulsively and generously to a human being, not to the Third World, not to the world's poor in general, but to this little kid who's looking at me with her soft eyes and saying in a quiet voice that she'd really like to attend school. I resolve to pay her school fees, if her parents will allow it.

Or I am negotiating with a merchant in the market, and after we get through our dickering and I bought the carving I wanted, the merchant says, "It would be so nice to have a covered market, not

everything out in the air as now. So when it rains as it did yesterday my goods and the other merchants' goods are protected." And then you can understand why I tell my table companions at dinner that night, "I just met this merchant this afternoon, and he said a good way to help small business in this community is to put a tin roof over the open market stalls. This guy's a businessman like I am. I want to support small business, and I'm sure others in our group do, too. Isn't raising the money to put a tin roof over this market something we could actually do?"

What's not to like about these scenes? Part of the ethical value of traveler philanthropy is its impulsiveness, its spontaneity. My encounter with the merchant just happened. I didn't expect it: all I hoped for was a nice carving. And somehow we started talking, and the merchant mentioned something that really mattered to him. And, it turned out, appealed to my own experience and my values. Isn't it wonderful in our thoroughly planned lives to have a genuine, unexpected experience? We don't have nearly enough of them. Even vacations are planned—especially group tours! Look at the itineraries you tour operators put together: events are scheduled at precise times, and they have to end on time so the group can go on to the next event. Part of a tour guide's job is to say, "I can see you're having this great experience, but we have to go now because there's another great experience we've planned for you. It's right there on today's schedule." The value of the experience I just had with the little girl and the merchant is that it's not on the itinerary. Terrific. Precisely because the travel planners didn't schedule these spontaneous person-to-person encounters, they have special value for me. And I'm likely to remember them longer than many elaborately planned group events.

What's the downside? An unplanned encounter is a random event. It's one thing if the random event produces a simple transfer of funds from one person to another—my money for the little girl's school fees to her parents or perhaps to the school. It's quite another if the random encounter leads to a complex project impacting the community as a whole, like roofing the village market. My decision to raise money to cover market stalls because the merchant I met wanted them is a function of the merchant's preferences, not of the community in which he lives. Had the money I raise for this project been offered as an undesignated lump sum to the community, with the opportunity to decide on its best use, the outcome might have been something else: a savings bank, the main road's potholes paved, a deeper drainage ditch running alongside the market. It's very unlikely that my impulsive response to a situation that just happened to occur will lead to the same project the entire community would choose if it could set its own priorities.

Note that I, the generous tourist, have something specific in mind, so I'm not about to ask my fellow travelers to consider alternative ways of spending funds I'm trying to raise. I'm interested in money for tin roofs, not in the opportunity cost of these funds. Besides, there isn't much time to talk about this with my fellow travelers—to say nothing of convening the village elders or the elected local government council or calling a special meeting of everyone in the village. That's because our group is scheduled to leave at 8 o'clock tomorrow morning.

The problem is that decision-making about a public good is done quickly, over dinner and drinks, by outsiders who don't know the local scene. It's done with no community input, based on randomly- ▶

acquired evidence of need. But for the project to succeed, the recipient community needs to own it in some sense, become an active stakeholder, contribute time and labor to complement the money contributed by tourists. But how can the community have a stake in a project it won't even hear about until the philanthropists have left town?

Money in the amounts villagers lack is a necessary condition for roofing the market stalls. But the way that money was raised bypasses community consent and comes close to a sufficient condition for failure when it comes to making the non-monetary contributions community members must put in for the project to succeed.

Community ownership of a public good is vital not only in constructing infrastructure but also in maintaining it. When a section of the market roof blows away in a storm, when the well pump breaks down or the well silts up, when rabbits in the brand-new rabbit hutch start falling ill and dying, when potholes in the main road reappear—in other words, when things start deteriorating, as at some point they will, local people won't automatically look to themselves to act. We can imagine villagers saying, "It's the tourists' project. They decided what to do, they didn't talk to us about it, they put the money into it. So why don't they come and fix it? We keep waiting for them to help out, as they did before, and they don't come back. These people must be really stupid to let their money go to waste like this. Or maybe they have so much money they don't care if they throw it away." Again, this way of thinking doesn't show that the villagers are bad, or even lazy, but rather that they are human. Their analysis of the project's origins is correct. Their view of who is responsible for maintenance is understandable, even if it also makes no sense in terms of the community's own interests, since local people stand to lose more over the long term than the donor does if the project in their midst has no payoff.

Everybody who looks at the history of foreign aid realizes that aid projects fail over and over again because of lack of maintenance. It's what happens after the project is completed and the failure to repair and maintain equipment that makes the rate of return on projects very, very low, if not zero. Private philanthropists should learn from the past mistakes of government donors. Clearly, lack of maintenance is linked to lack of recipient ownership.

Lack of ownership is because donors didn't take time to consult recipients and ask whether this was what they really wanted and how much they wanted it. Donors fail to insist, as part of the discussion and negotiation process, that maintenance issues be discussed and decided upon before any money changes hands. We know in advance that machinery rusts and breaks down, infrastructure deteriorates. This is hardly a surprise. What is surprising is that this unsurprising reality isn't factored in as an integral component of aid when aid agreements are signed. The questions sound peripheral, but actually they're crucial. Who will cover maintenance and repair costs over the next three years? After three years? Who will provide the labor and assure that the right amount and the right skill level show up on schedule? Is labor free or compensated? If compensated, at what rate and by whom?

Answering such questions is particularly crucial where public goods are involved, because by their nature such goods have free-rider problems: no one beneficiary has an incentive, positive or negative, to maintain or repair a public good, figuring that other people also own it so they'll take care of it. What everyone owns no one keeps up.

The broader question is: who is ultimately in charge of the kind of development project

we're talking about once it's completed? a ministry of the central government—for example, the Ministry of Education to staff a new school? the Ministry of Health for the generator to keep vaccines cool? the Public Works Ministry for market roofs and filling potholes? Or is it the local government council? the village chief? the village notable who championed the tourist's idea from the start? These might seem like small matters. But I assure you: the devil is in the details, these details. Just because such questions won't be answered until well into the future shouldn't obscure the fact that when that future arrives the answers can make or break the whole project.

This is one area where, I think, we can build in some things you ought to do. Insist on talking, at the outset, about maintenance and ownership after the project has been completed and the last bill paid.

I've outlined some ethical dilemmas and practical problems associated with tourist philanthropy that make it difficult to translate benign intentions into positive results. Let me conclude with some reflections on what could and should be done in light of what I've said. I'm not saying that everything that could go wrong will go wrong but that it's appropriate to anticipate what could go wrong, especially when the reasons are entirely predictable. Ordinary human problems like inter-personal miscommunication and misunderstanding, reconciling different preferences, resolving conflicts of interest—these problems are magnified where interaction occurs across the dividing lines of race, class, language, religion, social custom, nationality, etc. Interactions between tourists and indigenous people take place across almost as many dividing lines as we can imagine. Interactions between tourists and indigenous people take place across almost as many dividing lines as we can imagine. And these divisions reinforce each other, cumulate, to the point that a gulf, not a gap, separates the actors in the philanthropy drama. This is a set of structural features that are given. These givens won't change even if we want them to.

This is not, by the way, an argument for not being philanthropic—though it could be. You could say to yourself, "I came to this conference feeling good about doing good. This was going to be a feel-good experience. Then Abernethy came along, and he threw not just a little bit of mist on this parade. He doused it with a torrential downpour. Well, I'm unhappy to have heard him. I wish the conference sponsors hadn't invited the guy. I'm afraid that's the end of Travelers' Philanthropy." No, not really. But that's a possible reaction on your part. That's a risk.

The approach I favor is to say it's worthwhile to develop this new field of travelers' philanthropy, if only because not to do so when wealthy tourists are surrounded by immense, visible, often heart-wrenching human need is ethically irresponsible. But from the start we need to recognize the risks, even the likelihood, of failure. Donors can be encouraged to say, "We're going to give money for a project, and it will be worthwhile even if nobody says thank you. And if they don't thank us we'll understand why not. We will not treat that as a reason for us to become angry, because if we were in the recipients' shoes maybe we would be pissed off too at how humiliating it is to take a handout from rich people we never saw before, just passing through, throwing us crumbs as their busses leave. Since we might not want to say thank you either, why set a higher standard for them and expect them to?"

What's crucial here is a lowering of expectations, and understanding through the active exercise of cross-cultural empathy why things you expect to work out may not work out. "OK, now I get it. I can see it's reason three and reason four why the project never got off the ground." It's not that the recipients are culturally different from me and morally worse than I am: that they're lazy, welfare bums, thieves, and so forth. No, it's the opposite: it's that they're like me in so many ways. They are part of the human family of which I, luckily, am also a part. We're all, donors and recipients, members of the same club. Let's welcome each other to the club. Precisely because some indigenous people dislike dependent relationships while others seek to take advantage of them, we can see both reactions not as strange and ungrateful but as rational and self-interested. It just happens that their behavior messes up my benevolent plans. OK, I'll try again. But I'll try again with a better awareness of how people I'm trying to help might see me and my money as problems and not just as solutions to problems, and with renewed respect for their capacity—indeed, their power—to call the shots and mess up my plans because they conflict with their plans.

Why do people spend lots of money to visit distant lands? There are lots of reasons, but

one is to explore the possibility of empathizing with the people we meet. Travel philanthropy can create situations of deep empathy not only when a project succeeds but also when it fails. Think of a failed project as alerting donors to the fact that recipient communities have stratification systems, like donor communities; that recipients pay close attention to relative gains and—like donors albeit in very different social and economic situations—may oppose a project benefiting everyone if someone else benefits more than they do. If I as a donor take empathy seriously and put myself in a recipient's shoes, I can appreciate why my generosity was not only insufficient but perhaps also an obstacle to achieving my goals. The resulting revelation into the human condition, transcending cultural difference, might be a truly positive outcome in its own right.

I have a recommendation that might help reduce some of these problems. As tour operators, encourage directors of lodges where tourists stay to seek out an indigenous, preferably grass-roots NGO that has a proven track record, that's handled money from other donors in the past, and that appears to be accepted as legitimate by local people. Become familiar with the organization's activities, so if a tourist comes to lodge staff and expresses a desire to help, there's a list at hand of ongoing NGO projects, including some that may be close to what the tourist has in mind. Or you and the NGO, with appropriate community participation, could devise a set of more ambitious projects that pass the "stakeholder involvement" test and could be undertaken if donors came along with a substantial amount of cash. Project goals and specs would already be written up, ready to be shown to a prospective donor rather than prepared weeks or months after the tourist departed. Where a donor wants the money for a specific purpose, the lodge director could ask if it would be acceptable to redirect the funds if another project can be shown to have broader community support and be more likely to be maintained. The donor would have to approve any redesignation. But at least there would be a mechanism for checking the fit (or lack of it) between donor and recipient preferences.

Note a potential tradeoff here between impulsiveness and impact. There's less chance the donor will proceed on the basis of a spontane-

ous, heartfelt feeling, but a greater chance that donor intentions will match actual outcomes and hence be truly ethical.

On Stanford Travel/Study trips on which I've lectured, I've tried to build into the itinerary a meeting with at least one NGO that tells us—and, if possible, shows us—what it does. In Sri Lanka in 1983 our group met leaders of Sarvodaya Shramadana, a Buddhist community development organization. In South Africa in 1997 our group visited various violence prevention programs sponsored by the Amy Biehl Foundation. Amy Biehl was a Stanford undergraduate who went to Cape Town on a Fulbright Fellowship after graduation and, in 1993, was murdered while driving friends home at night in an African township just before she was scheduled to return to the States. I taught Amy a course on southern Africa in her freshman year. So I was deeply affected by her tragic death and by the subsequent transformation of her parents, Peter and Linda Biehl, who carried on their daughter's work by devising many creative projects in Cape Town's African and Coloured townships. I insisted that our tour group meet participants in Biehl Foundation projects, in large part to assuage my own sense of unease. Frankly, I didn't want to be taking a bunch of rich white people, myself included, to post-apartheid South Africa and not go into a township and see what life was like there as a legacy of the old system of racial discrimination. It just would make me feel so bloody guilty, pretending in effect that South Africa was a white person's country when all the while I was lecturing on the origins of apartheid and the history of the anti-apartheid struggle. I just couldn't and wouldn't do it. Scheduling a visit to a place like Guguletu or Khayelitsha to see an NGO working with local people for a positive goal became a precondition for my taking a leadership role for a tour to that country.

And it turned out—as Duncan well knows because he was there—for many of the tourists who had seen the best game parks of southern and eastern Africa, that Sunday morning in St. Gabriel's Roman Catholic Church in Guguletu, which was set up for us by the Biehls, was far and away the most memorable and emotionally powerful experience of the entire trip. I still tear up when I think of it: members of our group deftly scattered among African congregants, exchanging greetings and sharing communion with them, hearing a sermon preached in English and Xhosa, standing around after the service as teenage boys and girls played incredible riffs on the church's marimbas. Duncan had tears in his eyes, too. And when I said, "Duncan, aren't we supposed to be at the vineyards in two hours?," he said, "This is why we came. This service." It was an incredibly moving experience, planned in one sense yet ultimately unplanned. It showed the tremendous value of linking tourists, as human beings, with local people, fellow human beings, in a setting allowing for mutual communication. That wouldn't have happened had there not been an organization with local roots as well as connections outward—in this case directly to my own university.

I just came back from a Travel/Study trip to Egypt. Before leaving the States I contacted Dr. Iman Bibars, who directs the Middle East and North Africa program of an organization called Ashoka. I think Ashoka is a great program. For those of you who don't know about it, an excellent book about how and why it was formed and what it does—*How to Change the World* by David Bornstein—has just come out, published by Oxford University Press.

Basically they identify social entrepreneurs, mostly in the Third World but some in Eastern Europe and some in the United States, ▶

individuals who have innovative ideas benefiting society and the vision and skill and perseverance to bring them to fruition. Ashoka Fellows receive a stipend for three years to work on implementing and diffusing their ideas.

So my thought for Egypt was, let's have Dr. Bibars and a small group of Ashoka Fellows meet our group. She agreed, and spent an hour with thirty-five of us, first talking about a women's advocacy group she had formed and then introducing three recently selected Fellows. One of them is the first deaf/mute to graduate from an Egyptian university. And the guy is setting up an organization for deaf and mute people in Egypt so they can lead productive lives. He "signed" for a translator who knew sign language in Arabic. The translator then spoke in Arabic. Then Dr. Bibars told the group in English what the translator had said. The audience was visibly moved by the man's story and by the way it was conveyed to us. It showed me, once again, that if you want tourists to have an emotionally powerful experience, it has to involve other people. It just has to. They're a whole lot more interesting than wild animals. They are a whole lot more interesting than snow fields, than mountains. I mean, mountains are great; some of my best friends are mountains. But people beat mountains and beaches and jungles and the high seas every time. To see this man communicating with us through sign language, across just about every barrier and divide you could imagine—well, it really touched a chord.

OK. That's the value of having a local NGO present what it does. The organization comes to you at your invitation, or the tour group visits the organization's offices or one of its projects in the field. I urge all of you to build into your programs, into your itineraries, a visit with an organization that has indigenous leadership, indigenous roots, has a track record, and might be the potential recipient of the traveler's generosity. Because my inclination after the presentation by the deaf/mute man was, "Now that's where I would like to put some money." True, he wasn't someone I happened to meet, like the little girl or the merchant in the imaginary story I told earlier. He was an exceptional person, a social entrepreneur who became an Ashoka Fellow after an extremely competitive process. As a side

note, one of the criteria for selecting a Fellow is ethical quality. I'm confident this NGO isn't going to run away with the money, and neither is this man.

Now I'll grant that in both the South African and Egyptian situations, the NGOs I contacted had American origins and headquarters. In this respect they were not grassroots indigenous organizations. But they had succeeded in linking up with indigenous people who in turn had grassroots connections and a good sense of the local community's pulse. You want to give tourists a feeling for grassroots organizational action, preferably if the agency is local and indigenous but, as a fallback position, if it's part of a larger unit based in a developed country. An important goal is to illustrate indigenous self-reliance and initiative and thus counter images of Third World passivity and welfare dependency that run all too frequently through our minds. In any event, you tour operators will know far more about grassroots operations in areas where you work than I did, operating on my own out of Stanford.

If you collaborate with an NGO, remember that donor spontaneity is severely reduced, maybe gone, though there could be a spontaneous response to several options the NGO presents. But what is added is the organization's capacity to solicit community preferences and get the job done. Presumably this is in partnership with the tour operator or lodge. I don't necessarily mean to exclude the lodge or operator. But there has to be a partnership, a real one, not just simply symbolic, between recipients and managers of a given tourist facility. Absent that partnership—and absent the discussion of maintenance, which has to be a tough discussion in advance—the chances of long-term success are pretty small. With these features present the chances are increased. They're up from 18 percent to 31 percent. That's actually a big improvement. 31 percent is a high percentage, considering the potential for miscommunication, misunderstanding, and resentment across these huge gaps, that are ironically the very basis for the appeal of travelers' philanthropy. The gaps really are there.

But if you ever have the opportunity to increase the chances of success from 18 to 31 percent, seize it. ●

# SUSTAINABLE TRAVEL

deborah mclaren advocates for indigenous communities and their environments

## BY DEBORAH MCLAREN

Deborah McLaren is an international leader in the movement toward responsible tourism. Her journey began with a long-anticipated vacation to Jamaica in the 1980s. In her provocative book *Rethinking Tourism & Ecotravel*, she writes, "I bought into the dream that I could go to Jamaica as a package-deal tourist and have a profound experience with local people. In fact I did have a profound experience, but not the type for which I was searching."

What Deborah found was an on-going struggle with racism, oppression, and hardship amid a "fantasy tourism culture" of waterfall hikes and all-inclusive resorts, where "local people were banned from the beach."

Deborah returned to the U.S. critical of traditional tourism: "It offered no mechanism for fostering friendships with locals or gaining insight into local cultures," she writes.

She came to further question the validity of the popularized notion of eco-tourism—an idea created with good intentions, she argues, but which has been marketed indiscriminately and is often in conflict with local people and the very wilderness and wildlife it promotes. Her examples of eco-tourism failures include some of those locations that are most popular or, as it has been said, are "being loved to death": Costa Rica, the Galapagos, and the Himalayas.

Yet, Deborah's book is not a manifesto to stop traveling; rather, it offers a thoughtful and compelling message to rethink tourism so that it does benefit local people and their environments.

Advocating on behalf of indigenous people worldwide is at the heart of what Deborah now does. As founder of Indigenous Tourism Rights International ([www.tourismrights.org](http://www.tourismrights.org)), formerly the Rethinking Tourism Project, she and her nonprofit organization are dedicated to collaborating with Indigenous communities and networks to help protect native territories, rights and cultures. She holds a master's degree in social ecology, and she has lived and worked throughout Asia and the Americas.

In Jan/Feb 1999 *Transitions Abroad* published Deborah's article about working with the conservation arm of the Bhutanese government in designing an ecotourism management plan for its Jigme Dorji National Park. She met with community members to discuss the national park and to encourage their participation in its planning and management.

This summer Deborah helped organize the first-ever online conference, *Rethinking Indigenous Tourism Certification*, intended for Indigenous Peoples who are concerned about tourism certification, working on certification, or working to develop sustainable tourism in their communities.

I spoke with Deborah about her views on responsible travel. To read the prologue to her book, go to [www.planeta.com/planeta/97/1197rtpo.html](http://www.planeta.com/planeta/97/1197rtpo.html). To learn more about Indigenous Tourism Rights International, visit [www.tourismrights.org](http://www.tourismrights.org).

**Sherry Schwarz: In *Rethinking Tourism & Ecotravel* you mention the inherently negative impacts of tourism and you refer to new**

**threats like the spread of sex and drug tourism. Yet, you include a heartening quote from Virginia Hadsell, founder of the Center for Responsible Tourism: "You must know the dark side of tourism! It grows. But there are encouraging pockets of responsible opportunities for travel that benefit both host and guest." What are some of the responsible opportunities you favor?**

**DEBORAH MCLAREN:** Tourism is one of the world's largest industries and as citizens of North America we can participate in tourism, as well as advocate for and support some pretty exciting changes in travel. International, even domestic tourism is a bit scarier these days. The travel industry is working hard to address some of these issues, making security a priority and providing up-to-date travel warnings. I think its very important to look at all of these issues and make safe choices.

Human rights groups have gotten into monitoring some situations and either providing insightful information to travelers who opt to visit regions like Tibet, or develop full-scale boycotts like they have in Burma (Myanmar). There are a lot of new choices out there, as well as some that have proven very successful over time. For example, there are responsible tourism operators who not only understand the culture and people they send tourists to, but they work to develop long-term relationships and return benefits to local communities. Kurt Kutay is the president of Wildland Adventures, Inc. ([www.wildland.com](http://www.wildland.com)) and the non-profit Travelers Conservation Trust. He's been a leader in developing programs that support local communities while continuing to build a critical analysis of global travel and its impacts. Wildland Adventures understands that the arrival of tourists alters the nature of a place and therefore it works to build the kind of inter-cultural, interpersonal and environmental bonds that enhance rather than exploit the people and places where we travel.

Organizations like Tourism Rights ([www.tourismrights.org](http://www.tourismrights.org)) and Tourism Concern ([www.tourismconcern.org.uk](http://www.tourismconcern.org.uk)) have organized human rights campaigns, such as those to protect porters and design policies that protect sacred sites, Indigenous communities, and biological diversity. Numerous new community-based tourism programs in Namibia, Botswana, and Ghana are very grassroots oriented and promote small, sustainable local programs.

The Internet is a new important resource. [Accommodate.co.za](http://Accommodate.co.za) is an online destination marketing portal focused on community-based tourism across townships and rural villages in South Africa. Ron Mader, the host of [www.planeta.com](http://www.planeta.com) has built the largest ecotourism web site on the planet. Not only does he provide accurate, insightful information about tourism in Latin America, he has hosted numerous conferences and given presentations to advocate on behalf of local communities. He also hosts traveler get-togethers in Mexico to connect and inform international tourists.

Fair Trade Tourism is a new and exciting area. Currently South Africa Fair Trade Tourism ([www.fairtourismsa.org.za](http://www.fairtourismsa.org.za)) is one of the leaders in this field. Instead of focusing solely on economic development, fair trade provides a framework for human rights and just economics. ▶

**SS: You are critical of Western “development” agencies like the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and the World Trade Organization. What more effective measures do you propose for ensuring the wellbeing of more of the world’s people?**

**DM:** It’s definitely hard. Those organizations are in the development game and are very top-down in their development approach. Even the environmental organizations and tourism development groups that are associated with them lack real insight and connections to the communities they are targeting. It’s a well-worn development path. They must change their approach in order to understand issues that are important to the communities that are targeted for tourism development. In order to make a real difference they will have to tackle issues such as collective rights, Indigenous development, and international sustainable tourism policies and work directly with Indigenous networks and grassroots organizations. These communities require their own, culturally-appropriate technical assistance and want to follow the policies that they recently been won to protect their resources.

**SS: What advice can you share with readers to make their travel experiences more worthwhile for themselves and their host communities?**

**DM:** I think the best advice is really to choose a mix of travel and personal experiences. Most people end up disappointed when they think they are going to paradise. Understanding the political, social and financial situation of your destination can really help. So many people have asked me this question over the years. My advice is to be yourself and reflect that in your travels. If you are a teacher, find out about educational volunteer opportunities where you plan to go and connect with them in advance. You’ll be with your own community and will be able to relate to people who are very similar. The value of that kind of experience is tremendous. Same with doctors, students, archeologists, gardeners, seniors, whatever you may be. What do you do in your own community? If its important to you, spend the necessary time in advance to do your homework and make your trip really meaningful.

**SS: How did Indigenous Tourism Rights International come about?**

**DM:** It began when I started traveling to Ecuador as a human rights witness about fifteen years ago. There were so many issues facing the Indigenous Peoples there—from logging the Amazon rainforest, to oil exploitation, to roadbuilding. The elders were very concerned about the next wave of development, tourism. They wanted information for their communities in order to make informed choices about their long-term development. The Rethinking Tourism Project was initially set up to be an information network and resource for communities. We focused on information sharing and education, training. We were asked by Indigenous organizations to monitor international policies at the United Nations and provide feedback and advice. Eventually, we decided that we had done enough “rethinking” and our work had really taken on a more activist, rights focus. Our board decided to change our name to reflect this. We continue to develop local leadership, facilitate information and networking, and help in the area of international policy and development. The past year or so we have been swamped with “tourism certification” work. Our board has really been the biggest influence on our work. It represents Indigenous Peoples and allies around the world. So our work

has always been at request, reflecting needs of local communities, rather than us going out to look for the work.

**SS: What are some of the most pressing tourism development issues facing the indigenous people with whom you work?**

**DM:** As you can see from this conversation, there is a real need to recognize the rights of Indigenous Peoples. Tourists, tour companies, development agencies, even the World Bank needs to recognize the fact that Indigenous Peoples have made tremendous progress in the past few decades to regain control of their territories. Many development agencies are uncomfortable with concepts like sovereignty and self-development. Unfortunately, many people still view these communities as backwards and isolated, rather than part of a very real, very strong progressive effort. Even the ability to say “no” to tourism is not acceptable to many. Why go somewhere when you aren’t wanted? On the other hand, communities themselves need a lot of support. When their lands and cultures are exploited and turned into cultural amusement parks, everyone loses. Sometimes it comes down to community versus community, or even family versus family in an effort to move into the global economy. There must be a lot more support for Indigenous networking and self-development. This way decisions are made that support the overall goals of the local people and ultimately develop good tourism products. We hope that the fair trade movement will continue to support Indigenous tourism.

**SS: You give countries like Costa Rica the thumbs down on ecotourism development. In this issue we feature Bhutan for its exemplary tourism policy. Are there other examples we should be aware of?**

**DM:** From what I understand from people who work there, the Costa Rica sustainable tourism program is basically a shell. There are some local programs that seem very good, but as far as government programs, they don’t seem to really have it together. Several South African and European countries are promoting interesting tourism products and services, such as fair trade, eco-agrotourism, and initiatives like this. Canada’s various territories are also making exciting progress in Aboriginal-owned tours and development.

**SS: You see tourism as a potential tool for organizing, establishing links between diverse sectors of people, and for actively working against an exploitative global industry. How can travelers returning home affect positive changes in tourism? Are there particular resources you recommend?**

**DM:** Get involved! Stay connected through efforts in your own community. Share your travel experiences with friends and family. Offer to give workshops at high schools, colleges and churches. Blog. Exchange information. I am hoping to set up a web site in the near future, with guidelines and support for ethical travel, where travelers can contribute information about their travels: what worked, what didn’t? The Internet has been a tremendous technology for planning, learning, connecting, and staying in touch. It’s also a great way to communicate while you are traveling.

Join international organizations. Some well-known travel groups like Global Exchange ([www.globalexchange.org](http://www.globalexchange.org)) and Oxfam ([www.oxfam.org.uk](http://www.oxfam.org.uk)) have long offered insightful tours to places like the Bush in Australia or alternative spring breaks to Brazil. Seek out responsible tour agents. Cutting edge companies like exodus ([www.exodus.co.uk](http://www.exodus.co.uk)) or Himalayan High Treks ([www.himalayanhightreks.com](http://www.himalayanhightreks.com)). ▶

com) team up to support projects in the areas they visit. For example, they do tree planting, donate clothes for porters on Himalayan treks, and even support community education efforts. Other organizations like the Resource Center of the Americas ([www.americas.org](http://www.americas.org)) conduct responsible tourism workshops and have educational materials for students when traveling abroad.

Learn more about international alliances that are working on tourism issues. For example, last year a gathering coordinated by Ecumenical Coalition on Tourism (ECOT) and Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) delivered a declaration on tourism and terrorism that should be mandatory reading for all international travelers. ([www.cca.org.hk](http://www.cca.org.hk)). TEN: Third World Tourism Ecumenical European Net and respect ([www.respect.at](http://www.respect.at)), an organization sponsored by the Austrian government, are networks composed of development agencies, aid agencies, church-groups, solidarity groups and individuals who are active in the field of tourism and the effects it has on the people of the Third World. There are movements like this in India, Latin America, South Africa, and other places. Google "responsible tourism" or "community tourism." Read *Transitions Abroad* and visit web sites like [www.planeta.com](http://www.planeta.com). Universities and colleges offer a lot of alternative travel (the Center for Global Education at Augsburg College ([www.augsburg.edu/global/](http://www.augsburg.edu/global/)) in Minneapolis is well known). A number of environmental, human rights, religious, and other nonprofits organize alternative and exchange travel. Some of them include the Plowshares Institute ([www.plowsharesinstitute.com](http://www.plowsharesinstitute.com)) and Marazul Travel ([www.marazulcharters.com](http://www.marazulcharters.com)). Learn more about the places you visit before you go, so you can connect in advance—not just briefly while you are there. Buy books on this topic, and support publishers that are willing to promote books and magazines that provide a critical perspective. A nice resource is Tourism Concern's *The Good Alternative Travel Guide* or their *Community Based Tourism Handbook*, which provides information on how to choose a destination.

My own *Rethinking Tourism and Ecotravel* book has been used by numerous universities, travelers, the media, even communities that are interested in learning about tourism, globalization, and alterna-

tives. I love talking with students, researchers, and travelers around the country about these issues. Subscribe to newsletters published by tourism organizations that provide information to engage in campaigns for social and ecological justice in tourism and development. Third World Network ([www.twinside.org.sg/tour.htm](http://www.twinside.org.sg/tour.htm)) has plenty of good information and links.

**SS: What are a few simple starting points for responsible travel that all of us can practice when visiting a country?**

**DM:** Many of the organizations I have already mentioned offer thoughtful guidelines for both tourists and tour operators. The International Center for Responsible Tourism has a good website: [www.zoo.co.uk/~z0007842/icrttouroperatorinitiatives.htm](http://www.zoo.co.uk/~z0007842/icrttouroperatorinitiatives.htm). The best advice I can give anyone is to go as yourself, understand why you need to travel wherever it is you are going, and connect long in advance to organizations and people in your destination. It is difficult to ever achieve real friendship and insight as a "guest" in a place where you have no connections, no past and most likely no future...where you will likely never achieve equitable relationships without working to build them realistically. Learn about the political realities most people are facing in the place you want to visit. Are there existing boycotts to that area? Be respectful—of yourself and of the local people and culture. Go in peace and hope to learn more about the world. Do your homework. Pay a fair price. Avoid situations where you could be promoting human rights abuses, like low wages or exploitation of child workers. Forget the old thinking "at least we're paying them something" and recognize they might have different choices and perspectives about their own development. Find out if local communities or regions have established grassroots tourism networks and services. And don't burn out! Avoid being a road warrior and take care of yourself. Choose destinations where you can learn as well as rejuvenate. Practice a healthy lifestyle and concern for your community, and take that with you wherever you go. You will find yourself among friends. ●

— COURTESY OF TRANSITIONS ABROAD, 2004

# THE FUTURE OF TRAVEL

## BY VOLKER POELZL

Tourism is the world's largest industry, with nearly 700 million international tourist arrivals in 2000 and total revenues of \$475.8 billion. In the face of such staggering figures the well-known saying "Leave only footprints-take only photographs" sounds naïve; our presence in a foreign country always has an impact, whether we follow the beaten path or the inside path. In addition to the ecological impact of development in environmentally sensitive areas-problems like waste disposal and pollution-there is the destruction of local traditions and traditional ways of life to accommodate tourists' needs. The increased dependency on a cash economy is in part promoted by foreign visitors; however, according to the World Bank, less than 45 percent of the money tourists spend goes to local economies.

## A New Travel Ethic

Travel means discovery, challenge, and new experiences. But a journey of discovery is only successful if it does not destroy what it discovers. Travelers need to educate themselves to minimize their impact on the local environment, infrastructure, people, and culture. An ethics of travel should be concerned not only with the economic impact of travel, but also with how visitors impact the cultures of their host countries.

In 2001 the World Tourism Organization (WTO), an intergovernmental global forum for tourism policy and issues, approved a "Global Code of Ethics for Tourism." While it moves in the right direction, the document's conflicting statements point to the core dilemma of mass travel: According to the WTO interpretation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the right to the freedom of movement and the right to leisure entitle everyone to travel for recreation wherever they please. While this sounds like a reasonable interpretation, it conflicts with the rights of the host people. According to the Human Rights Declaration, everyone is also entitled to the "realization of the economic, social, and cultural rights indispensable for his dignity and the free development of his personality" (article 22). Such social and cultural rights include the right to live unaffected by the economic, cultural, social, and ecological impacts of international tourism.

In a sense, tourism is a Pandora's box. While travel as a way to promote peace, mutual understanding, and friendship between the people of different cultures, it also promotes economic inequalities and cultural and environmental degradation.

## Travel or Consumption?

Much of travel today is about consumption-the consumption of foreign places, cultures, and people. The colorful locals are often objects of curiosity and visual consumption, part of an exotic Arcadia to be admired and photographed. The interactions between the visitor and the local people often do not go beyond the exchanges of seller-buyer and provider-consumer.

We do not just visit cities, mountains, museums, and beaches. We visit the people. They have a right to privacy and to a way of life that

is not shaped by outside forces such as international tourism. The best way to learn to respect the locals is to meet and get to know them. It is in the interactions and encounters between the host and the visitor that an ethics of travel begins. Traditional patterns of hospitality are based on reciprocity. Where friendship and understanding develop, the traditional relationships of seller-buyer and provider-consumer are transformed. More than consuming places and people, travel is an opportunity to break out of our patterns of familiarity and gain insights into the cultures that make up the diversity and complexity of the human race. The more travel becomes a journey of discovery and shared experiences, the less host countries will suffer from the excesses of a leisure-oriented tourism industry.

## Rights and Obligations

Although travelers certainly have rights in foreign countries, we have obligations as well. If we appreciate and respect the cultural, economic, and social integrity of our travel destination, we will want to help it by choosing a low-impact and non-intrusive ways of travel-to give preference to small, locally-owned operations that are sensitive to the ecosystem and local culture. It is also important to interact with the local people in their authentic cultural context and ignore the stereotypes of tourist brochures and the glossy travel press. Travelers should also look at favorite tourist activities such as picture-taking and souvenir-buying in the context of their impact on their host country and its people. The local infrastructure should be used moderately, without drastically increasing demands, and travelers should consider buying products that are characteristic of the local culture and tradition, not those that are a byproduct of the tourism industry.

## Can We Make a Difference?

There is no way to turn back the clock to the days before jet travel, when only a few people ventured to foreign countries. The tourist industry will continue to grow. Distant locations and people will continue to be exploited as travel destinations. We all leave footprints in the places we travel, but we can learn to minimize them and reduce their impact. We can also set examples for others by following our own ethics of travel. An increasing number of travel businesses have recognized that responsible, ethical, and respectful travel is in fact the only solution for the preservation of our travel destinations and the future of travel.

For a copy of World Tourism Organization's "Global Code of Ethics for Tourism" go to [www.world-tourism.org](http://www.world-tourism.org). For a comprehensive listing of organizations, publications, and ecotour organizers working to preserve our travel destinations and the future of travel, see the Responsible Travel Section or the seventh edition of the Alternative Travel Directory. ●

— COURTESY OF TRANSITIONS ABROAD, 2002

# TRAVELING RESPONSIBLY

## BY RICK STEVES

As we recognize the problems confronting the earth and humankind, more and more people are recognizing the need for the world's industries, such as tourism, to function as tools for peace. Tourism is a \$2 trillion industry that employs more than 60 million people. As travelers gain a global perspective, the demand for socially, environmentally, and economically responsible ways to travel will grow. Peace is more than the absence of war, and if we are to enjoy the good things of life—such as travel—into the next century, the serious issues that confront humankind must be addressed now: through responsible travel and political action.

There are many exciting opportunities for both. Here are a few of my favorite organizations.

Global Volunteers, a nonprofit organization, offers useful “travel with a purpose” trips throughout the world. The work varies by country, but if Europe's your goal, you'll likely teach conversational English in Italy, Spain, Poland, Romania, Turkey, or Ukraine. Ask about peace reconciliation programs in Northern Ireland (375 E. Little Canada Rd., St. Paul, MN 55117-1628; 800-487-1074, fax 651-407-5163; [www.globalvolunteers.org](http://www.globalvolunteers.org).)

Volunteers for Peace, another nonprofit, runs international work-camps to promote goodwill through friendship and community service. Options include historical preservation and conservation projects (1034 Tiffany Rd., Belmont, VT 05730; 802-259-2759, fax 802-259-2922; [www.vfp.org](http://www.vfp.org)).

## Consume Responsibly

Whether you're working or playing, consume responsibly in your travels. Understand your power to shape the marketplace by what you decide to buy—in the grocery store, in the movie theater, or in your choice of hotels.

In my travels (and in my writing), I patronize and support small, family-run, locally-owned businesses: hotels, restaurants, shops, tour guides. I choose people who invest their creativity and resources in giving travelers simple, friendly, sustainable, and honest experiences—people with ideals. Back Door places don't rely on slick advertising and marketing gimmicks, and they don't target the created needs of people whose values are shaped by capitalism gone wild. Traveling responsibly means consuming responsibly. Your trip is a vote for the kind of world we could have.

## Travel Thoughtfully

Travel like Gandhi—with simple clothes, open eyes, and an uncluttered mind. Celebrate the similarities and differences in cultures. Seek international styles of living out of a genuine interest in the people and cultures you visit. Be positive and optimistic, and don't dwell on problems or compare things to back home. Accept and try to understand differences: Paying for your Italian coffee at one counter and picking it up at another may seem inefficient until you realize it's more sanitary—the person handling the food never handles money. Be observant and sensitive: If 60 people are eating quietly

with hushed conversation in a Belgian restaurant, you know it's not the place to yuck it up.

## Speak the Language

Make an effort to bridge that flimsy language barrier. Rudimentary communication in any language is fun and simple, even with a few basic words. On the train to Budapest you might think that a debate with a Hungarian over the merits of a common European currency would be frustrating with a 20-word vocabulary, but you'll surprise yourself at how well you connect just by trying. Don't worry about making mistakes—communicate!

Reach out to meet the people you traveled so far to see. Lunch with a group of Palestinian college students, walk through Moscow with a diehard Communist, and learn why the Swiss aren't completely comfortable with a unified Europe. Go as an ambassador, a guest, a friend. In travel, too, you reap what you sow.

If you want to tackle more than travel, consider political action. Debt keeps the poorest countries poor. Money needed for health care and education is diverted to interest payments. Mozambique, with a per capita income of \$90, a life expectancy of 40, and almost no health care, spends over half its government's income on interest payments. A baby in Nicaragua is born with a debt to the rich world of \$2,000 and a father who earns about \$400 a year. These debts translate into real suffering among local people born long after some dictator borrowed (and squandered) that money. As interest is paid, people go hungry.

The debts are owed mostly to the U.S., Japan, Germany, Britain, and France, either directly or through the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. Rich governments can forgive the debt owed directly to them and pay the market value (10 percent) of the debts owed to the World Bank and International Monetary Fund. The U.S.'s share is under \$2 billion. We have the resources. All America needs is the political will and people power.

For the sake of peace, fragile young democracies, and countless real people, forgiving this debt is the responsible thing for us in the rich world to do. Let's celebrate the new millennium by giving the poor world a break. ●

— COURTESY OF TRANSITIONS ABROAD, 2000

# KIDNAPPED IN RWANDA

how to be a responsible travel activist

BY ROBERT POWELL SANGSTER

When I was in Rwanda in 1992, just prior to the genocide, van driver Oswaldo Rugembage told me a heartbreaking story about his youngest sister. She died in their small village about 50 kilometers from Kigali, the capital, and Oswaldo knew exactly what killed her.

The well that serves the village was continuously fouled by animals. The family realized the danger of drinking contaminated water but firewood for boiling water was scarce, and they had no money to buy wood from the peddler's cart. Even when they carried water in heavy urns from a source miles away, there was no guarantee it was clean.

Within three months after her birth, his sister developed chronic diarrhea. She couldn't keep anything down; couldn't gain weight. Her eyes became unnaturally deep-set. Tendons looked like twine holding her knee joints together. Six months later, toward the end, she didn't have enough energy to raise her head from the cot.

After hearing that story, I was kidnapped—emotionally. I simply couldn't walk away and do nothing.

This leads me to say a few words about "responsible travel." The most conservative view is that we ought to stay home because visiting other cultures inevitably corrupts them. In a few places, that may be true. Others say, "Okay, go, but leave only footprints behind." That is, minimize your impact. That makes sense.

## Responsible Travel: An Activist's View

However, I propose a more activist view of responsible travel. My definition includes having a positive impact. This is trickier than it appears. As a traveler, it takes a good deal of thought to be sure that what you perceive or interpret is reality. Having said this, there are certainly areas in which a traveler can take responsible action with little fear of ambiguities. One of these is health.

With Oswaldo's story on my mind, I talked with several other local people, an elderly doctor, and two NGO workers on an AIDS project. I learned that one major reason there are no economic "tigers" (a la Malaysia, Singapore, etc.) in Africa is that so many people are chronically sick. Water-borne diseases are a major cause, including persistent diarrhea that kills millions and leaves tens of millions malnourished and with barely enough energy to work at a subsistence level and not enough to progress in school. As I later criss-crossed the African continent I paid close attention to health conditions. They were, and are, appalling.

## No One Said it's Easy

I returned to the U.S. and spent two years researching ways to remove pathogens from contaminated water. Finally, I was satisfied we had developed a system that is effective, durable, transportable, and cheap. Our small non-profit donates these units, each one of which serves about 400 people, in underdeveloped countries.

I began this undertaking with no background in engineering and no expertise in achieving good water quality. However, input from the Pan American Health Organization, various NGOs, and the private

sector overcame my shortcomings. The lesson is that, no matter what your project, there's plenty of help available.

## Other Ways of Helping

Paola Gianturco took an approach different from mine. Seeing various serious needs during her travels to remote places motivated her to use photography and vivid descriptions to bring them to the attention of the wider world. After considerable research, she made return visits to each place to be included in her first book, *In Her Hands: Craftswomen Changing the World*. Her book illustrates the efforts of scores of craftswomen to use their skills to improve their lives and those of their extended families. On the book's web site there's a section entitled "You Can Help" where Gianturco lists useful actions one can take and effective organizations to support.

Yet another tactic, one taken by many responsible travelers, is that of importing goods from less-developed countries. I've imported seafood from Chile, soccer balls from India, and rugby jerseys from New Zealand (okay, hardly a third world country). And when time permits, there are wonderful textiles in Bolivia and Uzbekistan, teak and stone carvings in Zambia, and...well, the list is long. The point is that any importer who pays fair prices benefits the local economy. That's responsible.

## The Old Fashioned Way: Money

Sometimes a trip is just a trip and a traveler is not shirking a duty by simply enjoying the ride. But if you feel even a little bit "kidnapped" by what you experience, consider making donations to organizations whose committed staffs toil day after day in tough conditions. Rather than just sending money to some outfit whose van you saw driving around the place you visited, do some research. Non-profits are rated on the Internet in terms of effectiveness, percentage of revenues spent on overhead, and so on. I routinely support Doctors Without Borders and the American Friends Service Committee.

To me, part of the definition of responsible travel includes recognizing and acting on opportunities. ●

*(Note: Oswaldo Rugembage was later killed in the conflict. His surviving family members were forced to flee.)*

— COURTESY OF TRANSITIONS ABROAD, 2004

# TOURISM AND POVERTY

reflections on the world bank

**BY RON MADER**

Ambitious does not begin to describe the World Bank's mission: ridding the world of poverty.

Tourism is a major service industry and rural communities and cities alike depend on tourism revenues to fuel the economy and generate employment. But the World Bank has been slow to develop and implement pro-poor tourism strategies and even slower in communicating what it has done.

Travelers interested in visiting rural villages and supporting ecotourism should ask the pertinent question: how is this work funded? A follow-up question needs to be addressed to the World Bank (as well as to other development agencies): how are you supporting ecotourism and responsible travel?

In July 2002 I participated in a review of a document commissioned by the World Bank about ecotourism opportunities in Oaxaca, Mexico. The report—"Oaxaca Ecotourism Study," supported financing forestry projects that include an ecotourism component. The document was prepared in secret, the study is not available online, nor has there been a reference to the work on the World Bank web site.

I am not criticizing the loan, just the lack of imagination. If the information were made public at all stages of development, the bank-funded initiatives would stand a greater chance of success. Transparency creates opportunities. How do you create synergies when the principal actors (aka "stakeholders") are not informed?

In February 2003 I moderated a World Bank forum on "What is Responsible Tourism? What is Sustainable Tourism?" The seminar was coordinated by the Educational Travel Conference and included presentations by Malia Asfour, John Henderson, Eleanor Sterling, Kim Whytock, Mark Woodward, and me.

The organizers (Carol Reed and Alicia Stevens) said the presentations were being videotaped (cameras were buzzing overhead) for inclusion in a CD. Also, they promised to prepare a summary document which would be posted on the World Bank web site. Six months later, I've seen nothing: no documentation, no post-forum dialogues.

During the online Financing Sustainable Tourism Conference I recently hosted ([www.planeta.com/ecotravel/tour/ecotourism\\_financing.html](http://www.planeta.com/ecotravel/tour/ecotourism_financing.html)) one of the participants proposed that we create a directory of failed sustainable tourism projects. That idea did not go over well when I repeated it at the World Bank.

But surely knowing what hasn't worked would be useful. Supposedly, of 100 internationally-funded projects in Ecuador, 95 have failed. I'd like to know why—not to cast blame, but so that we might learn something from the mistakes.

We should all join the World Bank in its challenge to rid the world of poverty! Tourism alone will not be the cure-all, but readers of Transitions Abroad demonstrate time after time that they support those organizations and companies that contribute to the economic and environmental well-being of communities around the globe.

As for getting better information from the World Bank, we can contact them and ask them to show what they are funding. As these details become more accessible, so will the chances that ecotourism

and responsible travel will have greater support from the traveling public.

**Contact:** World Bank, 1818 H Street, NW, Washington DC, 20433; [www.worldbank.org](http://www.worldbank.org).

## Defining Ecotourism & Responsible Tourism

The term "ecotourism" seems to have a different definition for everyone. While the details vary, most definitions of ecotourism boil down to a special form of tourism that meets three criteria:

1. It provides for conservation measures;
2. It includes meaningful community participation;
3. It is profitable and can sustain itself.

These three components of ecotourism are difficult to accomplish individually, let alone as a package. Moreover, they are difficult to measure or quantify. Assuming you wanted to know which are the "best ecotourism destinations," the question must follow: How is one to judge?

Membership in groups such as The International Ecotourism Society (TIES) requires only the payment of a membership fee. Members sign a pledge stating that they will be a "responsible traveler or travel-related professional who conserves natural environments and sustains the well-being of local people."

While this ethic sounds good and this self-regulatory system boasts the best of intentions, it lacks any system of double-checking information and no "teeth." If projects are to be considered ecotourism, they must include local participation and they must assist conservation efforts. This is not to say that tourism services that don't include these components are bad. They simply are not ecotourism.

We need to pay special attention to the consequences of ecotourism—some of which are negative impacts to both local cultures and the environment. One of the best interactive and thoughtful pages on the Web was developed by Dave Schaller. Check out and play Amazon Interactive, an "Ecotourism Simulation Game" in which you manage a nascent ecotourism project in Ecuador.

"Responsible tourism" calls attention to the fact that much of tourism simply is not responsible. Locals are exploited. Natural or cultural resources are treated with disrespect.

For travelers, responsible travel is simply treating others with the same respect you would ask for in your own community. While the tourism industry has long touted "destinations," in fact we are simply entering someone else's home. ●

— COURTESY OF PLANETA.COM, 2006

# NATURE TRAVEL: THE BASICS

## BY BILL BELLEVILLE

Nature travel is so trendy these days that just about anyone with a few trees, some half-addled critters on a tether, and a bit of open space not edged with concrete calls themselves an “eco-tourist” destination or resort.

We invite you to take a virtual exploration of what nature travel is really about—what to look for, what to avoid, and how to tell the difference between them.

First, let’s settle on what “eco-travel” is really about. The International Ecotourism Society ([www.ecotourism.org](http://www.ecotourism.org)), a nonprofit agency that helps set standards and ethics for the industry, describes it as “travel to a natural place that both conserves the place and the culture associated with it.” In other words, nature travel isn’t loading up a boat with a few thousand tourists and dumping them on a tiny island full of penguins or tortoises or some fuzzy-but-overstressed species.

In fact, the most genuine sort of ecologically sensitive travel doesn’t even consider visiting a destination unless that destination has a management plan or strategy in place to monitor tourism impacts—and to restrict them when natural sustainability is at risk.

Beyond this approach, however, the breadth of nature travel can be divided into two major types:

### Pure Eco-travel

In this variety, visitors spend their entire time exclusively in a place themed to nature. Such a place might be the Galapagos Islands—a sort of cradle of evolutionary biology—where nightlife and neon are virtually nonexistent. The biggest surprise of such a place comes not from hitting three cherries on the slot machine but watching a blue-footed booby perform its mating dance, or a nesting frigate extend its throat like a red balloon.

### Auxiliary Eco-travel

Here, you visit a traditional tourist site and then spend part of your visit exploring more natural aspects of the destination. In this case, you might go to St. Lucia in the Caribbean for the umbrella drinks and the luster of the fancy beach resorts, and then end up snorkeling the reef and hiking a trail through the mountain rain forest. Insiders call this “eco-tourism lite,” and see it as a way of educating traditional tourists by using such local devices as interpretive nature paths, botanical parks and zoos, and novice-level snorkeling trails. Auxiliary eco-tourism can best be ferreted out during your trip by reviewing brochures and flyers at your hotel and by asking the concierge about the availability of local nature tours.

However, if you are a more serious “green” traveler, you’ll want to be more particular from the very beginning about selecting a destination at all. And there are some fundamental questions to ask, either of your tour operator and/or the lodge or green resort where you intend to stay.

### Know Before You Go

1. What is the track record of your tour operators? How long have they been in business? Are the guides naturalists or just glib public relations types more interested in tips than in helping you have a true eco-tourism experience?

2. Will your guides harass or “herd” the animals in any way to get them to perform for you and your camera? Do they bait or feed them? Will the animals be available in their natural setting, and will the appearance of your group be as unobtrusive as possible? As for culture, will you be visiting sacred sites without permission of the indigenous people who still revere them?

3. Does the lodge or eco-facility blend in well with the natural environment? Is solid waste (read: garbage) and wastewater processed in such a way that it doesn’t degrade the sites? Are alternative methods of supplying power considered, such as solar panels, photovoltaic cells, and wind generators? Transporting fossil fuel to remote sites can be both incredibly expensive as well as environmentally problematic.

4. Is there a plan that limits the number of visitors to a certain site and closely monitors that site for degradation? In recent years, Costa Rica—once a premier eco-tourism destination—is now scrambling to recover its reputation as a result of degradation and tourism overload.

5. Understand why you want to visit a site—something beyond the fact that it advertises “ecotourism” or “jungle tours.” Do you have an interest in birding or certain “charismatic mega-fauna” like large beasts? Is your interest in habitats themselves—swamps, savannahs, rain forests? Research the subject thoroughly before selecting a site so you’ll be more knowledgeable about it. When you arrive, you’ll also have a better idea of what you’re looking at.

6. Consider joining a volunteer group that works closely in the environment, usually helping a professional in their field research. EarthWatch does this well on land, and the Oceanic Society does so along the coast and in the sea. The Sierra Club and Audubon Society offer group tours that often interface with working scientists, as do many museums, such as New York’s Museum of Natural History, and, increasingly, large city aquariums, such as the National Aquarium at Baltimore.

7. The admonishments to “take nothing but pictures,” or, for divers, “leave nothing but bubbles,” may sound trite—but they are actually quite profound. If you are in a public preserve or park, collecting anything, including plants or even empty shells, is often prohibited. And, if a local vendor is selling souvenirs made from local fauna and flora, make sure its origin isn’t threatened or endangered. The idea of nature travel, after all, is to leave the place just as wild as you found it—both for the traveler who comes after you and the indigenous person who may still be living in harmony with his or her local environment. If you find yourself with a tour guide who operates otherwise, it is your responsibility to express your concern with such behavior—you are, after all, the paying customer. ●

# THE IMPACT OF STUDY ABROAD

## educational travel as a model for responsible tourism

BY SHOSHANNA SUMKA

My semester abroad experience in a small village on the island of Sumatra prompted me to begin research on the impacts of tourism in host communities. My classmates and I spent four of the most amazing, eye-opening months of our lives living, working, and studying alongside the Minangkabau people of Western Sumatra. While we benefitted greatly from the exchange, I wondered about the village after we left. Did the community also gain from the experience?

Tourism has been promoted as a possible answer to environmental, economic, and cultural losses. But tourism has also been shown to create its own profound problems. Educational travel, in the form of study abroad programs, appears to offer a model for responsible tourism, tourism that has the potential to avoid the problems inherent in traditional or "mass" tourism by providing real benefits to the hosts as well as to the participants in the programs.

### Negative Effects of Tourism

Tourism, generally defined as temporary stays of people traveling primarily for leisure or recreational purposes, is often said to hold benefits for the destination communities--as an economic boost or even for environmental conservation. All too often, no such positive effects occur. Moreover, both the local communities and the visitors are often disappointed with the outcome. For the visitors, the search for authenticity produces an unattainable paradox: As soon as tourists enter the scene the local people have to put on a show to satisfy tourists' expectations; the tourists are then disappointed by the staged version of culture produced for them.

As *Transitions Abroad* contributing editor Deborah McLaren points out in her recent book, *Rethinking Tourism and Ecotourism: The Paving of Paradise and What You Can Do to Stop It* (Kumarian Press, 1998), the unequal power relations between tourists and locals emerge in both economic exchanges and the exchange of knowledge. Because tourists are paying customers, they have "rights" in the host community. One result of this unequal power dynamic is that the tourists never get to know the locals in any meaningful manner; likewise, the locals' view of the tourists is a very superficial one. One problem that stems from this lack of "real" contact between hosts and guests is the stereotyping and idealizing of cultures.

### Benefits of Alternative Tourism

Alternative tourism can be characterized as a form of tourism consistent with natural, social, and community values which allow both hosts and guests to enjoy positive and worthwhile interaction and shared experiences. This implies contact between local communities and tourists in an equal exchange, with both sides benefitting. The interactions between visitors and locals should help develop a respect for other cultures, rather than romanticizing them. Student travelers can be seen as at least potentially responsible travelers because they are in the country for a longer period of time than tourists, either to attend university with host country nationals or to live with a family or both. In all of their interactions--with other students, professors,

family members, and members of the community--the study abroad participants have the time and opportunity to develop meaningful relationships and to learn about the culture of the other.

### Study Abroad as Alternative Tourism

Study abroad programs can be categorized into two broad types. The first is traditional study abroad, often with a language focus, in which the students spend a year or a semester at a foreign university living in a dorm or apartment or sometimes with a host family. The second type is experiential, field-based study abroad in which the emphasis is on non-classroom-based learning. Most such programs have a substantial homestay period. Many experiential programs have a focus on social justice. Study topics include: gender and development, the environment, social change and the arts, multicultural societies, and Indigenous studies.

For a profile of one such successful program and a description of the steps in developing an experiential program, see "ICADS in Central America," an interview with Sandra Kinghorn, and "Experiential Education: Enriching Study Abroad Through Immersion Learning Programs" by Heather Ford in the November/December 1998 issue of *Transitions Abroad*. Other examples of experiential programs include the School for International Training College Semester Abroad's "Nicaragua: Revolution, Transformation and Development." The semester is spent studying the history and politics of both Nicaragua and Cuba, economics and development, culture and identity, and social movements and civil society. The program consists of a seven-week homestay in Managua, a week-long visit to a rural village, and a field trip to Cuba. The Center for Global Education offers an experiential semester program called "Multicultural Societies in Transition: Southern African Perspectives" based in Windhoek, Namibia with homestays with rural and urban Namibian families, regional travel in Namibia, and a two-week seminar in South Africa. Courses are offered in political and social change, the development process, history, and religion. These and programs like them focus on more than just learning a language; they attempt to foster a deepened understanding of a country and its people that goes far beyond what a tourist or even a student on a traditional program would ever learn. For descriptions of experiential programs look under "Directed Field Study" in the new editions of *Academic Year Abroad* and *Vacation Study Abroad* (Institute of International Education).

### Impacts of Educational Travel

To determine whether study abroad really constitutes a form of alternative tourism, I looked for studies on the impacts of educational travel. Not surprisingly, there is little data: the study abroad literature looks mostly at the effects on the students, while the anthropology of tourism literature emphasizes effects on the hosts.

Students who study abroad report that the programs helped them make career and life choices, attain skills in intercultural communication, improve problem solving skills and field research tech- ▶

niques, and gain respect for cultural differences. Students are introduced to new ways of seeing and thinking which challenge old assumptions and beliefs. Third World travel especially leads to a greater understanding of self and a confronting of U.S. values concerning consumerism, individualism, and race-based identity. Students return with a greater global-mindedness. In general, the most commonly observed impacts on students who studied abroad are better foreign language proficiency, more knowledge about the culture, politics, and society of the host country, and altered stereotypes.

The results are not so clear, however, when one takes into account the self-selection of students. Many students who go abroad, as compared to ones who stay at home, may be inclined to a broader world view. One study showed no increase in international understanding because the students who went were already previously concerned about international issues.

An unpublished study by Skye Stephenson for the Council (CIEE) on its semester abroad program in Santiago, Chile includes host families. The main focus of the study was to examine all parties involved with the exchange program, not only the students but the professors and host families as well. "The premise of this study is that not only exchange students but members of the host society who come into contact with them are impacted by the cross-cultural experience,"

Stephenson writes. By surveying the students upon arrival and again at departure the author found that it was difficult for the students to adjust to cultural and value differences and that their experience was more stressful than anticipated. The strongest impact on the host families was a "reaffirming [of] their own sense of being Chilean and in gaining a deeper appreciation of their own culture."

### Planning and Preparation

The limited studies available point to the conclusion that study abroad can be a form of responsible travel when there is an equal exchange between students and hosts. This can happen only when an effort is made on the part of program organizers and students to understand the deeper issues in the cross-cultural experience. Design, preparation, curriculum, orientation, and a homestay period are key elements in a program that can make for a positive experience for all.

If students live in an apartment or dorm with other Americans, their contact with the local people is limited. Economic or social class is also an issue: If privileged U.S. students go to a foreign university with privileged foreign students, as Chip Peterson points out in a 1997 column in this magazine, they may never really experience the broad cultural differences of their new environment. ●

— COURTESY OF TRANSITIONS ABROAD

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# SAVING MACHU PICCHU

responsible tourism is a 3-way deal



## ARTICLE AND PHOTOS BY TIM LEFFEL

Who is responsible for sustainable tourism? The government, the tourism industry, or tourists themselves? All of the above, say progressive tourism operators in Peru, but too many people fail to fulfill their part of the bargain. Government action makes a big difference. However, most of their work is for nothing if the tourists don't spend their dollars wisely and make responsible decisions.

Mike Weston was traveling to Peru from Britain when he met his future wife. He settled in Cusco and later founded Peru Treks and Adventure, a company that benefits the local communities in the area, both through employment and through community projects. The company pours half its profits back into local assistance and development grants. However, Mike says organizations like his cannot make a difference on their own. "The emphasis cannot be only on the hotels and tour operators. Travelers need to do their homework. They have to bring their business to companies that are doing the right thing and spread the word."

This has become especially important in the region around Machu Picchu. The site was once a mysterious and hidden set of ruins visited mainly by archeologists and hardcore backpackers. In 1992, only 9,000 tourists visited the ruins all year. In 2002, the figure rose to 150,000. In 2005 there will probably be close to 400,000 visitors. Machu Picchu is the most visited site in South America. It reportedly generates \$40 million each year for Peru's economy. Because of the power of this one attraction, tourism is the second largest industry nationwide, after mining, and the largest industry overall in the Cusco region.

UNESCO continually threatens to put Machu Picchu on its list of World Heritage in Danger sites, a designation meant to encourage swift corrective action. For years there has also been plenty of hand-wringing among archeologists and preservationists. In 2000, the World Monuments Fund (WMF), a conservation group based in New York, added Machu Picchu to its watch list of the 100 most-endangered sites. The group later removed it after the Peruvian government scrapped plans to increase the number of visitors and implemented regulations for the Inca Trail.

This impressive and enigmatic Inca city was meant to be inaccessible. It lies on a narrow peak wedged into a narrow river valley miles from any areas suitable for large-scale farming. Until it was rediscovered by American archeologist Hiram Bingham in 1911, nobody knew about it apart from a few Andean locals. Even today, the only road in the area is a winding switchback that carries tourists up on a bus from Aguas Calientes town at the base. Visitors must arrive by train at the base of the mountain (\$46-plus, one way from Cusco) or do the 4-day Inca Trail hike through the mountains (\$300-plus).

## Regulating the Inca Trail

The Inca Trail itself has been another source of worry for decades. Until the end of 2000, travelers could just show up and hike the 4-day trail on their own or sign up with an escorted group. The result was overcrowding and erosion, lots of garbage, and rampant exploitation of the porters. Eranjelio Seina Castca, one of the porters on my own Inca Trail trip, had no nostalgia for those days. He had been at this for seven years, and over 600 Inca Trail trips. "There was a lot of misery before the controls started," he says. "We would have to carry over 50 kilos (110 pounds) and there was never enough food. We had to sleep out in the open, with no tents."

In January 2001 the government began to regulate the trail and to require permits. Of the 93 tour operators that had sold Inca Trail packages at the time, half were denied permission to continue operating. To meet the new requirements tour operators must use only assigned camp sites with proper toilet facilities; carry all garbage with them; use only propane for fuel (no open fires); provide two guides for groups of more than seven tourists; and limit the amount porters carry to 25 kilos.

In general, conditions are far better for the trekkers, the porters, and the trail itself. Another boost has come from the Inka Porter Project (Porteadores Inka Ñan), an NGO that spent close to three years working on behalf of porter rights. The group pressured operators to pay a minimum wage for porters and lobbied to improve their conditions. The project also provided English language and first ▶



aid programs to over 400 porters and worked to educate tourists on how to choose a responsible agency.

The agency did its job so well that in mid-2005 it shut itself down. Former press and marketing manager Ann Noon says that it is now up to the trekkers to keep things moving in a positive direction by hiring a tour company based on more than price. "The easiest and least visible place to cut corners is in the pay and treatment of the porters."

Mike Weston also believes the onus is on the visitors. "It continually amazes me that some travelers don't even crack a guidebook before they leave. Many seem to spend five minutes—at most—researching a tour company for the Inca Trail." He notes that his company makes it a requirement that trekkers arrive 72 hours before departure to get acclimatized. "If we didn't, clueless travelers would show up the night before and then keel over on the trail."

### Transforming the Gateway

Like many "tourist ghetto" areas around the world, Machu Picchu town, the gateway area long known as Aguas Calientes, is a mess. It's a thrown-together collection of structures with few apparent

building regulations. Every space is filled with big signs and mass-produced souvenirs. When guests walk into the stunning Machu Picchu Pueblo Hotel, a fancy ecolodge surrounded by orchids and flitting hummingbirds, they can't believe they are in the same town.

It was even worse before the mayor finally got some of the revenue from Machu Picchu diverted to his town. Garbage disposal has improved and the hot springs are better maintained. Plenty of problems persist, including less visible ones like sewage treatment, but the pressure from several sides has helped significantly.

Alvaro Bedoya Nadramia is one of the people trying to make a difference in the area by following more sustainable practices. His Rupa Wasi Eco Lodge, in Machu Picchu town, has been light years ahead of other hotels in the area since its start three years ago. "Some people are finally waking up and realizing they need to take care of what they have," he says. "We do what we can to help this through the municipality, but we also try to give a good example by the way we run our own business." The hotel is built mainly of wood—a rarity here—and even uses organic soap. Waste is composted and Nadramia tries to recycle everything.

Like most other business owners I talked to in Peru, Nadramia puts a fair chunk of the blame for area problems on travelers themselves. "The biggest impact overall, in terms of waste, comes from plastic. So why do tourists buy four or five plastic bottles of water each day instead of just using the one bottle and purification tablets? What do they think happens to all that plastic out here in this isolated area once they throw it away?"

### A Long-Term Plan

Despite the throngs of other visitors, as I wandered around the ruins of Machu Picchu after four days hiking to get there, the experience was both humbling and exciting. Our guide Oscar explained that there is fear the structure is sinking and that the continual bus traffic and growing tourist numbers aren't helping. Japanese scientists said in 2000 that the area was at high risk for a landslide. "They are studying satellite pictures each month. These wires and marks are helping them to see if this theory is real or if it is just worry," he said.

Every set of feet has an impact, and the luxury side has stepped up and made a huge difference. The Orient-Express Hotels group runs the Monasterio Hotel in Cusco, the Sanctuary Lodge by the entrance to Macchu Picchu, and the train lines to the site, including the elegant Hiram Bingham coach. "When we started our opera- ▶

#### RESPONSIBLE TOURISM IN THE CUSCO REGION REGIONWIDE

**Andean Travel Web:** [www.andeantravelweb.com](http://www.andeantravelweb.com)

**South American Explorers Club:** [www.saexplorers.org](http://www.saexplorers.org)

#### CUSCO

**Peru Treks and Adventures** (tour operator): [www.perutreks.com](http://www.perutreks.com)

**Q'Ente** (tour operator): [www.qente.com](http://www.qente.com)

**United Mice** (tour operator): [www.unitedmice.com](http://www.unitedmice.com)

**Center for Traditional Textiles:** [www.incas.org/SPChincheru.htm](http://www.incas.org/SPChincheru.htm)

**Niños Hotel and Foundation:** [www.ninoshotel.com](http://www.ninoshotel.com)

**Hostal Marina and Hope Foundation:** [www.hostalmarani.com](http://www.hostalmarani.com)

#### MACCHU PICCHU TOWN

**Rupa Wasi Eco Lodge:** [www.perucuzco.com/rupawasi](http://www.perucuzco.com/rupawasi)

**Machu Picchu Pueblo Hotel:** [www.inkaterra.com](http://www.inkaterra.com)

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tions here in 1999 you could smell garbage when you walked around Machu Picchu," said Joanna Boyen, public relations manager for Orient-Express Hotels. "There was literally a huge dump right outside the ruins and they would just light it on fire now and then."

After dozens of meetings with various municipal governments and agencies the Orient-Express group worked out a program to haul off the original garbage—100 cubic tons of it—and cart off new refuse three times per week on the train. The company also replaced the old diesel kitchen at the Sanctuary Lodge with natural gas and installed a water filtration system for both the inflow and outflow.

In addition Orient-Express worked hard to help broker a deal between UNESCO, the World Bank, and the local governments to avert a crisis over Machu Picchu. The parties are drafting a master plan, one that will limit the number of visitors but will also provide investment to deal with garbage, sewage, and Inca Trail maintenance. "It looks like we are going to settle on a daily limit of 2,500 visitors," says Boyen. "It's a few hundred people more than we get now on peak days, but tourism in Peru is climbing at the rate of 15 to 20 percent per year, so you have to allow at least a small cushion for growth. This sets a defined stopping point so it doesn't keep growing exponentially."

At the same time the admission price will rise again, to \$30 per

person in the near future. As with any golden goose historical site, the struggle between commerce and preservation brings up all kinds of conflicts. "Who comes to Peru for the first time and doesn't go to Machu Picchu?" asks Weston. "So if the government wants Peru tourism to increase by 10 percent per year, that means 10 percent more visitors to Machu Picchu, automatically. But it's already close to capacity now, so what can you do to compensate? You have to raise the price."

Ann Noon notes that the Inca Trail permit has risen from \$17 to \$60 per person. "But a fair amount of that money is going into trail maintenance, monitoring of regulations, and better toilets. The free-for-all was cheaper, but sustainable tourism costs money."

"You can't pay a rock-bottom price for everything and still expect responsible tourism to magically happen," says Weston. "If the Inca Trail and Machu Picchu are to be preserved, everyone who goes has to do their part. The only thing that is going to keep tour operators from trying to cut corners is market forces. If companies lose business because they get a bad reputation, they will change. Travelers who don't do any research and don't speak up are just reinforcing the bad practices." ●

— COURTESY OF TRANSITIONS ABROAD, 2005

# MAKING A POSITIVE IMPACT

personal connections benefit visitors and hosts

## ARTICLE & PHOTO BY JIM KANE

We always walk happily here. Lots of fresh, clean air and lots of fertile lands."

Damian, the mayor of the weaving and farming community of Chahuaytire, was explaining why he preferred his 120-family hometown to Cusco, the regional capital. We were ambling down a meadow, sharing a conversation and a glorious afternoon hike at 13,000 feet in the rural Andes of Peru, with no one within miles.

"And then there's Carnival. We get together and dance. Oh yes. Everyone in the community...Uff—wow!"

As travelers we cherish this sort of relaxed interaction with the people of the countries we visit. At the same time, we are always conscious of the impact our visits have on other cultures, particularly in the developing world.

After living, working, and studying in five countries over five years, I decided to co-found Culture Xplorers with impact foremost in mind for both the visitor and the local communities we visit.

When researching and planning new trips, I follow these positive impact rules of thumb:

1. Go deeper, not farther.
2. Participate, don't just observe.
3. Find a need and help fill it.

These same rules of thumb can be used as easily by travelers with no language skills and little time in country as they can by multi-lingual volunteers spending a year abroad. The key is the determination to travel with an open mind, a desire to connect with and respect the people and culture, and a willingness to give of yourself.

An incident on my first trip to Laos is an example of how even the most unprepared visitor to a country can make a connection with locals and leave a positive impact.

Just after landing in Luang Prabang I walked along the Mekong river before turning in for a much-needed nap. I brought along my camera looking for atmospheric scenes of river life. When I spotted a wiry, deeply tanned, barefoot man and his wife unloading bundles of firewood from their



A Culture Xplorers traveler chats with a Quechua villager, after an Earth Offering ceremony.

dugout canoe, I thought that I had found the perfect subject.

However, when I looked through the lense, instead of taking a shot I lowered the camera and descended the steep bank to lend a hand to the wife struggling under her load, which weighed as much as she did. With a smile and a gesture, she indicated she understood and gladly unburdened herself onto me.

My initiation into the finer techniques of wood transport would be a sweaty one. The 100 pounds of firewood tied in two bundles on either end of a pole swung more wildly with each lurching step forward. Before I reached the top of the embankment a crowd of men had gathered. Based on their giggles and gestures, I realized I was the morning's news and entertainment.

After the work was finished, Zhai, the husband, and I relaxed on the bank. As he smoked a cigarette, we fumbled through a phrasebook to start a conversation we both wanted to have. After a time, he gestured to

the other side of the river and invited me to his home, pointing out some of the rarely-visited Buddhist temples nearby. In Zhai's hut, one of the most modest dwellings I have ever seen, we shared a sip of homemade firewater and then started our hike, with Ukzou, his 3-year-old daughter in tow.

We agreed to meet again the following day, this time with the help of his friend who spoke some English. The two became my guides to the nearby caves and villages of the Mekong. Parting company several days later was bitter-sweet. I was sad that I probably would not see Zhai or Ukzou again. But we smiled and hugged, happy that we had each made a wonderful human connection.

The moral of my story is that if we keep an open mind, go deeper, participate when possible, and give of ourselves. We will be enriched by our efforts, and the people we meet along the way will be glad that our paths have crossed. ●

— COURTESY OF TRANSITIONS ABROAD, 2003

# BEYOND ECOTOURISM

transformational adult learning in the high himalayyas



Working with her hosts in Lingshed helped this Crooked Trails traveler deepen her cultural exchange.



photo on left: Linda Carlson // photo on right: Sean Hatt

## BY SEAN PATRICK HATT AND TAMMY LELAND

I found myself in a time of dizzying transition: my divorce had just been finalized, I was in the process of selling my half of a successful business, and I was beginning what would be a grueling 2-year path through graduate school. I was physically, mentally, and emotionally exhausted, and needed a change.

A friend recommended I consider Crooked Trails, a Seattle nonprofit community-based travel organization that helps people connect with other cultures through education and responsible travel. The organization is also committed to programs that develop and nurture real relationships with the indigenous communities they visit.

Tammy Leland, one of the founders of Crooked Trails, described the experience that community-based travel offers and explained how the elements of mutual service and learning can tie two cultures together. She told me how her previous work with the hill tribes of Thailand and Vietnam, the Quechua Indians of Peru, and other indigenous communities around the world had opened her eyes to the myriad opportunities for learning, growth, and change.

Finally, she explained, we would travel with a purpose. Crooked Trails would ensure that we would all leave something of ourselves behind, in the form of carefully planned and targeted financial support or a community service project or perhaps both.

Our itinerary—26 days in total—would include two days in Delhi on each end of our stay, a train trip to Agra to see the Taj Mahal, round-trip air travel to and from Leh, the capital city of Ladakh, where we would acclimatize to the high altitude prior to our trek. From Leh we would begin the 10-day round-trip trek to the remote village of Lingshed as invited guests of Geshe Ngawang Jangchup, a

friend of Leland's and the head monk of the main monastery in the area. Ours would be the first group of visitors ever guided and serviced entirely by residents of his village.

Community-based travel such as the kind offered by Crooked Trails is more than a culturally and ecologically sensitive alternative to traditional tourism. It is a unique opportunity for adults to have what I call a "peak learning experience."

According to Malcom Knowles, author of *The Adult Learner* (Butterworth-Heinemann, Woburn, MA) adult learning is based on several assumptions that are different from more traditional models. First, adult learners need to know why they need to learn something before undertaking to learn it.

In addition to needing to know why they need to learn, adult learners must feel responsible for their own decisions. This was the essence of the quandary in my decision to travel with a group: on the one hand, I knew I couldn't find what I was looking for alone, but on the other, I knew that my primary reason for going on this trip was to mend a piece of my life—and that this would require a great deal of autonomy. The experience delivered by Crooked Trails was the perfect balance of group interaction, planned itinerary, and freedom to explore. Each of us made decisions within the parameters of the support provided by our guides.

Third, adult learners come into a learning opportunity with a wealth of personal experience. This needs to be recognized and tapped as the experience unfolds. As a community-based traveler, I found the opportunities for self-organized peer-helping activities as opposed to more traditional tour-guide one-way communication. ▶

The community-based travel option provided the perfect balance between the group setting and traveling alone.

Next, adult learners require a life-centered as opposed to subject-centered orientation to learning. That is, adults will learn to the degree that they perceive they are ready to learn and that the learning will help them to deal with challenges they face in their daily life.

Finally, adults are most motivated by internal needs—the need for richer quality of life, for deeper understanding of self and others, for meaning. Again, community-based tourism proved to be perfectly suited to providing this quality of experience, not only in terms of

its educational benefits and service components but also, in my case, the opportunity to place myself in a totally new context. The result was much more than the typical rejuvenation afforded by any vacation I had ever taken. I was changed. And, I was not the only one. Community-based tourism companies offer unlimited potential for providing transformative learning experiences, not only for their clientele but also for their guides and the local populations with whom they partner. ●

— COURTESY OF TRANSITIONS ABROAD, 2003

## WHAT IS COMMUNITY - BASED TRAVEL?

According to Crooked Trails, community-based travel includes the basic goals of ecotourism but with a few enhancements: Travel to natural destinations inhabited by indigenous cultures. Community-based travel is all about learning from and directly helping the disappearing indigenous communities around the world through cultural exchange, financial assistance, and education.

**Minimize impact.** Like ecotourism, community-based travel seeks to minimize the adverse effects of tourism by encouraging and supporting environmentally sensitive practices, not only by travelers but also by local people.

**Build awareness.** Community-based travel is about the exchange of knowledge and wisdom for both visitors and residents of host communities alike.

**Provide financial benefits and empowerment to indigenous people.** Like ecotourism, community-based travel seeks to benefit local people by helping them to maintain their right to self-determination by giving them decision-making authority regarding the conduct of tourism in their lands.

**Respect local culture.** Environmental sensitivity doesn't stop with the ecosystem but extends to understanding and respecting cultures in their own context.

### FOR MORE INFO

The following are recommended community-based travel service providers.

**Community Aid Abroad**, Victoria, Australia; [www.caa.org.au/travel](http://www.caa.org.au/travel).

**Crooked Trails**, Seattle, W.A.; 206-320-0505; [www.crookedtrails.com](http://www.crookedtrails.com).

**Cultural Restoration Project**, San Francisco, C.A.; 415-563-7221; <http://home.earthlink.net/~crtp>.

**Global Exchange**, San Francisco, C.A.; 415-255-7296; [www.globalexchange.org](http://www.globalexchange.org).

**I-Venture**, Denver, C.O.; 800-985-4864; [www.i-to-i.com](http://www.i-to-i.com).

**World Neighbors International**, Oklahoma City, O.K.; 800-242-6387; [www.wn.org](http://www.wn.org).

### KEY WEB SITES

These two web sites serve as good starting places for those interested in community-based travel with a focus on ecotourism:

**EcoClub**, [www.ecoclub.com](http://www.ecoclub.com). Based in Greece, this web site spotlights eco lodges and activists around the world.

**UN Environmental Programme**, [www.uneptie.org/pc/tourism/ecotourism/documents.htm](http://www.uneptie.org/pc/tourism/ecotourism/documents.htm). The UN's collection of ecotourism publications. Excellent resource.

S.P.H

# PEACE THROUGH TOURISM

**BY DENISE L. HUMMEL**

It is staggering to think that elephants sought higher ground immediately before the Tsunami hit Asian shores on December 26th last year, while no advanced technology existed in the form of an early warning detection system that could prevent the loss of human life ... or so said a spokesperson for the Ministry of Tourism of Sri Lanka. I can't say for sure. I wasn't there. I was safe and dry in my apartment in Varese, Italy, at the time.

For the past several days, I have been honored to be one of the many panelists at the International Institute for Peace Through Tourism Global Summit in Pattaya, Thailand, an organizational conference dedicated to exploring the ways in which tourism can and does promote peace. I am one of the only westerners here and am surrounded by Ministers, Members of Parliament and others dedicated to the concept of sustainable tourism and peaceful tourism.

While I have been speaking about the strategies that western tourism enterprise has utilized to confront terrorism and natural disaster in the U.S. and Europe over the past few years, my fellow panelists from Sri Lanka, Uganda, Cambodia and South Africa, to name a few, have been discussing the ways in which terrorism, internal armed-conflict, war and poverty have affected their lives and those of their families and countrymen. Among a group of co-panelists at breakfast one morning, I was the only person to not have held the status of refugee at some point in my life. To the extent I have changed houses or homeland, it has been entirely through choice and a quest for new experience and I know nothing of fleeing for my life or the lives of my children. My colleagues from across the sea, in contrast, have been counting the years, and in some instances, the months, days, hours and minutes of peace.

It is amazing to me that the more I am exposed to through travel and interaction with peoples of other countries, the more ignorant I feel. I have known, through reading American newspapers and watching CNN, for instance, that people living in other parts of the world do not share the same standard of living that I do, but I did not know that the single greatest killer of children world-wide is unclean water. I did not know that my colleagues in Jordan get water once a week, but that my female Jordanian colleagues have virtually no "glass ceiling" that prevents them from advancing professionally. I didn't know that there are still cold-storage containers on the shores of the Andaman coast in Thailand that contain the bodies of unidentified loved ones after the wave hit and I didn't know that police boats and huge fishing trawlers still lie kilometers from the sea where they lie against buildings, but otherwise upright, as if they are simply dry-docked in the wrong place at the wrong time.

What is sustainable tourism and how can we in the western world assist our brothers and sisters in less developed areas to face problems that affect fragile economies so dependent upon tourism? And how can we, as tourists, promote peace when we travel? So many of us, as individuals as well as public and private enterprise, donate money. Is that the way to assure that families and businesses post traumatic natural or terrorism-related episode continue to survive?

It appears, based on what I have seen and heard here, that despite our display of compassion, exemplified by our overwhelming generosity, that this may not be the answer. Houses built with Tsunami donations, for example, but which failed to consult the cultural, physical and spiritual needs of the people, lay vacant. Boats built with Tsunami donations lay idle on the shores awaiting bureaucratic clearance before they can be used by Thai fisherman. Tsunami money to Sri Lanka remains unutilized because the Sri Lankan administrative offices charged with administering the money, are located in an area of the country which is governed by a para-military entity not recognized by the U.S. or the United Kingdom.

The best answer seems to be exemplified in the request I heard time and again from His Excellency Akel Biltaji, Special Advisor to His Majesty King Abdullah II of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, His Excellency. Eng. Ziad Al-Bandak, Minister of Tourism and Antiquities, Palestine National Authority, Ibrahim Yusuf, Ambassador of the Republic of Indonesia, and James Lu, President of the International Hotel and Restaurant Association, to name a few. The way to be a part of sustainable tourism in each of these countries, is for the average tourist to "come back." This means -- to go back to Bali as soon as possible after the recent bombings, to frequent the hotels that were rebuilt after the Tsunami, but that are not yet at full occupancy, to eat the fish caught by local fisherman served in local restaurants and to buy the handicrafts of the indigenous peoples. The way to be part of the movement of "peace through tourism" is to be an ambassador of acceptance, traveling with an open heart and open mind, and demonstrating respect in our words, behavior, and interaction with peoples of all cultures. "Travel is fatal to prejudice, bigotry and narrow-mindedness," said Mark Twain. In this era of terrorism, a reality that Mr. Twain probably never contemplated, truer words were never spoken. As a general rule, we do not hate people we understand, and we have no reason to destroy what we do not hate.

As I walk around Khao Lak in Thailand, an area that was almost completely washed off the map by a wall of water, I am also reminded of the words of Francis Ford Coppola, "Time is the lens through which dreams are captured." As my lens captures the images of hotels, local businesses and homes in ruins, I feel that it is simultaneously capturing the ghosts of the people who walked in and out of these thresholds. But, it is also capturing the dreams of the Thai people to rebuild their land. It captures the dreams of lasting peace of the Sri Lankan people whose internal armed-conflict screamed to a halt because they lost almost all their weapons and ammunition in the wave. And it captures my dream for all of us in the Western world to revisit this world of smiles, elephants, pristine shores, Buddhist temples, limestone caves, blue skies and peaceful waters. ●

# LOOKING AT THE BIG PICTURE

## responsible travel and ecotourism

### BY CLAY HUBBS

In the last issue I talked with our special interest travel editor, Ann Waigand, about the pros and cons of group travel. This time I spoke about the effects of travel on the natural and cultural environment with two of our ecotravel editors. Ron Mader is an author and “information catalyst” whose award-winning Planeta.com web site is a focus for what Conservation International—in awarding Ron the 2000 Ecotourism Excellence Award—calls the “ecotourism revolution” in Latin America. Deborah McLaren is the founder of the Rethinking Tourism Project, a consultant on community-based tourism around the world, and the author of *Rethinking Tourism and Ecotravel: The Paving of Paradise and How You Can Stop It*. Next time I’ll talk with our first responsible travel editor, Dianne Brause, who presently is leading a program in India.

**TRANSITIONS ABROAD: Picking up from my interview with Ann Waigand in the last issue, my first question is what’s the best way to travel—on your own or with a group?**

**MADER:** This depends on what kind of person you are and the time you have available. Personally, I love traveling alone, but I know this style is not for everyone. Independent travel allows for much greater flexibility. For example, if you find that a town is more interesting than you expected, you can spend extra time. Likewise, if you meet up with interesting travel mates, you can travel together. Package trips provide something that’s very important—security. And some people prefer to have someone else make the arrangements.

**MCLAREN:** I do both. I have been a conventional tourist (described in my book, *Rethinking Tourism and EcoTravel*), which prompted me to take a critical look at tourism and look for alternatives). I’ve also been an alternative tourist, an educator, a tour planner and leader. I have traveled independently, with small groups, and with family. I’ve stayed at megaresort hotels, fleabag hotels, small ecolodges, home-stays, in tree houses, under the stars, in a tent, on a boat, and just about anywhere you can think of.

**TA: If on your own, what’s your checklist, your ground rules?**

**MADER:** Find out as much as you can before you go. Getting information is no trouble via the Web, guidebooks, or by calling government tourism phone lines. Find out what the weather will be like, if there are special events you can plan to attend.

**MCLAREN:** First, learn about the community you plan to visit and link with grassroots organizations there. See my list of grassroots organizations in the November/ December issue.

**TA: If with a group, how decide on what group and what destination?**

**MADER:** If you want to book a tour, approach only those operators you might actually hire and ask how they support conservation or local development projects. Many agencies and operators are very proud of their environmental conservation and community development work. They can either send details via email or direct you to a

section of their web site which explains their programs in detail.

**MCLAREN:** I’ve been more the “organizer” lately, planning and leading Indigenous alternative tours to Mexico with our partners in Morelos. These combine learning about community development with rest, relaxation, and a focus on health.

**TA: What about combining the two: independent travel to your destination, then choosing a local outfitter or provider?**

**MADER:** This is ideal. It allows the maximum flexibility and professional service, but it usually takes getting to your destination to find out your options.

**MCLAREN:** That’s often the only way to get a local person.

**TA: Is this always the cheapest way to go?**

**MADER:** Not necessarily. Packaged tours—while appearing to be quite costly—may limit your expenses.

**MCLAREN:** Planning your own itinerary is often the cheapest way to go. Volunteering helps bring the price down even further, particularly if you are really collaborating with an organization or community and can arrange something substantial (it takes too much energy and time away from community projects if a volunteer can only spend a couple of weeks).

**TA: Why is it the most “responsible” way to go?**

**MADER:** Responsible travel is simply treating others with the same respect you would ask for in your own community. While tourism officials talk of “destinations,” in fact we are simply entering someone else’s home. Independent travelers can be just as disrespectful as those in a larger group.

**MCLAREN:** I truly believe in linking what is important to you in your own community to your travels. For example, if you are a teacher or community gardener, do your homework and link with schools or similar programs in the community you plan to visit. This way you make valuable friends and gain insights into another community that can last a lifetime. It avoids the “point and click” vulgarity of tourism and puts us on the same level as our hosts.

**TA: Since all travel burns fossil fuels, is there any rationale at all for pleasure travel?**

**MADER:** John Shores poses this question in his influential essay, “The Challenge of Ecotourism” [www.planeta.com/planeta/95/0295shores.html](http://www.planeta.com/planeta/95/0295shores.html). What use is an “ecolodge” if it takes so much energy and natural resources to get the traveler from point A to point B?

My belief is that since tourism is a social process it cannot be reduced to mere economics or an environmental tally. Tourism can have benefits for locals and travelers alike. We are more aware of human rights violations, environmental catastrophes, and other global ills precisely because of the role travelers play in sharing information.

**MCLAREN:** I think it’s important, especially in this age of corpo- ▶

rate media, to see things for ourselves, to connect with one another, to organize together and learn about what's really going on in the world. Don't trust travel marketing and the mass media to tell you. I guess that's the most important reason for going—and for this magazine!

However, it is important to look at the negative effects of our travel. How can we make real changes in our lives that lessen these effects? Not just little ones like riding a bike instead of driving (a great thing to do) but lobbying for better environmental standards and regulations and for adherence to human rights. Travel means looking at the big picture.

**TA: Are there particular tour operators you can recommend?**

**Mader:** I have some favorites, and the one thing that they have in common is a great respect for both locals and travelers. One operator told me, "Ecotourism begins with how you treat people in your office."

Sometimes my favorite operators overlap with "award winners" from magazine contests and tourism fairs. Sometimes not. Many of my favorites simply haven't received much publicity. What we really need is a system of nominating the "best of the best" operations,

then providing detailed information about what it is that they do so well. Until such a system is fully developed, I welcome travelers to post their experiences on the Planeta.com country forums. And I know Transitions Abroad also welcomes feedback from its readers.

**TA: Can you think of a list of places that travelers should avoid?**

**MADER:** Travelers need to develop a keener sense of where to go. I personally do not believe in boycotts.

**MCLAREN:** Absolutely! Travel boycotts to stop horrendous human rights abuses work. Also, boycott guidebooks, magazines, and companies that continue to promote travel to areas that are boycotted. People need to do their own research. No one can provide an up-to-date list, but there are boycott guides. In addition to the selection of responsible tourism organizations and resource publications I describe in the November/December issue of Transitions Abroad and on the Transitions Abroad web site, there are a staggering number of resources on Planeta.com. Also, check out Tourism Concern's web site at [www.tourismconcern.org.uk](http://www.tourismconcern.org.uk). ●

— COURTESY OF TRANSITIONS ABROAD, 2001

# ECOTOURISM GUIDELINES

how to choose the organizations and businesses you support

BY DIANNE BRAUSE

A number of years ago I compiled a local community publication called "Forever Green: An Ecotourist's Guide to Lane County," bringing ideas I have developed in my work in international travel into the context of my hometown. I found that the same principles apply to traveling to the tropical rainforests of Central America, the African game reserves, or a town in Oregon.

We developed a list of questions that we used to determine which organizations to include within our Ecotourist's Guide. You can use these same criteria to help you assess which types of organizations you would like to support as you travel the world.

For the purposes of the guide we used the following as a working definition of ecotourism: Tourism or visitor-related activities or services that support the local people, culture, and economy in a positive way, while at the same time contributing to ecological protection and sustainability.

**An ecotourist supports a business, organization, or service that:**

- **Is Locally Owned and Operated.** Local ownership and management means that the money you spend will likely stay within the community and go to the people who are actually doing the work.
- **Supports the Community and is Service Oriented.** Does the business know and care about the local community and is it willing to go the extra mile? For example, our city bus service person recently told me that although the bus from the airport is scheduled to arrive three minutes after the bus that heads out to our rural area leaves, that if we call ahead, the driver will delay his departure until the airport bus has arrived.
- **Supports Local People and the Local Culture.** Does this group use some of its resources to make life better for others in the area? In my community a number of the health food and small grocery stores invite customers to add a \$1 or \$5 donation to their food purchase to support a program that helps feed many of our poor and homeless.
- **Creates Locally Crafted or Value-Added Items.** Handmade items or products made from the natural resources of an area generally provide "right-livelihood" work and often utilize fewer natural resources than would be the case in a mass production setting.
- **Provides Direct Guest-Host Relationships.** We often travel to learn about people from another area, but do not see any way to actually get to know our hosts and their lives. In the western U.S. a number of working ranches invite guests to take part in the herding of livestock as part of their stay and as a way to learn what ranch life is really about.
- **Is Environmentally Conscious or Focused.** Does the business keep the needs of the environment and ecosystem of the area in mind? Some river-rafting companies teach their customers about the history, ecology, and protection of the river they are floating down and use some of the profits for conservation of the river.
- **Composts, Recycles, and Reduces Pollution.** Does the tour company compost food wastes and recycle all bottles, cans, containers, and paper products?
- **Experiments with Innovative and Alternative Methods.** Does the group take risks with innovative approaches to support sustainability? Our utility company has created a methane generation plant using the escaping gases from the local dump to produce 25 percent of the district's electricity by the year 2000.
- **Offers Hands-on Involvement to Volunteers.** An organization that encourages volunteers to become involved in local projects creates a much deeper connection with the people and culture of an area. Example: A bi-annual beach clean-up day on the Oregon Coast helps visitors and locals get to know one another while helping preserve the environment.
- **Supports Reduction of Resource Usage** (energy, water, transportation). In my area, a bicycle cooperative hires youth to provide "valet parking" of bicycles at all major events in town so that people are encouraged to ride a bike rather than pollute the environment and clog the streets with automobiles.
- **Meets "Green" Criteria or Ecotourism Guidelines.** Is this group serious enough about their interest in protecting the environment to publicly commit to a published standard or guideline for ecotourism? In Costa Rica, one of the hotels we visited committed to designing its buildings and exterior lighting so as not to interfere with the endangered turtles nesting on the adjacent beach.

Most groups won't meet all of the above criteria. Yet at home or abroad these guidelines may help you consider some of the many daily choices you have which impact the health and welfare of people and ecosystems. As a traveler, you can have an important impact on the development of ecotourism and the movement toward sustainability in the 21st century. ●

# MAKING THE MOST OF VOLUNTEER VACATIONS

BY DOUG CUTCHINS AND ANNE GEISSINGER

Last year, on a bit of a whim and without much planning, we decided to take a quick volunteer trip to Ireland. We had a good time on the Emerald Isle, no doubt about it. But we also had a lingering sense that, with a little more effort, our trip could have been just that much more rewarding, both for us and the people we encountered. By giving thought to where you're going, what you'll be doing, the kinds of interactions you want to have, and what results you want to achieve, your own volunteer vacation can quickly change from a quick trip away to a deeply meaningful experience that you'll remember for many years.

There are essentially three stages to a volunteer vacation—pre-departure, the vacation itself, and post-vacation—and three sets of people to consider—yourself, the population being served, and the sponsoring organization. Here are some things to consider that will make all of these stages even more positive for all of the people concerned. The most important part of the experience takes place before departure and after you come home, not during the experience itself.

You can set yourself up for positive interactions with the people you'll be serving by learning what you can about your co-workers and the people and place you'll be visiting. Read any orientation materials the organization sends you. Study maps to familiarize yourself with the country's geography. Research the basic country's history. If the country has a dominant religion different from your own, study it—preferably with someone in your home community who practices that religion. Ask your sponsoring organization for cultural tips. Learn at least a few basic phrases in the host country's language—you'll be surprised by how much goodwill this will buy you upon arrival.

But we caution against going too far. Don't try to become an expert or eliminate all of the surprises. Unless it will be several years before you depart, odds are you will be frustrated. In a worst-case scenario, you might actually set up false expectations that aren't fulfilled. Second, you will want to savor the surprises that come with discovering the nuances and delights that every country and culture has to offer.

Spend some time in intentional reflection before you go. What do you want to gain from this journey? How do you hope this experience changes you as a person? What are your goals, both personally and as a community servant? What are you most excited or nervous about? Start your journaling several weeks before departure, and be sure to chronicle both what you're doing to prepare and what you're feeling as you get ready.

Once you're off on your volunteer vacation, try to lose yourself in the experience as much as possible. Your time is likely to go quickly, and you'll be on a plane home before you know it. So embrace that fact rather than fight it. To preserve the experience, we strongly recommend that you keep a record of what happens. Most people do this through journaling, but if that doesn't appeal to you, you can write regular—even daily—letters to someone at home (and ask them to keep the letters for you), make audiotapes, and take lots of photographs, even of the most mundane tasks. Record keeping in this way serves two purposes: it helps you process and make sense of your experience while it's happening, and it also preserves your memory for the future. One of our favorite things to do late at night is to pull an old journal off a shelf and see what we were doing on that date on a volunteer vacation many years ago.

For all that we recommend planning and goal-setting before you depart, you should also let serendipity just happen. Some of our greatest delights, fondest memories, and best pictures during volunteer vacations are of moments we couldn't have dreamt, conversations with remarkable people we happened to meet, and events we were lucky to stumble upon or were invited to.

While you are right to focus many of your energies on making this the best possible experience for yourself, never lose sight of the fact that you are also on your volunteer vacation for altruistic reasons, too. Make sure you're practicing people-focused, bottom-up, grass-roots development work. Your project must be community driven and owned; it must reflect the community's priorities; and it must be carried out in sustainable and appropriate ways. Remember that the process is at least equal to, if not more important than, the product.

In interacting with the host culture, don't demand too much. And remember that you are a guest. Don't just follow the golden rule; follow the cross-culturally updated version: Do unto others as they would have you do.

One of the best ways to make friends in a new place is through children. If there is one constant among cultures that we've seen around the world, it is that everyone loves their kids. Be nice to kids. Interact with them. Show them pictures of home. Try to communicate with them. If adults see that they can trust you with their kids and that you are nice to the people they care the most about, they are more likely to treat you well, too.

When you return home, take time to unpack your bags, glance at your overburdened email in-box, take a deep breath, and start figuring out how you're going to answer one big question: So what? Don't just think about what you're going to tell others about what you saw and did; think about what it meant. How did it impact you? Are you a different person now? And how might your life need to change to fit the new you?

One of the best ways to force yourself to answer these questions is to talk with local civic groups, schools, or at your place of worship. This will put a timeline on your processing and will help you to engage these questions in a real and honest way.

Lastly, be sure to think about how you can continue to be of service to your host organization and to the culture or country that hosted you. Perhaps you can serve as a reference for future potential volunteers with this organization, or give them a story or photo to post on their web site. Pay attention to and advocate for your host country when it is in the news, or look for international organizations that work with the people who hosted you.

Anyone can go on a volunteer vacation, and, as we proved in Ireland last year, you can do it with little planning or preparation. But by being thoughtful, taking time to reflect, and letting serendipity take over at times, you can have an even better and more meaningful experience. ●

— COURTESY OF TRANSITIONS ABROAD, 2005

This article is an extended version of a section of the introduction to *Volunteer Vacations: Short Term Adventures that Will Benefit You and Others*, published by Chicago Review Press. reprinted with permission from Chicago Review Press.

# VOLUNTEER VACATIONS TO FIT

how to select the best-suited organization

BY DOUG CUTCHINS AND ANNE GEISSINGER

The fact that there are hundreds of organizations that can help make your dream volunteer vacations reality is both a blessing and a curse. How do you choose from all the great options? Here are ten questions that everyone should ask before signing on with an organization.

**1. What work will you be doing? What skills do I need to have beforehand?** Are there opportunities to develop skills that I don't have but want to gain? Will I be doing the same work every day, or will I take on a variety of tasks? If organizations can't give you specifics, they should at least be able to give you examples of the kinds of projects you'll be involved with.

**2. Where will you go? Will the project take me to a place that I want to go?** Don't just think in terms of a country or region; find out specifically where a project is located and learn as much as you can about that place.

**3. What are the goals of the work being done? Do I have the same values as the organization?** Many volunteer vacation organizations have religious or political agendas. You don't want to end up promoting a cause, directly or indirectly, that you don't believe in, so make sure you read the organization's mission statement and ask careful, pointed questions of the program's organizers and administrators.

**4. What do past volunteers say about their experiences with this organization?** Beware of any organization that won't put you in touch with past volunteers. Solid, reputable organizations should have a list handy of past volunteers who will tell you both the good and bad points of the organization. Beware of any past volunteers who won't say anything negative or criticize the organization in any way—every organization has its flaws, and you'd rather know about these in advance.

**5. What are the living conditions?** Organizations house volunteers everywhere from tents to private homes and from 4-star hotels to youth hostels. Think about what you want and can afford for housing options, and make sure that you select an organization that meets your standards. Don't assume that sites have electricity or even running water.

**6. What about housekeeping? How much of the cooking, cleaning, filing, and so on will I be expected to do?** Few people go on volunteer vacations to do mundane tasks that they have to do at home. But keep in mind that this work is needed for the smooth operation of the organization; most volunteer vacation organizations run on a shoestring budget and can't hire someone to take care of these things. They often divide routine work among all of the employees and volunteers, from top to bottom. It's important that you understand what is expected of you in this regard.

**7. How much does it cost to participate? What is included in a program fee?** Unless you're willing to commit to at least a year of work, have a lot of experience in a given field, or are a highly-trained professional such as a doctor or dentist, odds are that you will have to pay for at least some of your volunteer vacation. Program fees

can range from less than one \$100 per week to thousands of dollars. Be sure to take into account any "hidden" costs, such as health insurance, visas, inoculations, gratuities, airport transfers, etc. Organizations should be up-front with you about how much it will cost to volunteer with them, and many will offer tips on how to fund-raise if necessary.

**8. When does the project take place, how long does it last, and does it fit with my schedule?** Some volunteer vacation organizations offer programs year-round, with flexible start and end dates. Others only operate at certain times of year or on set schedules. Make sure your calendar fits with what the organization offers.

**9. Will I work on my own or in a group?** What is the profile of the average volunteer? What are the motivations of the other people in the group? Your fellow volunteers can either make or break your experience. Even if the volunteer experience isn't exactly what you thought it would be, you may still come home with wonderful friends and memories; conversely, being mismatched with a group with which you have nothing in common and have a hard time bonding can spoil an otherwise excellent experience. Of course, you won't know exactly who is going or how well you'll mesh with them, but knowing something about the type of person who usually joins a specific organization can help ensure that you have a positive group dynamic. For example, you may want to look for groups that cater to people in your own age range.

**10. What kind of training or orientation is offered?** Some organizations offer in-depth training and orientation programs; others may offer just some predeparture materials or a hearty pat on the back before you dive into a volunteer position. The level of orientation and training needed is really up to the individual volunteer and the specific experience, but the more out of your element you will be—in terms of the work, the culture, the language, or other factors—the more you will need training and orientation, preferably in the country of service.

By considering these issues, asking the right questions, and being honest about your needs, desires, and expectations, you can increase the likelihood of having the best possible experience on your volunteer vacation. ●

**Doug Cutchins** and **Anne Geissinger** are the co-authors of *Volunteer Vacations: Short Term Adventures That Will Benefit You and Others*. This article is an extended version of a section of the introduction to that book, the 9th edition of which will be published in spring 2006. Reprinted with permission from *Chicago Review Press*. Doug and Anne can be contacted at [annedoug@pcpartner.net](mailto:annedoug@pcpartner.net).

— COURTESY OF TRANSITIONS ABROAD, 2005

# SENIORS HAVE A DIFFERENT AGENDA

BY ALISON GARDNER

The practice of combining volunteer service with travel dramatically expanded in popularity and accessibility during the last decades of the 20th century, along with the expansion of travel horizons in general. While longer term service abroad—six months, a year or more—has appealed mainly to the young, who often perceive it as a period of "finding or proving oneself" or building credentials and experience to strengthen a career direction, older people have quite a different agenda. Identifying and serving this agenda has revolutionized academic research timetables around the world, allowed charitable organizations and non-profits to move projects and services from dreams to reality and created an army of able-bodied individuals who are eager to share their experience of a lifetime as well as their considerable physical energy, enthusiasm, and—very importantly—their financial support for a good cause.

As outlined in the "Volunteer Vacations" chapter of my guidebook, *Travel Unlimited: Uncommon Adventures for the Mature Traveler*, older people generally sign up for volunteer service for any of three good reasons, sometimes for all combined:

1. a strong interest in a particular cause, project, or subject area, often related to a long time hobby or an earlier career;
2. a desire to visit a region in a "grassroots" way not easily accomplished by just passing through as a stranger, either on an organized tour or as an independent traveler; and
3. a wish to give back something significant to a world that has been, by and large, economically kind and physically comfortable to them in their earlier years.

Unlike their younger counterparts, these volunteer recruits rarely want to be away from home for long blocks of time, preferring one week to a month, though they may take two or three different volunteer vacations spread over the course of a year. Most are well educated, combining a high degree of task-oriented motivation with a lot of patience and attention to detail. Though some people will plan and carry out their volunteer travel independently, they more often like the camaraderie, security, and orderliness of a small-group experience. About 65 percent to 70 percent of older volunteer vacationers are women.

## Young and Old Together

Many older people underscore the value of working side by side with people of different ages to achieve a common goal. However, they do like to know that the project is proven senior-friendly, with some others in their age bracket as a normal part of the mix. For many, intergenerational conversations and shared adventures are a refreshing change in societies where communications between young and old are often artificial and uncomfortable. Carefully selected volunteer vacations can establish common ground and a lifelong bond between family members of different ages, especially grandparents and grandchildren.

## The Birth of Voluntourism

Expanding and creatively diversifying over the past 20 years, short-term volunteer vacations embrace the interests and harness the

photo Talking Mountain Ranch



A Global Volunteers senior participating in a Cook Islands literacy project.

**“A few enlightened countries have built into their tax laws the option of deducting some or all short-term volunteer vacation costs, sometimes including airfare. Check this with an advance enquiry to the IRS or your accountant.”**

abilities of adults at different stages of their lives, even into their 80s. Participants not only donate their time and energy, but financially support their own presence on the project, and top it up with an added contribution to the program.

What I like to call "voluntourism" annually attracts hundreds of thousands of older adults to become part of an expanded short-term labor force within their own countries and abroad while paying to work hard on their vacations. Whether teaching English to eager classes of Chinese or Guatemalan students, tracking orangutans in Borneo's rainforests, unearthing dinosaur bones or archaeological ruins, building concrete block houses in impoverished regions, sailing out to sea to conduct marine mammal research, or caring for children at an orphanage in the Dominican Republic, an increasing number of retired and retiring people have caught the voluntourism bug.

Volunteer vacations offer good value to those on a tight budget

because they are priced to reflect living conditions and meal delivery at a lower expectation level than traditional vacations. Dormitory-style or shared accommodation with shared bathrooms, billeting in local homes, different levels of camping, as well as cafeteria- or family-style food preparation and delivery may all be part of a particular project. Some may offer a surprising level of privacy and physical comfort—with air conditioning, private rooms, and gourmet chefs in the kitchen. Some provide educational lectures and entertainment in the evening, or organized group excursions to explore surrounding areas on days off.

Read the fine print with a discerning eye and an adventurous spirit and ask lots of questions of program organizers and previous recruits before making a decision. But don't hesitate long—spaces fill quickly and last minute cancellations are rare. ●

— COURTESY OF TRANSITIONS ABROAD, 2004

## A PERSPECTIVE ON VOLUNTOURISM

### BY CORI TAHARA SIMMS

An interview with Tara Prescott, a 1998 graduate from the Univ. of California Los Angeles (UCLA). Tara earned an M.A. from Johns Hopkins Univ. and is currently a first year doctoral student in English at Claremont Graduate Univ.

#### **Why did you enroll in UCLA Alumni Travel's Baja VolunTour Trip to Mexico?**

**Tara:** To see part of Mexico and interact with people there in a meaningful way, not just as a typical American tourist. When I studied abroad in Ireland, I ran into stereotypes about Americans. The assumption is that Americans are oblivious and self-involved.

#### **So how is this trip different?**

**Tara:** When people go on vacation, they tend to think, "Where can I have the most fun? How can I get the most out of this?" For me, [this] is a chance to ask, "What can I learn about the people who live here? What skills, gifts, stories, or time can I contribute?"

#### **What are you excited about visiting?**

**Tara:** I'm excited about the Museo de Las Californias, as well as the bee-hive making.

#### **Why do you think people should explore our neighboring country?**

**Tara:** If you live in California, you know how important Mexico is to everyday life. Mexicans and Mexican-Americans are a vibrant and vital part of American culture. My best friend's family is from Mazatlan. I have students in my classes from all over Mexico. It's important for Americans to experience what life is like outside of America. It's also important for people in Mexico to meet Americans who aren't only interested in cheap goods and spring break partying.

#### **Do you have any apprehensions about going?**

**Tara:** The cost worried me at first, but then the option to save money by sharing a room was an added perk. Plus, it's a great way to meet other people. ●

— COURTESY OF TRANSITIONS ABROAD, 2005

## WARNING:

investing yourself may change you, your world view, and your future

**BY REVEREND DR. HENRY BUCHER, JR.**

As a college chaplain and professor in the U.S., I encourage students to volunteer for local excursions to assist refugees in our area (Sherman, TX), usually working through non-government organizations: translating, filling out legal forms and counseling. Returning to campus after their first service the usual comment is: "I feel so good after doing this. When can we go again?"

After the second trip, however, good feelings turn into more probing questions: "Why is Juan a refugee? Who killed his family and why?" Students who have gone this second kilometer and continue to serve, ask, listen, and learn hardly notice how quickly their world view is being reshaped. The world has not only become more complex, but they also see the role of North America through a new pair of glasses.

When I was in college my volunteer service projects focused on reconstruction after World War II: building a church in Finland or homes in Israel for Jews whom had left Iraq after 1948—always with volunteers from around the world.

Later, some of my projects in Senegal and Gabon related to nation-building after independence from European colonization. Each experience was part of a process that nudged my motives from doing something good for the less fortunate to asking why more and more people in the world, including the wealthy countries, were getting poorer while a few were getting much richer. How can the power of the poor be manifested in their communities, and how do the rich understand their role in possible change?

In the long process of being a volunteer and leading other volunteers, many ideas developed as I tried to determine what a good volunteer is and what pitfalls should be avoided. Completing a building project in a "developing" nation may send tingles of satisfaction down our spines, but did we have the time to learn from and talk to people who are leaders in grass-roots projects involving development, people in sweat shops, leaders in sustainable development, or students and professors? Did we listen to leaders of women's co-ops who are doing wonders in micro-loans or community health projects? Did our building project take all our time and energy, and perhaps even take jobs away from local workers?

In between my early volunteer experiences in other countries and my work with college students, I was a volunteer with civil rights projects in the South and later in Chicago with the "End the Slums Movement." A factor that soon became clear was that I and other "outside agitators" could be even more effective by organizing "up North" to change laws and attitudes in Washington that would help create systemic change.

During the global "Cold War" with "low-density conflicts" for the industrialized world, but a high intensity of deaths in the less powerful nations, some of the same messages came through: "When you return home, work to change the power structures that disempower us!"

Some volunteer projects can be downright dangerous. Being on a peacemaking team in the West Bank today is probably more danger-

ous than assisting runaway slaves in the early 1800s. In Central or Latin America, accompanying to a court case a witness whose life has been threatened can be more dangerous than it was working for a voter registration project in the South in the U.S. just forty years ago.

But the real "danger" is that volunteer service challenges socially determined ideas when an involvement elsewhere frees people from the prison of our cultural cocoon. During the 1950s I wondered what the young German volunteers were thinking as they built homes in Israel. Would I have similar thoughts were I to go help rebuild Iraq after Gulf War II?

Volunteer service changes the volunteer while it is helping others, and thus can be a catalyst for social change. I am very uneasy about volunteers through NGOs getting government and corporations "off the hook" for nationally needed social services, especially when the money saved may be used to strengthen the military-industrial complex. Yet what could have more potential for changing our country than thousands of young volunteers actually experiencing the lives of our poor, listening to them, and then acting on what they learned?

Investing yourself, immersing in other cultures, listening and bringing hope, and then acting on what you know is right, will change you; and your impact on society could be more than you can now imagine. ●

— COURTESY OF TRANSITIONS ABROAD, 2005

This essay was originally published in the CVSA newsletter "ITEMS" and was reprinted with permission. To learn more about CVSA or for a subscription to "ITEMS" contact 646-486-2446.

## MAKING RETIREMENT COUNT

a volunteer plants seeds of hope in tanzania



(Left to right) Global Service Corps and Hearts Helping Hands Inc. assist Tanzanians in developing sustainable agricultural practices; Peter Knowles accepting gifts of thanks for his work on behalf of Tanzanian farmers.

### BY AMY WARREN AND WINSIN HSIEH

Peter Knowles, a spirited 77-year-old English-American has tackled retirement with vigor and youthful exuberance. After losing his wife to cancer a few years ago, he found meaning through volunteer activities close to home in Naples, Florida, as well as around the world. An emergency room volunteer in the Naples Community Hospital, Peter coupled his ascent of the 19,000-foot Mt. Kilimanjaro last year with fundraising for the hospital's stroke program, raising more than \$20,000.

Peter first visited the home to Mt. Kilimanjaro while on business in Tanzania as an international banker. He's been trekking there ever since, though his greatest feats remain close to the ground, where he is promoting sustainable agriculture.

Peter's experience with sustainable agriculture in Tanzania developed through his participation a year and a half ago in Global Service Corps (GSC), a non-profit volunteer abroad organization. Peter participated as a volunteer in GSC's sustainable agriculture program for four weeks. Like other GSC volunteers, he lived with a local family and learned skills that helped him to contribute to the local community, such as building organic plots with farmers, leading biointensive agriculture trainings, and teaching English to villagers.

The need for sustainable agriculture was obvious to Peter, who went on to found Hearts Helping Hands Inc., a non-profit corporation that is working with GSC to provide farming supplies and equipment for agricultural programs in Tanzania. Peter was inspired to start this venture when, as a volunteer, he noticed the farmers with whom he was working were in need of more basic tools, forks, hoes, watering cans, seeds, and plants. Peter has also contributed money for the development of a community market for locally grown organic produce.

In addition to working on these projects, Peter also maintains close ties with The Sibusiso Foundation ([www.edupro.nl/sibusiso/index.html](http://www.edupro.nl/sibusiso/index.html)), which is a non-profit organization dedicated to schooling Tanzania's vulnerable, mentally disabled children and helping them to develop their potential and integrate into society. ●

### For more info

Global Service Corps' International Volunteer and Intern Programs (from two weeks to six months), 300 Broadway, Ste. 28, San Francisco, CA 94133-3312; Tel. 415-788-3666 x128; [gsc@earthisland.org](mailto:gsc@earthisland.org), [www.globalservicecorps.org](http://www.globalservicecorps.org). Academic credit is available and programs are tax deductible.

— COURTESY OF TRANSITIONS ABROAD, 2005

# MEDIA, ENVIRONMENT, AND TOURISM

place as a determinant of travel and focus for travel writing

**BY HERB HILLER**

The objective of this initiative that follows the Media, Environment and Tourism Conference is to make travel and travel writing more respectful of "place" rather than treat places simply as destinations or, even less desirably, as "attractions" or theme parks. The initiative seeks to move travel away from mainstream tourism's tendency to objectify places and, in the first instance, to characterize places more in their own terms, using the presence of outsiders, temporarily at leisure, as a way to help satisfy local priorities.

When mainstream tourism defines places, the visitor experience tends to be driven by "heads in beds" and pushing turnstiles. Places tend to collapse into attractions with gated admissions. Journeying, exploration, informal encounters tend to be marginalized. Locals drop out of the equation except as they contribute to sales and service functions.

As travel has evolved and as most newspaper travel sections and travel magazines represent it, travel tends to mean tourism with its control by airlines, chain hotels, rental car agencies and their consolidated power to influence. Although travel writing, influenced by conservation and preservation, has diversified, travel advertising creates a dominant context of brand names and centralized influence, of what's standard, predictable and safe.

Yet most travel writing as well remains focused on attractions, theme parks, new hotels, changes in transportation services - on places as sources of things to see and do. Significant dates and personalities drive history.

In the same way that history is the record of winners, places tend to be represented by dominant forces, tourism chief among them.

Irreverently, "place" in the first instance suggests that people don't have to travel at all to enjoy what traditionally has made leisure travel important. "Place" represents an orientation to wherever we find ourselves. This can be as close to home as a neighborhood we haven't come to know well -- perhaps even our own with whose history and, except for its most routine patterns, with even its day-to-day life we are unfamiliar.

In terms of quick getaways, "place" might mean overnighting where we live but elsewhere than under our own roof. "Place" suggests visitors who are willingly drawn in, defining where we find ourselves by first hand experience that results from a good degree of exploration, rather than transactionally moved about by prescribed options.

Historically, leisure travel and its bundled effect as tourism has been driven by forces largely extraneous to the place traveled. These forces include travel agents, tour operators and travel advertisers that in turn include carriers and lodgings. Destinations have represented themselves chiefly through travel marketing that aligns with these interests. Mostly travel industry figures represent the world's places and they speak of places as destinations.

**How might things be different and why should they be?**

Looked at from within, places seethe with their own dynamics we call

politics. Groups vie to re-define the past of their places and direct its future. Three main interests tend to represent the integrity of place: interests of conservation, preservation and culture. These represent the natural environment, the built environment and how people define themselves with regard to each other apart from outsiders as well as interactively with them. All three interests concern themselves with heritage. All work to balance out economic determinism, which in most of the world's places finds mainstream tourism a significant partner if not a driving force.

At least in the United States, these three forces operate separately. All concern place but don't come together around this concept. Yet for the average citizen, place is what most often is in issue. People tend to respond the same way when an historic building gets torn down as when a stream or lake becomes polluted and no longer fully available for recreation. It's the loss of the familiar that people react to. Culture figures in the same way. People tend to be welcoming but suspicious of outsiders who seek to impose change. Visitors may be welcomed by the ones and tens but not by the thousands and tens of thousands. Over time, places tend to work out their ethnic differences. In time, immigrant neighborhoods, once maybe shunned, become integrated with the mainstream and valued for their integrity. People don't like to see traditional neighborhoods disrupted by new highways or by other forced dislocations.

These forces of conservation, preservation and culture represent a significant bulwark against how mainstream tourism tends to objectify places by narrow touristic value. But their effectiveness is diluted when they operate independently of each other. Each has its local partisans who tend to get involved with environmental causes, with saving landmark structures from demolition, with conserving historical artifacts and art.

At a time when homogenizing influences ascend with great power, place represents a counterforce. And, as already indicated, place also represents an important way of viewing travel.

Therefore, place as a concept joins what is local and long term in contrast to what is outside and short term as invoked by leisure travel. When locals address place instead of only its separate aspects, the values of place strengthen. When travelers become more aware of place rather than simply as destination, they become more respectful of where they find themselves.

Indeed, travelers might easily be seen as people who respect their own places while visiting places elsewhere, sensitized at home by values they bring to the places they visit and that they share with people resident there.

Locals everywhere, then, might well strengthen their capacity to slow the impacts of change that mainstream tourism represents by emphasizing their qualities of place. Of course, for this to work, mainstream tourism will have to entertain these qualities more willingly. One way to consider what might happen is to look analogously at how organic foods and other natural products increasingly show up on supermarket shelves. Market forces are driving markets to ▶

expand what they have historically either not supplied at all or in too small regard.

The question becomes, how to broaden the idea of travel by the concept of place. The sequence for effecting change suggests a start by demonstrating greater demand in the marketplace for place - what the travel industry would call "product" -- that is everywhere available. Simultaneously, the separate elements of place need to come together. Conservation viewed as "environment" carries pejorative baggage. Preservation viewed as elitist carries the same. Ditto culture as Culture. Place carries no baggage. Granted that the term at least at first appears awkward. It wouldn't be the first that nonetheless captured popular imagination. "Lipstick" made it. So did "tourism."

### The Market for Place

Surveys increasingly show that the market for what place embraces is greater than ever. (Request a copy from the author)

Travel editors and travel writers can be critical to popular embrace of this new regard for place.

Although we know that travel has been contextually absorbed by tourism, the lurch necessary to effect change may come from how place opens the way to more profitable newspaper travel sections. Already the most profitable sections of newspapers, their focus on place may help them become more profitable. These sections represent the pivot around which tourism might be redefined as a way that influences the mindset of readers about place and, in the first instance, about their own resident places.

Place for the first time would encourage local businesses that traditionally have advertised only in out of town newspapers to advertise locally as well.

For example, imagine if instead of Travel these sections of newspapers were now called Place.

This would encourage the advertising of local bed-and-breakfasts and every other kind of lodging because of a new emphasis on local people "getting away" in and discovering their own cities. Restaurants have long promoted dinners out. What if coupled with staying overnight at a local B&B, not just for a wedding anniversary but also at whim? What if museums and galleries got behind the effort and packaged art opening, dinner and room for the night? Books, and even guidebooks, about where people live would become products for local advertising. This wouldn't draw book advertising away from book sections. This would be added opportunistic advertising. Neighborhood shopping districts, antiques districts, amusement districts and other sources of products for sale distinct in their setting would become additional prospects. Some restaurants would want to appear in Place instead of (or in addition to) dining sections.

As the concept takes hold, writers would be assigned articles that treat places more fully, telling more about what makes places tick, more about issues, more about living history that, without choosing up political sides, talks to popular expression. Instead of just reporting on major attractions, writing would report on situations in process of becoming.

### People to People Connections

Place, as an essential determinant of how we live, would resonate with travelers who are already drawn to the idea of place at home. In the same way that travelers in recent years have moved beyond

the beach as a way to spend tropical vacations, visiting museums, historic districts and natural attractions that include trails and preserved landscapes, so they might be drawn to visit people in their myriad representational groups, people genuinely of their place who, by drawing in visitors of like mind, help strengthen local commitment to values of place.

Tourism has never effectively tapped into people-to-people opportunities. Yet newly sensitized tourist agencies might find enormous opportunity in diversifying the appeal of their places. At a time when a limited number of international carriers, chain hotels, mass tour operators and the like tend to duplicate the travel experience endlessly, less well budgeted places, including less commercial attractions everywhere, find themselves disadvantaged in getting word out.

Place offers an alternative sector that's more local and authentic, which, in a world increasingly motivated by conservation, preservation and culture seeks authenticity, can help make local experience more valuable. It's easy to imagine this alternative become a powerful transnational influence in tourism. Accordingly, work has to be directed to bring together preservation, conservation and cultural groups in what we think of as "destinations" (which of course today means everywhere) and work has to be done from within travel. Both need to re-focus on place. Reoriented, travel writing - and travel writers -- can provide a nexus.

It's an unfamiliar task for travel writers to become engaged in something of pivotal importance. Yet we shouldn't be daunted just because the idea is novel. Innovation makes sense at a time when the profession is hurting from the fallout of 9/11. At least in the short term, travel is altogether turning more regional and local. People are looking for what's more authentic. Most vacations remain matters of only a few days. The new emphasis on travel nearer home is likely to capture a larger, lasting market share.

Thoughtfully driven, this proposal to effect change might succeed. ●

This article was contributed by planeta.com during the Media, Environment, and Tourism Conference.

It has been un-edited since its first appearance on Planeta.com in 2001.

# GOODNESS SELLS

a modest proposal for the rebranding of ecotourism in the U.S.

BY FRANCES FIGART

## Wanted: Ecotourism Sales Manager

"Wanted: Ecotourism Sales Manager... We are looking for that individual who has the skills to develop this new market, build a database, and turn these efforts into 'booked business' for our tourism partners and liaison and develop new ecotourism events for the city."

When I read this ad on The International Ecotourism Society (TIES) website, I was ecstatic. Because ecotourism is still a new concept to many professionals in the U.S. travel industry, it was exciting to hear of a destination marketing organization in Texas -- and a National Tour Association member -- taking bold steps to develop new product in this sustainable market niche.

But when I checked in with Linda Fort, CTP, director of destination sales at the Corpus Christi Convention and Visitors Bureau to learn more, I found out something rather sad. "It turns out we will be calling this position 'nature-based tourism' as opposed to 'ecotourism,'" she said. Why? "The ecotourists are often perceived as 'tree huggers,' as the media has not always reported their activities in a positive light. So we are stressing nature-based tourism. We want to make sure we don't get involved in environmental issues; we want to send the message that our city is nature-friendly, and we have a variety of events for all nature lovers."

Though disheartening, Fort's decision to rename her new sales position bears testament to no shortsightedness on her part, but rather to the greater marketing issues faced by the travel industry today when trying to speak the words "ecotourism" and "United States" in the same breath. What does it mean when a city has to leave ecology out of the picture in order to be perceived as nature-friendly? What does it mean when a CVB can't advertise for an "ecotourism sales manager" without risking being labeled environmentally extremist?

## Defining Ecotourism

Before investigating these questions further, it's only sound practice to agree upon a working definition of the term "ecotourism."

TIES defines ecotourism succinctly as "responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and sustains the well-being of local people." It further espouses that those who participate in ecotourism activities should:

- Minimize impact
- Build environmental/cultural awareness and respect
- Provide positive experiences for visitors and hosts
- Provide direct financial benefits for conservation
- Provide financial benefits and empowerment for local people
- Raise sensitivity to host countries' political, environmental and social climate
- Support international human rights and labor agreements

In a comparative study of ecotourism policy in the Americas by Steve Edwards, Bill McLaughlin and Sam Ham for The Organization of American States (OAS), out of the 25 government tourism agen-

cies that chose to define "ecotourism," 21 chose to create their own definition.

While the details vary, most definitions of the term boil down to a special form of tourism that meets three criteria:

1. it offers an element of environmental conservation
2. it provides for some level of meaningful community participation
3. it is profitable and can sustain itself over time I choose (like all the other individualists in this field of study) to augment these with a fourth criterion:
4. it incorporates an educational or interpretive component

Collectively these four will be the type of tourism I refer to when I say "ecotourism."

## Ecotourism's Brand Identity

A word's definition is one thing. But its connotation—what it is perceived to mean by those who encounter it, in whatever context—more closely resembles what many who work in the marketing field would call a "brand." A brand is a network of associations representing the sum of all experiences between an individual and a product or concept. Popular definitions hold that a brand should be a deliberate result of strategic considerations on the part of some group of professionals about a product or concept's value (paraphrase of Yesawich, Pepperdine, Brown & Russell).

What, then, is the brand identity of ecotourism in the United States?

"I don't think ecotourism has a brand awareness with the general public at this point," said Mac T. Lacy, publisher and cofounder of The Group Travel Leader in Lexington, Ky. "The term and the product are still too new in the marketplace to have any kind of general awareness other than with those in the industry and a very limited number of consumers who are already buying the product."

Although Lacy credits travel professionals with a general awareness of the term, their impression seems to be nebulous, at best. Barbara J. Bowman, director of sales, Grand Junction Visitor Convention Bureau, Grand Junction, Colo., concedes the term is very muddy for her. "Sometimes ecotourism can have a very negative connotation for people: I've actually heard someone say, 'I'm not going on some tree-hugging tour,'" she says.

Like her fellow DMO Linda Fort in Texas, Bowman is under pressure not to use the term. "I have taken some real heat for even trying to promote ecotourism in this area, from the conservative community and even from the tourism office itself." She echoes Fort's sentiment when she says the prevailing attitude is that people don't want to be connected with this form of tourism.

"Ecotourism smacks of biodegradable soaps and composting toilets, of 'the only thing you want to leave behind is footsteps' and 'you take out what you take in,'" said Bruce Beckham, CTP, executive director of Tourism Cares for Tomorrow in Canton, Mass. "I think ▶

ecotourism has been branded as being green tourism, having to do with the ecology of the earth."

If Beckham's assessment is on target, we'd expect someone who leads tours that educate people about ecology to call them ecotours. But ecologist, wildlife researcher and leader of natural history tours for the Maine Audubon Society, Smithsonian Study Tours and National Wildlife Federation, Chris Lewey says, "I never use the term ecotourism associated with anything that I do. When I hear 'ecotourism,' I think of travel to really remote places with an underlying theme of sustaining a third world economy by providing them with tourism for dollars so that they don't exploit their resources."

Thus, the spectrum of brand associations for what type of person might be an ecotourist ranges from the extremes of tree-hugging environmentalist to sociopolitical activist. And it follows that those who espouse the moderate middle ground of pure ecological sensitivity might be inclined to resist the label "ecotourist" because of its other, more extreme connotations.

"It seems to me that when people hear the word 'ecotourism' they immediately get a mental picture of someplace far away: the Galapagos Islands in an open launch, everybody dressed in multi-pocketed vests with cameras and binoculars hanging around their necks, or maybe a soaking-wet hike up an insect-infested mountain-side on Maui."

This is H. Peter Jorgensen speaking. Jorgensen is an NTA member who understands and is doing ecotourism in the United States. His attraction tells tourists the story of American agriculture and the expanding capacity of American farms to feed the nation and the world. The Silos & Smokestacks National Heritage Area, comprised of 37 counties in northeast Iowa, was formed to support the interpretation of the region's heritage to its residents and visitors. It has all the elements in our working definition of ecotourism: environmental conservation, community participation, profitability/sustainability, and education/interpretation.

"In short, people think ecotourism is for diehard environmentalists and tree huggers who can afford to travel to far-flung exotic places," Jorgensen said. "But they don't realize that when they took the kids to Yellowstone Park, they were participating in ecotourism. Or when they visited Uncle Merle and Aunt Betty on their Iowa farm and saw how the environment of that farm was managed sustainably, they were ecotourists."

## Home And Away

Thus it would seem that ecotourism's warped brand identity in the United States has, at least for some, obscured its true definition. But why?

Part of the reason lies in an aspect hit upon by Jorgensen and Lewey: that ecotourism is thought of as "away." There is no dearth of evidence to the fact that every other part of the world has developed this product to a greater degree than the United States, most particularly the Latin American countries, from whence the term originates. With such strong connotations as a remote, third-world endeavor, often with sociopolitical overtones, it becomes difficult, if not impossible, for anyone to think of ecotourism as an activity that can occur in the U.S.

Yet, as we have seen, the U.S. travel professional is picking up on this product and making some effort to develop it. Otherwise, why would Linda Fort at Corpus Christi have strategized to create a posi-

tion to manage sales for this market niche? What's happening to cause "ecotourism" to pick up steam and appear on the U.S. travel industry's radar screen?

"I argue it's a result of Sept. 11," said Ron Mader, Latin American correspondent for *Transitions Abroad* and founder of *Planeta.com*, based in Oaxaca, Mexico. "If U.S. travelers are more reluctant to travel abroad [as a result of Sept. 11], then we bring those attractions here. Witness the great success of Las Vegas, where one can visit replicas of Egyptian pyramids, the Eiffel Tower and European castles. The same principle holds true with botanical gardens; in Cleveland you can trek through replicas of ecosystems from Costa Rica and Madagascar. But I think the bug-a-boo remains the word 'ecotourism.' Where there are great examples of ecotourism in the United States, we don't really call it ecotourism. If you talk about nature travel or visits to the national parks, the image is terrific. If you limit the discussion to 'ecotourism,' the term is used exclusively for international travel."

How have we come by an image of ecotourism that is so far off its actual definition? To answer that, let's look at how we get our information in this country: the media.

## Media's Role in Branding

To what extent have the media contributed to propagating the existing ecotourism brand?

I was recently granted an interview with National Geographic Explorer-in-Residence Wade Davis, whom I have long admired. Davis is the ethnobotanist and anthropologist upon whose adventurous spirit the character of Indiana Jones was loosely based. In speaking with Davis, my goal was to give *Courier* readers a broader understanding of tourism's place in our culture. Hence, the interview was titled: An anthropological view of Travel and Tourism. Talking with Davis was fascinating and I learned a great deal from his perspective on modern tourism, especially in the case of travel to exotic destinations such as the Amazon and Tibet. Davis advocated tour operators educating their clients about other cultures before they attempt to visit them. All of this was constructive and helpful, as you can see for yourself in the August 2005 issue of *Courier*. However, the most disheartening part of the interview came when I asked Davis what he thought about ecotourism. This is what he said:

"I think that in principle, the idea of ecotourism, which is to have minimal impact—to go to celebrate natural wonders as opposed to commercial extravaganzas constructed for the industry—is a wonderful idea, and the idea of seeking knowledge through travel can only be beneficial for the world. What I find is that there is a correlation between sensitivity and difficulty of access; the harder you have to work to get to a place, the more interesting the interaction or sensitive the encounter. But I've always found that "ecotourism" as a term is kind of a conceit because it maintains the assumption that somehow if you travel with a backpack, polar fleece and a Nikon, as opposed to loud Bermuda shorts, a funny hat, sneakers and an old Kodak, you're somehow a different kind of tourist. I think that much of what ecotourism does is simply increase penetration of the hinterland, and I think ecotourism gets into serious problems in the realm of culture because it invariably then becomes a form of voyeurism. I've seen ecotourism operations that are set up in a competitive fashion with the goal of "contacting unknown peoples." I think it's extraordinarily problematic and exploitative in its essence. With ▶

that said, it's also important to note that tourism, when practiced sensitively, can be an incredible source of empowerment for local people -- and not just economically."

Now Davis is a Harvard graduate with a Ph.D. in ethnobotany; his curriculum vita is the only one I've ever seen that is 42 pages long. He's written a dozen books, lived among cultures all over the globe and spoken to audiences in the highest echelons of education. While his focus is, of course, on international examples of ecotourism, and ours is U.S.-based, if his perception of ecotourism is negatively skewed, that means there is a real problem -- not only with the way the term is used, but also with the types of activities that are carried out worldwide in the name of ecotourism. Davis' "first contact" example was one that I myself had read an article about in a popular outdoor adventure magazine. This type of coverage suggests that not only have the media helped to propagate the brand of ecotourism in the United States, they have sensationalized it at that.

"The brand of ecotourism is not accurately portrayed in the media," agrees Ed Hall, CTP, president and CEO of the Rochester Visitors Association, Rochester, N.Y. "In our country it's very muddled. A lot of people embrace the term as a marketing term thinking it has some real warm and fuzzies connected to it, but not necessarily what I consider to be the real essence of ecotourism, which has to do with walking gently in the ecosystem that you're visiting and not destroying it in the process of enjoying it."

Jorgensen says the media tend to perpetuate the prevailing notion of ecotourism because "exotic" sells. "Nature shows like much of what's on the Discovery Channel tend to try to attract viewers with stories that are drawn from locales that most people are not going to see and get into situations most people frankly would not want to be in," he said. "I recently saw a film involving being in the middle of a herd of one and half million wildebeests on a riverbank where the migrating ungulates were being snatched and eaten alive by giant crocodiles. Fascinating stuff, but I'm probably not going to choose to endure the hardships that were suffered by that film crew."

Another NTA tour supplier member, John Shaffer, director of marketing and sales for Luray Caverns in Luray, Va., agrees and says, "the image of ecotourism currently presented in the media is too narrowly interpreted. Cruises in the Galapagos Islands are not all there is to ecotourism; Acadia National Park in Maine is also concerned about the environment when it takes tour groups into the wilderness. Some of the coverage for ecotours [presents them as] high-dollar tours with only luxury opportunities and [focuses on] the fact that they are exotic in nature."

Certainly, then, coverage in the U.S. media of exotic, overseas ecotours, whether or not they have the four criteria of our working definition, does play a part in why the brand of ecotourism is askew.

### The Role Of Government And Money

Shaffer says Luray Caverns has practiced sustainability and ecotourism for over a hundred years. They were fortunate, he says, to have in their hometown Shenandoah National Park, which shared its best practices and resources for sustainable usage. Together, the cave attraction and the national park taught themselves and each other how to practice ecotourism.

"We did this by protecting the assets that we have and going to all kinds of means to orient our employees as well as our visitors as to how they can enjoy this natural attraction in a way that preserves it

and allows it to be just as good if not better for future generations," he said. "We own our attraction, but we would not do anything to harm it. This philosophy of sustainability and taking care of assets is much more widespread than is apparent from the media and than the public realizes. All natural attractions have to have this as one of the top concerns of their management. The days of exploiting a natural attraction for pure profit are long gone; those people are out of business because they've exhausted the product or because the public are purely revolted at the methods with which they handle those attractions."

When asked to provide an example of ecotourism in the United States, many travel professionals and industry experts immediately say: the National Parks Service, where the money is reinvested into the park conservation and educational programs. But not all park goers can be ecotourists.

"The sensitive areas in our country are dominated by the Park Service," said Rochester CVB's Ed Hall. "But you have the absolute dilemma of not putting a velvet rope around the parks so that they can only be accessed by fit backpackers. You've got to facilitate the ability of all types of people to enjoy the asset and at the same time protect it."

Joel Frank, chief of tourism, Northeast Region, National Park Service, Philadelphia, Pa., deals daily with this dilemma. "It is vital to engage the end users and make them understand that since the parks are theirs, they have a responsibility to be involved in helping to preserve and protect them," he said. "I believe that the successful implementation and marketing of a 'voluntourism' system within the NPS will allow people to take ownership and develop an attitude that 'this is my place and I need to do what is necessary to protect it.' And it is my hope that this newly found connection and personal accountability to nature will go beyond national park borders and be incorporated into their everyday lives as global citizens."

What does Frank think about the brand of ecotourism in the United States?

"We have to be careful that [ecotourism] doesn't become another buzzword, like 'organic' or the public may think that going to a park makes them an ecotourist. When they hear the word 'ecotourism,' the public thinks ziplines through the rainforest. The travel professional, on the other hand, will think Tauck."

Tauck World Discovery of Norwalk, Conn., is indeed one of the most eco-friendly tour operators in the United States. The NTA tour operator provides adventure tours to top global ecotour destinations and guests have been involved in ecological initiatives and endeavors while they are traveling on tours, primarily through voluntourism, which they invented. Tauck's relationship with America's National Parks began in 1926, when founder Arthur Tauck, Sr. first brought guests to Great Smoky Mountains National Park... in his Studebaker. Today, the company's 30 most popular North American itineraries result in 120,000 park visits annually to more than 50 national parks across the country. And yet, ironically, like ecologist Chris Lewey who provides lecture series for Tauck, the company does not brand the term "ecotourism." That's partly because they are a mass-market operator, but it's also partly because they don't see their tours as truly fulfilling every element of an ecotour proper, and they don't want to merely use the term as a label, according to Phil Otterson, executive vice president, external affairs and global alliances. ▶

"If you want to talk about national parks, fine. But if you want to talk about ecotourism, let's talk about the Galapagos," Otterson said. "Let's talk about governments and countries and local entities that have a true concern for ecotourism, and work towards change within the current U.S. government that has placed concern about the environment on the back burner."

Otterson isn't the only person who's convinced our government, despite the noble efforts of its parks system, stands between the U.S. and the development of real ecotourism product. David Cogswell, a senior editor at Travel Weekly in New York City, espouses a view shared by many:

"Our popular culture in the U.S. is formed in large measure by the big corporate media conglomerates, and they very consciously massage the public mind to favor a corporate agenda, which is anti-environment, among other things. The corporate agenda is essentially anti-democratic, anti-free market and anti-public property.

The environment is legally public property. Dating back to Roman law it is the commons, and it belongs to all the people. Corporations want to privatize everything so that they can take freely whatever they can make money on and then dump their waste products back into the public sector for the rest of us to clean up out of our tax payments. So when it comes to media, it is not a level playing field for environmental issues. You have to find ways to get around the natural anti-environmental bias of the corporate media. The key is the bottom line. Corporations don't 'believe' in anything but making money. Though they are essentially anti-environment in their very existence, the one value that supersedes all others is maximizing profit. So the way to get them on your side is to show how it can be profitable."

Tourism Cares for America's Bruce Beckham agrees that "it really all does come down to the money," but he views the issue more in terms of the importance of giving back. "From a tourism standpoint, there are very few philanthropic organizations that are not looking for some kind of return on investment, even if it is just feeling good about themselves. People just don't throw their money at something based on the fact that it's the right thing to do. They always have to figure out what am I going to get, and part of that is feeling good about themselves because they've done the right thing."

No matter what your views of government, philanthropy or big business, it does make sense to look at ways to show potential stakeholders that ecotourism can be a viable long-term investment. But that's an uphill battle as long as the current brand image of ecotourism is inaccurate, as long as a vice president at a large tour operator like Tauck can honestly say: "There is no such thing as ecotourism in my professional opinion in the United States." Otterson adds that "of course that's a euphemism and it isn't true, but compare whatever we are doing here to what's happening in other countries and the difference absolutely amazing. The flip side of this is, that's the opportunity. Now you have nothing, so how much worse can it get?"

Before the U.S. can begin to compete for ecotourism business in the global marketplace, I believe it is the joint responsibility of the travel professional and the travel media to change the perceived image of ecotourism in the United States, to rebrand ecotourism.

### Travel Writers' Responsibilities

First and foremost, journalists from all types of backgrounds and areas of expertise must take it upon themselves to learn the basics

about ecotourism and sustainability before they can hope to accurately portray these subjects in the media. Learning includes studying and being aware of the proper definitions of the terms involved, so that these understandings will be conveyed to the consumer.

Ecologist Chris Lewey brings up an example of how the media often confuse or conflate terms related to "environment" and "ecology."

"Environmentalism brings in [humans] as far as having a perspective on what should be done, how it should be done, how we interact with the environment, whereas ecology is the science behind it that has nothing to do with decisions on recycling or land use planning – the two are totally different. Environmentalists might cite ecological law and theory in support of or to refute something. But it often stands out as I'm reading something [in the media] that it's really not clear the way people are using those terms."

Lewey stresses that the media's role is crucial here because "educating people influences the decisions that they make."

Kim Whytock, a tourism strategist operating Kim Whytock and Associates, Inc., based in Dartmouth, Nova Scotia, points out some misunderstandings about ecotourism have been perpetuated by the media.

"Media and the marketing people have perhaps contributed to the confusion by choosing to use the word 'ecotourism' to their own particular end and as a promotional word describing the 'what' of travel as opposed to the 'how' of travel. Ecotourism is more a principled type of travel that can [take the form of] many types of experiences and [occur] in all places, downtown New York to the Grand Canyon."

It is therefore the second responsibility of the journalist to strive not to slant stories toward a bias, angle or agenda that is defined by his or her own needs and interests and that therefore begs the question. This can happen when editors or publishers have expectations that stories will fit into a certain 'beat' or even agenda. When an ecotourism story doesn't fit the mold, it may be left out altogether.

"While a personal experience with understanding a farm's environment or a well-interpreted nature walk at Effigy Mounds National Monument here in Iowa can be a deeply satisfying one," Jorgensen says, "the story may not grab the attention of the reporter who wants to get his/her piece in the magazine or on the screen."

Sometimes Jorgensen's ecotourism work in Iowa has been overlooked by members of the media who are under pressure not to contribute to Iowa's image as a farming state.

Ron Mader sees Jorgensen's product as a perfect example of the kind of story that "straddles two different desks. Is it a tourism story, or is it an environmental story? Because it involves tourism, the eco desk turns its nose at it. And because it's eco, the tourism desk turns its nose at it. I think this is where ecotourism really falls through the net."

Finally, the journalist is responsible to cover ecotourism practices in a way that lends them credibility.

"It really is a matter of semantics, or the framing of the words," said Wendy Sailors, executive director of the Alaska Wilderness Recreation & Tourism Association in Anchorage, Alaska, which uses the term 'ecotourism' in its brochures and on its Web site. "People seem to get this idea that with ecotourism that it's an extreme green thing. In Alaska, I don't know that the media is using that term or really putting it out there in a way that makes it a valid trade." ▶

The media play a determining role in promoting and marketing ecotourism as well as in the community economic development ecotourism should aim to improve, according to Milagro Espinoza, a San José, Costa Rica-based communications specialist in sustainable tourism with the Rainforest Alliance, an international conservation organization. "The media can lend credibility to ecotourism in the eyes of the consumer, so stories in the press about ecotourism destinations can truly help promote the concept."

Planeta's Mader insists that the travel media in particular need to cover the serious issues. "I'd like to see a re-imagining of media that connects environmental journalism and travel writing," he said. "Too often travel media put a positive spin on their features and environmental media cover negative effects. The question in my mind is, 'How do we get away from the sensationalism, report on what's wrong, but provide some sort of continuity?' It would be good to see a serious mix."

Jorgensen agrees. "The media give a lot of press when an activist does some stunt like living in a redwood tree or running their power boat in front of an oil tanker, but give a big yawn when a farmer starts talking about conservation tillage and planting systems or how she is installing a digester system to turn cattle waste into methane fuel to heat and light the barn," he said. "My sense is [the media] needs a much broader understanding of just what ecology as a tour experience can mean."

The media can only get that broader understanding with help from the travel professional.

### Truly Practicing Ecotourism

The travel professional's responsibilities are myriad; I focus here on seven of the most important. First and foremost is practicing true ecotourism according to our working definition, not just saying you do it.

"The travel professional sees ecotourism as another marketing term, another selling point, like 'rack and pinion steering,'" said the National Park System's Joel Frank. "Are you truly an ecotourism company or is this just a tagline, like 'new and improved'? There is no standard to adhere to, so there is no repercussion if you don't do it. We've got the basis of what ecotourism means, but now we need to take the steps to get there; it's time for action. What type of action will differ for each company or organization."

What Frank is getting at is vital – and complex. In order to practice ecotourism in the true sense, each company or organization needs to define for itself what that should mean, and then hold itself accountable to that definition. For example, the reason I added the educational/interpretive element to my definition of ecotourism is that so many travel professionals held it up to me as the most important value of an ecotour from their perspective.

"Ecotourism has to bring an education and an understanding of fragile ecosystems – and if it works well, it makes people an ambassador when they go home to try to save them," said Rochester's Ed Hall. "If it doesn't do that, if it doesn't bring an appreciation of the sensitive nature of the interdependency of the living system, then it really fails."

Once a company or organization defines the term for itself, it also needs to establish a code of ethics and some working goals or guidelines for practicing ecotourism – and then adhere to them. It needs to make itself accountable.

A great example comes from the Alaska Wilderness Recreation & Tourism Association (AWRTA), a members-driven trade association formed to be a collective voice for wilderness-dependent businesses. AWRTA advocates for the sustainability of Alaska's natural and cultural resources, responsible tourism and tourism planning for communities. AWRTA members abide by the voluntary ecotourism guidelines adopted by the membership in 1995.

### AWRTA Ecotourism Guidelines

1. Businesses seek environmentally sustainable economic growth while minimizing visitor impacts on wildlands, wildlife, Native cultures, and local communities by offering literature, briefings, leading by example, taking corrective action or other appropriate means.
2. Travel modes and facilities used maintain a low impact on the natural environment; tour use is sustainable over time without significantly altering the resource or negatively affecting the experience.
3. Businesses provide direct benefits to the local economy and local inhabitants thereby providing an incentive for local support and preservation of wild areas and wildlife habitat.
4. Businesses seek appropriate means to minimize their effects on the environment in all phases of their operations including office practices.
5. Businesses ensure that managers, staff and contract employees know and participate in all aspects of company policy to prevent impacts on the environment, Native cultures, and local communities.
6. There is an educational emphasis and purposeful desire for travelers to learn about the natural and cultural history of the places they visit.
7. There is a formula for the business and guests to contribute to local non-profit efforts for environmental protection.
8. The travel is in the spirit of appreciation, participation, and sensitivity. At some point, a tour group becomes too large to be considered "ecotourism."

### Proper Marketing

The second responsibility incumbent upon the travel professional: once you are really doing ecotourism, marketing it properly – and that means telling success stories. Once again, an excellent example is H. Peter Jorgensen with Silos & Smokestacks National Heritage Area.

Long interested in environmental and sustainable issues, Jorgensen has been extremely resourceful in creating an agritourism Mecca, capitalizing on Iowa's most natural asset: its farming community. His latest project is working with a group of 300 farmers (Practical Farmers of Iowa) to create a themed "eco-farming" tour that will focus on sustainable agricultural methods. "These are folks who try to find ways to work within the natural systems with very humane raising practices and gentle management. They all have one thing in mind, which is, 'Can we farm without polluting the Mississippi River and Gulf of Mexico?'"

He tells some amazing stories about this endeavor, including one about a farmer who tried farming with modern land management methods that included straightening a stream on his property. "But he had two little kids, and when he straightened out this stream, he noticed he couldn't show his kids the bird populations that once lived there: they were gone. He also noticed that when there was a dry period, there was no moisture in the soil: it was all gone." So he undertook a project called "My sins against the Wapsipinicon," ▶

the river that runs through his area, and restored the kinks and the bends in the wetland, which cost a lot. The results were that his crops had more resistance to drought, there were more of the types of insects that were good for the crops – and the birds came back!

This is the type of story that travel professionals need to work to get before the press.

“It’s all in how you spin it,” said Colorado DMO Barb Bowman. “Ecotourism gets a bad rap, because of the marketing. We need use the media and marketing tools we have to educate our public about what it really means.”

A good example of marketing ecotourism success stories is BEST Practices, a publication of Business Enterprises for Sustainable Travel that was developed by The Conference Board and the World Travel and Tourism Council. It highlights successful business practices utilized by travel and tourism companies that advance their business objectives while enhancing the social and economic well-being of destination communities.

### Recognizing Stakeholders

A third responsibility of the travel professional is recognizing and giving credit to the multiple stakeholders involved in the development process as well as the sustainability of ecotourism.

One example is provided by Sailors of AWRTA, who is participating in The Arctic Project, which has six training modules that correspond to six guidelines similar to our AWRTA’s ecotourism guidelines. “The community one is the most interesting to me because it talks about not just being involved in or caring about the community, but buying locally when you are there,” she said. “And it’s not always going to be the best price, but in the long term, you’re building those relationships.”

For Sailors and others trying to effect change, a big question is: How can you convince people that buying locally is the best long-term option?

One exemplary answer suggested by Kim Whytock is The Sustainable Tourism Association of Canada (STAC), a non-governmental organization (NGO) that acts as a clearinghouse of information and policies for the sustainable tourism industry in Canada. Using a quality assurance program, STAC works with stakeholders to develop, enhance and promote the sustainable nature-based tourism industry in Canada.

Another good example is the many awards programs our industry creates to reward companies that are doing good. Parks Canada’s Sustainable Tourism Award, for instance, reflects the emphasis this parks system places on many of the values often associated with ecotourism. The criteria established for the Parks Canada Sustainable Tourism Award reflect the three pillars of sustainable tourism development: economic viability, environmental sustainability, and cultural appropriateness. Recipients of this award make a contribution to practicing and promoting sustainable tourism in Canada by:

- Demonstrating a commitment to excellence and encouraging an appreciation of, and respect for, Canada’s natural, cultural and aesthetic heritage;
- Striving to achieve tourism development in a manner which harmonizes economic objectives with the protection and enhancement of Canada’s natural and cultural heritage;
- Cooperating with colleagues and the tourism industry in promoting sustainable development;

- Offering tourism products and services that are consistent with community values and the surrounding environment; and
- Fostering greater awareness of the economic, social, cultural and environmental significance of tourism.

Recognizing the importance of encouraging studies related to sustainable tourism among future tourism industry entrepreneurs and employees, as part of the award, a \$1,000 scholarship is given every year to a student entering his or her final year of tourism-related studies at a representative university or college in each of Canada’s five regions -- Western Canada, Ontario, Québec, Atlantic Canada and Northern Canada.

Shaffer believes more U.S. travel professionals could benefit from some type of appreciation or accreditation program. “We need some sort of indication that a company has taken the time and effort to learn about sustainability and the fragile environment. To me that’s a plus in the way you talk to the tour patron; they want to go with someone who is sensitive to the issues that we all are concerned about.”

Certification programs are another means of recognition, but a caveat should be heeded: certification that is too rigid and standardized may defeat ecotourism’s goal of sustainability. “In efforts to standardize operations, most ecotourism certification programs contradict one of the main components of ecotourism: local control,” Mader says. “In fact, most stakeholders have been left out of the process. Certification of tourism is not a ‘market-driven’ option and therefore has little value as a tool for sustainability. If certification has value, it will be in certifying the accomplishments of consultants, NGOs and government leaders in addition to local companies and hotels.”

### Working with Media 101

There are basic guidelines for working with the media that comprise a fourth responsibility for the travel professional. These include building relationships with members of the media based on trust and understanding, so that when a travel writer needs to get a quote from an industry expert about ecotourism, they will automatically turn to you.

It’s always good practice to show your media friends that you have some understanding of their work and what they want to offer their audiences. “Ecotourism ‘experts’ need to be sensitive to media demands, ensuring that information is provided in a timely basis and that it is . . . fun,” says Mader.

“Readers don’t want gloom-and-doom or, even worse, boring travel sections.”

Understanding and working with journalists’ deadlines is key; as an editor, there is nothing worse than getting the information you really need, but having it come to late to be a part of the story. Understanding the way writers work also entails communicating with them in the form they prefer. Ask your media friends which way they’d like you get in touch with them; often e-mail is preferable because the telephone interrupts a writer on deadline.

Information requests not only need to be answered on time, but new information needs to come to reporters in the form of a press release. Surprisingly few travel professionals really have this skill down, and rural communities especially need to learn it. But once you get to be friends with a reporter, sometimes just a brief pitch in an e-mail will be all you need. ▶

## Educating And Controlling

A fifth responsibility of the travel professional is educating the media about ecotourism, sustainable practices and travel industry trends.

"The tourism industry needs to communicate with journalists and make them aware of ecotourism and sustainable initiatives," says the Rainforest Alliance's Espinoza. "Unless journalists are aware of what ecotourism means, they will find it difficult to write a story that accurately portrays local community efforts to develop ecotourism activities. Keeping journalists up to speed with ecotourism news will help educate others about market trends, how ecotourism works and its growing importance."

It also falls to the travel professional to supervise and control the interview as well as the end product as much as possible, which is the sixth responsibility. As the person in your company who understands ecotourism fully, it is important for you personally to speak with the media representative, rather than leaving this task to someone who might not be as well informed.

Mader points out that most large organizations "usually have a communications department in charge of information distribution. Unfortunately, this often takes away from the principal players the ability and the responsibility to communicate. We should rethink the role of institutional PR departments; for the most part they have become unnecessary. We recommend that tourism boards pay professional editors to review and redo brochures and Web sites for operators and communities."

Espinoza reminds us that the tourism industry "must always direct part of its promotional efforts toward the media, not only by responding to media queries but also by being proactive, by closely monitoring the news in order to take advantage of opportunities to reach out to journalists and connect ecotourism stories with what is currently being covered in the press."

## Partnering and Sustainability

The seventh responsibility of the travel professional is partnering with other travel professionals for community economic development through ecotourism. And this is the area where perhaps the greatest pitfalls can be encountered.

Ron Mader's excellent essay *Stones in the Road* addresses the realities of ecotourism's Achilles heel, and makes suggestions for positive ways to work together. Here is an excerpt from the introduction:

"Many of today's travelers are choosing ecotourism and sustainable travel over other, more traditional vacations. Yet, studies indicate that a large number -- perhaps even a majority -- of initiatives to foster ecotourism and sustainable travel have failed. So, what's the problem?"

In a nutshell, what sounds great on paper is often difficult to implement in the real world. When it comes to generating tourism that benefits both the environment and local economies, we are all on the learning curve. But we don't talk about failure at public policy meetings, government workshops, or in reports to foundations or development banks, where it would benefit us most to concede we are a young niche market finding its way. We can learn from our mistakes if we are willing to admit it when mistakes are made. Before seeking greater investments in this emerging industry, it would be wise to reflect on the lessons learned."

Looking back at the components of our working definition of ecotourism, we see:

1. environmental conservation
2. community involvement
3. profitability and sustainability
4. education and interpretation

Ed Hall points out that sometimes the first component is in conflict with the third one. "And that's the difficult part: balancing that number one and number three objective -- and there has to be both," he said. "Making the two work together is not easy and it sometimes involves a partnership of an NGO working with the community along with a sensitive tour operator along with a customer that understands their role, too."

Since our survey of ecotourism's brand identity has shown that the environmental conservation element (number one) is what has the greatest brand awareness in the market, it would seem our priority in collaborating might be to attempt to swing the pendulum back in favor of the sustainability and profitability element (number three).

Peter Levick, director of external relations for Parks Canada in Gatineau, Quebec, says "we actually don't use the term 'ecotourism' to describe what we do because there is such a cultural and heritage element to it, and we feel like 'sustainability' better brings that aspect into the picture. 'Ecotourism' is so narrow that it doesn't get at that."

Kim Whytock, who developed much of the sustainability language used by Parks Canada, agrees. "'Ecotourism' is unfortunately used in many ways to be a synonym for nature-based tourism, scenic touring or environmental advocacy tourism," he said. "I think it should be more closely related to 'sustainable tourism' in the context of both its impact and relation to natural and cultural heritage experiences and the contribution of tourism and travelers to the well being of the places that host the tourism. Therefore the brand promise should be similar to the definition for sustainable tourism used by The Tourism Industry Association of Canada (TIAC) and Parks Canada."

TIAC and Parks Canada use this definition: "Sustainable tourism actively fosters appreciation and stewardship of the natural, cultural and historic resources and special places by local residents, the tourism industry, governments and visitors. It is tourism which is viable over the long term because it results in a net benefit for the social, economic, natural and cultural environments of the area in which it takes place."

Their ethics statement is: "The Canadian tourism industry is guided by the values of respect, integrity and empathy in designing, delivering and marketing sustainable tourism products, facilities and services." And its ends are "to create a sustainable tourism industry that: promotes sensitive appreciation and enjoyment of Canada's natural and cultural heritage, contemporary landscapes, cultures and communities; balances economic objectives with safeguarding and enhancing the ecological, cultural and social integrity of Canada's heritage; and shares responsibility by being a full participant and contributor to the economic, environmental and cultural sustainability of the destinations and assets it utilizes."

If Barb Bowman can't market "ecotourism," she hopes to create similar product under the more acceptable auspices of "sustainable tourism." Colorado's historical society has recently provided a ▶

grant for hiring a staff person at the Colorado Tourism Office to be devoted to cultural and heritage Tourism. "A big part of that position is focused on sustainable tourism, which is very exciting," she said.

So perhaps "ecotourism" works best when used with an adjective before it. Perhaps it is worth thinking about branding it as "sustainable ecotourism."

### Goodness Sells

So, how can the travel industry better promote ecotourism to the media, and by proxy to the public and to stakeholders, as a viable long-term strategy?

"The travel industry first has to be convinced that ecotourism is viable," is Mader's answer. "If the industry does not believe it (and ecotourism is still emerging), then the picture it paints to the media will be superficial. Communication, cooperation and collaboration speak louder than certification at this point in ecotourism's emerging brand."

Remember that earlier we said a brand should be a deliberate result of strategic considerations on the part of some group of professionals about a product or concept's value? It's time for those who want ecotourism to be the success in the U.S. that it is in South America, Africa and Australia to decide what they want ecotourism to be? And what they are willing to do to get it there.

Mader suggests one way to go about this is to create an inventory of how ecotourism is perceived by the public in the U.S., similar to what we have done here. What sorts of images are portrayed in the media? What is the international news coverage? Then use that information to put a positive spin on ecotourism in the U.S. through marketing that will alter any negative perceptions.

"I think every NTA tour is environmentally sensitive, but we might not do that good a job of explaining that to our patrons," said John Shaffer of Luray Caverns. "We could use every opportunity on a tour to take a dollar out and let the group know that in some way our visit here is going to benefit the preservation of this national park or natural attraction. Goodness sells: I think that can be a marketing tool."

H. P. Jorgensen agrees. "There is no better marketing hook than personal buy-in. If a company is truly committed to organizing itself and its products around being a part of the solution rather than part of the problem, the consumer will buy in to the 'feel good' aspect of being a part of a larger community effort."

Bruce Beckham of Tourism Cares for Tomorrow sees that "feel good" aspect as the key to the travel industry learning to collaborate. The organization's Tourism-Caring for America projects that help to preserve and protect national treasures in the United States are the most successful aspect of Tourism Cares. "Getting people together for a common cause is really what needs to be done on a consistent basis so that people make that part of their regimen, and so that part of their existence in the travel business and the tourism industry is a matter of giving back," he said. "If you get people physically involved, they feel a social responsibility as well as an industry responsibility. The people have to turn around when it's all said and done and see the results of their labor – the return on their investment of their time. That will give them the mindset they have to have to work together in other ways."

Speaking from the international, and particularly the Latin

American, perspective, Mader reflects on where we have been, and the existential nature of where we're going: "For years ecotourism was described as a profitable, fast-growing niche. Reports were wildly exaggerated about the size and the potential of the market.

For those seeking short-term profit, ecotourism has been a disappointment. For those searching for sustainable development, ecotourism is key. Sustainable tourism depends on long-term investment and cross-sector sharing of responsibilities and profits. There is a lot of work to be done. So we need to be honest about what works and what does not. We also need to be creative. The early converts to ecotourism were drawn by the possibility of doing something that had never been done before. How we channel creativity into collaborative efforts will determine whether or not we make responsible travel and ecotourism more successful."

AWRTA's Wendy Sailors reminds us that "ecotourism is not a bad term to use when you are marketing to the world." And this is key, because we are!

But we are still at a disadvantage because ecotourism in the U.S. is, at best, in its infancy. Mac Lacy of the Group Travel Leader cautions us with an analogy: "I would say that ecotourism is a 'PBS' term right now and it will be a long time before it is a 'commercial radio' term. If I were in the business of marketing an ecotourism product or company, I'd be sponsoring something on a local PBS affiliate -- not advertising on the local rock, country or talk radio station."

Shaffer believes that with the advent of hands-on technical tours and agricultural tours to farms and factories, the industry is now poised to have more meaningful tours that talk about the environment. "I think there is an opportunity for tour operators to make a new niche for people who are sensitive to these issues," he says. "We all just need to see it as an opportunity to sell more tours to natural areas. And we need to collectively take the idea of ecotourism and make it much more broad than it's interpreted today."

Thus, ecotourism's future is yet to be decided. "Unless it gets irrevocably attached to a really extreme point of view, which often occurs with anything that focuses on environmental issues, the term -- and the products it describes -- should become very relevant to many people in the years ahead," Lacy said.

I argue that it is up to those of us who have an investment in the concept of 'ecotourism' to create its future by thinking strategically and collaborating effectively to rebrand ecotourism and make it what we believe it should be as a representation of the United States on the global playing field.

As Jorgensen has proven in Iowa's farm country, "the environment isn't someplace 'away,' it's omnipresent, and you can literally be an ecotourist in your own back yard if it's interpreted well." ●

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# VOLUNTOURISM

## a foyer in the mansion of global service

BY DAVID CLEMMONS

VolunTourism, the integrated combination of voluntary service and the best of travel and tourism – art, culture, history, geography, and recreation, is really a segue to the vista of service options that span the globe. Tourism presents the unique addition to volunteerism of providing an educational context from which a more comprehensive understanding of a destination and its residents can be developed. It is likely, in fact, that the voluntary service portion of these travel experiences will be significantly enhanced simply through having a greater perspective of the region, its people, and natural environment.

But how does a tour operator, incentive house, or nonprofit organization deliver the best possible VolunTourism experience for its clients? Well, to fully answer this question, we will use an analogy – the analogy of a foyer in a mansion.

A foyer has characteristics and specific design features that set it apart from other areas in a mansion. Characteristics may include: 1. welcoming/inviting, 2. simply furnished, and 3. well-lit. Specific design features may include: 1. a closet or coat-rack, 2. access to other rooms, and 3. a larger, sturdier door. If a VolunTourism practitioner is to be successful, analogous traits and elements should be incorporated into the overall travel experience for VolunTourists.

### Welcoming & Inviting

If you want to reduce anxiety and increase comfort level, make sure that your VolunTourism programs offer a friendly and supportive environment for guests. If local residents and community members can be involved in welcoming VolunTourists to the destination as part of a reception or “first-day gathering”, this will set the tone for the entire trip.

### Simply Furnished

This implies that the environment in which VolunTourists meet community members and participate in their volunteer activities may be quite different than the ornate surroundings of the four- or five-star accommodations in which guests may find themselves during their stay. Community meals, in contrast to the lavish cuisine of these establishments, may also be very simple and characteristic of the foods consumed by local residents.

**Well-lit** – Volunteer offerings should be clearly described prior to arrival on site at a work project or activity. Participants should know the type of labor, degree of social interaction, and skill-set expectations in advance of participation. Orientation to issues of cultural sensitivity – what to wear, how to introduce oneself in the native tongue, hand gestures and other idiosyncratic behaviors, as well as photography, and interacting with children, is critical to the success of the experience for all parties – residents and VolunTourists alike.

**A Closet or Coat-Rack** – VolunTourism experiences should give participants – residents and VolunTourists – a place to remove some of their prejudices, pre-conceived notions, judgments, and other “cultural & personal coats.” Work projects are excellent for this pur-

pose, but so are visitations to cultural centers and historic sites. Greater will be the level of acceptance as education and knowledge improves throughout the entire trip. Remember: VolunTourism is the “integrated combination” of BOTH voluntary action and tourism. The tourism aspect of the experience can prove to be the sandpaper that removes the splinters of indifference and ignorance.

**Access To Other Rooms** – VolunTourism is an opening to the possibilities of future voluntary service and world travel. It is possible that VolunTourists will choose to move to new adventures like volunteer vacations, “volunteer sabbaticals,” service learning, or even “Peace Corps-like” options. It is also possible that VolunTourists will choose to visit different countries and destinations, or more remote locations as a result of their participation in VolunTourism. Having a glimpse of what is “adjacent” to the VolunTourism experience can prove invaluable in forming future life and travel habits.

**A Larger, Sturdier Door** – We all crave safety and security. Because VolunTourism experiences are taking us beyond our “comfort zone,” it is important to maintain safety and security on the physical, as well as, the emotional level for VolunTourists and residents. This comes naturally over the course of time as partnerships with local communities flourish. Local residents become more secure in connecting with visitors and incorporating them into their lives - understanding that these visitors are here to assist them in improving their life situations. VolunTourists benefit from the “at-ease” nature of residents and information on how you, as an operator, are creating a safe and secure environment for them.

VolunTourism offers a balanced approach to service and travel. There is plenty of room for expanding one’s view of the world, and improving the conditions of that world and its people, while incorporating a comfortable and leisurely approach to it. We are not all servants of the masses like Mother Teresa - ready to combat the forces of poverty, leprosy, and class struggles. But we can be introduced to these societal issues and challenges in a way that is non-threatening and respectful of our relative levels of understanding and want to address them. Wisdom-guided exposure to the destination AND its needs through this foyer in the mansion of global service is the essence of VolunTourism. ●

— COURTESY OF VOLUNTOURISM.ORG

# WISDOM & INSIGHT

## lessons learned for voluntourism

### LOS NIÑOS

*Volunteer – To willingly enter into service to another or to a cause.*

*Tour – To travel, journey, go to another place seeing sites and experiencing culture.*

As we go forward to create a strong relationship between volunteering and touring – VolunTourism, it is important to understand the nature of the various realms of volunteering and determine with whom we will work and what impact we aspire to have. Below please note the spectrum of volunteer work that is available.

Non-profit partners who may benefit from the charitable acts of volunteerism are orphanages, senior homes, and facilities for those with physical or mental challenges. These non-profit partners may or may not be organized to receive volunteer groups. The non-profit agency must be willing to set up activities that can be meaningful for their clients and for the volunteers. The volunteers must be made aware that their intervention is an immediate, charitable act and will brighten the day of those receiving the service and will brighten the day of the volunteer. In most cases the volunteer action will not create long-term change in the life situation of those receiving the service. Children, seniors, the unemployed single mother, all represent the disenfranchised in society. To create long-term change for these populations local structures need to be developed to address the needs and participation of these groups in their own society and this cannot be achieved through volunteer visits of persons not in and of the community. In voluntourism programs offering these opportunities, there is usually ample time to see sites, experience the culture, and tour.

Volunteerism that is dedicated to relief efforts generally needs to be organized by non-profit partners with experience in extreme situations of hardship where much of the community and social service structure may not exist or may have been wiped away. These organizations have expertise in situations where no potable water may be available, medicines needing refrigeration are being brought in through a network of “cold chain” locations, food movement is being provided through precarious transport networks, and the people being served may be suffering from trauma. As was apparent during the tsunami, many organizations sent inappropriate items and an overload of inexperienced “volunteers” made efficient water and food delivery even more difficult. If a relief organization has put out a call for volunteers, then those responding need to be aware that they may have very primitive living quarters, contracting disease is a real possibility, and long hours may be required.

In these scenarios the volunteer must not expect a lot of moment-to-moment guidance and direction from the non-profit organization. These are rugged opportunities to provide service best filled by people able to be very flexible and make decisions on the fly. In terms of impact, the volunteer realizes that her/his effort is intended to provide a bridge until the emergency has passed and those affected can once again participate in redeveloping their community. Another aspect of this volunteerism is that, unlike in the case of charitable

acts where there is time to relate one-on-one with those being served, in relief work often the large numbers of those needing to be fed, as an example, means that the connection with individuals is limited. Also there may be little opportunity to experience sites or learn about the culture.

In the arena of development work and volunteerism, the concept is that the volunteers engage in community projects that have been identified and planned by the community. The volunteers become complementary participants in a process that is already determined and underway in the community being visited and served. The engagement offers the opportunity for community members and visitors to learn about each other through mutual discovery of the similarities and differences of culture and context, rather than from a position of supporting those in need. Visitors may provide much needed resources for construction and additional manual or technical labor. Community members are invested owners in the project so the engagement with volunteers must be well designed and planned so that the resulting mutual exchange can occur. This generally requires good translators to be coordinating the work, if language is an issue.

There are a multitude of non-profit organizations focused on development work in the third world; however, it is a special few that are organized to receive visitors, coordinate logistics and hospitality for volunteers, translate, and orchestrate work projects with groups that are a mix of local community members and visitors. What volunteers interested in these types of experiences will know is that the impact they are having is complementary to those efforts of local people to improve their community and achieve their own self-reliance. Depending upon the non-profit organizing the experience, there may be opportunities to also experience sites and tour, or the community work may be all encompassing of the visiting group’s time.

Another aspect of volunteer work in the development arena is where volunteers provide support to research projects, archeological digs, historical preservation or other causes that seek a long-term impact for the community served. In most of these opportunities the volunteer may have little or no engagement with the local community. In some environmental volunteer programs, the volunteers may be living as a group and engaged only with the particular site or animal group being studied. Again, the amount of time volunteering and the amount of time touring varies with these groups depending on the project and the orientation of the hosting organization.

Voluntourism provides a wide range of opportunities for those “voluntourists” interested in traveling and making a difference. Voluntourism - willingly entering into service to another or to a cause as you travel – offers a wide range of opportunities to serve and journey. Let your creativity flow and, from the Buddhist prayer, may all beings everywhere, with whom we are inseparably interconnected, be fulfilled, awakened and free.●

# GENEROSITY IN ACTION

a way for travelers' donations to help local projects



photos courtesy of Generosity in Action

BY LYNN KELSON, TOUR MANAGER

## Travelers Ask to Help Village Schools

In April, 2003, I was asked to be the tour manager of a Stanford Travel/Study program on the Peruvian Amazon. During our cruise upriver on several of the Amazon's many tributaries, we visited two small riverside villages. One of the most interesting aspects of our visits was spending an hour or so in each of the local elementary schools. Our hearts were warmed by the friendly, engaging manner of the students, ranging in age from about 5 to teenagers, as they greeted us with several songs and demonstrated their eagerness to learn.

In my limited Spanish, I spoke to the teacher, an obviously dedicated and hard-working young man. I asked him if there were any school supplies that the school needed. He told me that in the single-classroom school there were very few of the standard government-prescribed textbooks used in all elementary schools in Peru, and almost no notebooks and pencils for the children. It was painfully evident to us all that he was making do with pitifully few supplies, and the children's economic level precluded their providing their own materials.

Once back on the launch that took us to our ship, the *Turquesa*, many in our group expressed a desire to help the village school children. Because I knew of Generosity in Action, I was able to explain how participants could donate tax-deductible funds for the purchase of a large number of books. Because of the group's generous donations, I was able to work with the local operator to purchase the government-approved books and supplies for all grade levels in Iquitos, which our local operator arranged to have delivered to the villages by the next ship to visit. Other groups have donated funds through GIA, which were used to build desks for similar schools in the Amazonian basin.

## How to Get Help to Where it is Needed

My experience is only one small way in which Generosity in Action can help travelers put into action their desires to help the local economy. GIA has funded many projects in other parts of the world, such as pumps, wells, medical supplies and even entire schools for villages in Burma, and schools and playgrounds in villages in South Africa.

## How Does Gia Work?

Generosity in Action is an independent non-profit organization managed by Duncan Beardsley, the former director of the Stanford Alumni Association Travel/Study Programs. Its purpose is to channel donations by travelers to projects that are deemed by the local authorities and tour operators to be feasible and of help to meet local needs. Travelers' charitable donations to GIA are handled through Philanthropic Ventures Foundation (PVF). Mr. Beardsley currently serves on the board of PVF. It is a way of allowing travelers who see local needs to donate funds to a qualified 501(c)(3) charitable organization, receive confirmation of their charitable tax donation, and be sure that the funds have been directed to the project of their choice.

## A Gia Project in Zambia, Africa

Another example of a very successful GIA project was initiated during an "Africa by Air" program run by Bushtracks in February, 2004. The group visited the Kapani School Project in Zambia. The Yosefe School, the model school of the project, sponsors 40 children who could not otherwise afford schooling, and teaches them conservation awareness as well as basic academic skills. Group travelers have donated \$3,000 to assist the Yosefe School, whose students might well become the game wardens of the future. One traveler ▶



Photos courtesy of Generosity In Action

generously provided \$10,000 in each of the past three years to be used for scholarships for outstanding students to attend a college in South Africa. An additional role for GIA was to ensure that the school had the proper structure for awarding scholarships, in order so that the donations would qualify as tax-deductible.

### Digital Pen Pals

A family program has announced a “give back” project sponsored and initially funded by the operator, consisting of 3 phases:

1. Building a room onto a school that can be closed off and locked, for future use as a computer classroom.
2. Purchasing with future donations, computers and educating local staff on how to use them
3. Installing satellite connections to the internet.

Meanwhile, children on the upcoming trip are sending e-mail messages to the school’s students that they receive on a computer provided by the local operator.

There is no limit to the ways travelers can touch and improve the lives of the people they meet in developing countries, and to the satisfaction they get from seeing how their contributions can better the lives of the people with whom they come into contact.

The projects that GIA supports must have a high likelihood of successful completion, and be in a place that future groups are likely to visit. This way, they can check to see that the projects have come to fruition.

### Determining the Feasibility of Projects

When you, as professionals, see a possible project, you need to follow several steps to determine if it is feasible:

- Make sure the project is a worthwhile and realistic one
- Coordinate with the local operator to be sure that the proposed project will be accepted by the community and is not viewed as an intrusion.
- Assess how much work and how many funds are needed for completion of the project

- Make sure that the money given will actually be used by the right agencies in order to accomplish travelers’ and the local community’s goals
- Ask your operator’s future groups to verify in later visits that the desired project has been completed to your specifications.

Cash donations are not tax-deductible. Travelers can either give a check to you on the spot, or send a check to Philanthropic Ventures Foundation when they get home. Checks should be made out to “Generosity in Action” with a note designating the purpose of the funds. Each donor will receive a letter from PVF confirming that their donation is tax-deductible and goes toward the specific project that was indicated.

### What are the Responsibilities of the Tour Manager?

The responsibilities of the tour manager or professional in charge of a tour group are to make absolutely sure that the funds are used for the designated project. If funds are given to the local tour operator, you must know that he or she is reliable and honest. Remind him or her that any problems with the local operators will jeopardize future business with many non-profit travel groups. For more information check the Generosity in Action website at [www.generosityinaction.org/OperationHints.htm](http://www.generosityinaction.org/OperationHints.htm)

### How to Contact Generosity in Action

For further information on Generosity in Action, you can contact Duncan Beardsley by e-mail at: [info@generosityinaction.org](mailto:info@generosityinaction.org) Or by mail at: **Generosity in Action**, c/o Philanthropic Ventures Foundation; 1222 Preservation Park Way; Oakland, CA 94612-1201; (510) 645-1890. ●

# STONES IN THE ROAD

## BY RON MADER

Many of today's travelers are choosing ecotourism and sustainable travel options over other, more traditional vacations.

Yet, studies indicate that a large number -- perhaps even a majority -- of initiatives to foster ecotourism and sustainable travel have failed. So, what's the problem?

In a nutshell, what sounds great on paper is often difficult to implement in the natural world. When it comes to generating tourism that benefits both the environment and local economies, we are all on the learning curve.

But we don't talk about failure at public policy meetings, government workshops, or in reports to foundations or development banks, where it would benefit us most to concede we are a young niche market finding its way. We can learn from our mistakes if we are willing to admit it when mistakes are made.

Before seeking greater investments in this emerging industry, it would be wise to reflect on the lessons learned. What follows is an examination of some key problematic areas in the development and implementation of ecotourism and sustainable initiatives. Paired with each is a possible solution that could facilitate progress and, eventually, success.

## Communication

Organizations with a vertical top-down communication structure are at a serious disadvantage in motivating their staff and informing outsiders. Interior communication is often quite poor and "public outreach" is defined as telling others what the organization is doing, rather than soliciting input or engaging in a frank dialogue. At the local level, there are few avenues for cross-sector communication. Academics meet with academics, NGOs with NGOs, businesses with businesses.

Bureaucracies -- including environmental groups and tourism ministries -- usually have a "communications department" in charge of information distribution. Unfortunately, this often takes away from the principal players the ability and the responsibility to communicate.

Lack of transparency is a serious obstacle at all stages of ecotourism development. Calls for contracts are rarely issued in public -- and less so are they documented on the Web. Development agencies have done an inadequate job of documenting the success and failure of their projects, leaving most stakeholders (particularly locals) in the dark.

For example, the World Bank has a mission to alleviate poverty and is attempting to do so by investing in tourism. That said, it remains a challenge to find relevant and timely information online.

**Solution?** Encourage institutions to be more communicative at all levels of the organization. Everyone needs to employ online and offline communication strategies. We recommend that institutions expand the rolodex. Get assistance from consultants who have a track record of success, not just filling out the paperwork. We should rethink the role of institutional PR departments; for the most part

they have become unnecessary. We recommend that tourism boards pay professional editors to review and redo brochures and Web sites for operators and communities.

## Money

Financing for any development work is limited. That said, we question why so many sustainable tourism investments have failed. Where are reliable statistics? Does anyone maintain them? If not, let's start.

**Solution?** Sustainable Tourism Bank Watch, [www.planeta.com/ecotravel/tour/bankwatch.html](http://www.planeta.com/ecotravel/tour/bankwatch.html), reviews what banks and development agencies are funding in this field. We have seen unprecedented willingness from consultants and bank officials to share details about their current work. More dialogues and more user-friendly, community-friendly evaluations of tourism projects currently in the pipeline would be of great assistance.

## Continuity (and the Lack Thereof)

Lack of continuity is the Achilles' Heel in ecotourism and sustainable tourism development. Successful ecotourism depends on security and most stakeholders are uncertain whether their operations will survive the coming year.

If the topic is considered "hot," officials dedicate time and money in developing institutional presence in the field -- regardless of whether it duplicates other efforts. When interest dwindles, the project is shut down and personnel sent to other divisions. We continue to see ecotourism development work managed by program directors with no expertise and frequently little interest. Given that ecotourism requires travel, many leaders are on the road. This leads to a start-go-stop-backward, go-again routine.

**Solution?** Stop reinventing the wheel! Conduct public inventories and evaluations of efforts and support the work already underway. Foundations should expand funding to existing projects and/or to individuals and groups working in the field. Institutions interested in working in this field need to make a long-term commitment (8-10 years minimum)!

## Marketing

Ecotourism is a local AND global endeavor. That said, many of its chief players are "too close to the trees to see the forest" particularly when it comes to marketing. For small businesses, it can be difficult to maintain perspective: how does one's ecolodge prosper or suffer because of international perception of the region or country takes a tumble? Natural disasters and political upheaval lead to concern that any vacation in the region would be a mistake. Another problem occurs on the ground. For local tourism offices in the developing world, more money and resources are spent creating a 'corporate image' instead of being attentive to actual travelers.

**Solution?** Create an inventory of how ecotourism is perceived by the public in a specific country. What sorts of images are portrayed ▶

in the media? What is the international news coverage? For local offices, how easy is it for travelers to find adequate information?

### Cat Herding

As a fairly new and often paradoxical niche connecting environmental conservation and the travel industry, ecotourism attracts independent-minded leaders including environmentalists who value tourism and tourism officials who understand the importance of conservation.

That said, organizing these leaders is akin to “herding cats.” These pioneers have “followed their bliss” and generally do not like people telling them what to do.

There is also a certain amount of ego at play. Said one university professor in all earnestness: “The government’s ecotourism program is failing because it is not following my paradigm.” This is why ecotourism is sometimes dismissed as “egotourism!”

### Development and Promotion

Officials tend to compartmentalize ecotourism development and promotion. And then they do not encourage cross-border communication within their own institutions! Conscientious travelers are not just seeking the trips with the best ads; they want to know that the project has been financed and designed in an ethical and sustainable manner.

**Solution?** It’s best to understand that development and promotion are two sides of the same coin; advertising needs to reflect aspects of sustainable development. Bureaucracies should implement personnel sharing programs so that departmental staff learn what the organization is truly doing in the development stages. Institutions can participate in larger umbrella organizations that develop and promote ecotourism among interested stakeholders.

### Certification

In efforts to standardize operations, most ecotourism certification programs contradict one of the main components of ecotourism: local control. In fact, most stakeholders have been left out of the process. Certification of tourism is not a “market-driven” option and therefore has little value as a tool for sustainability.

**Solution?** If certification has value, it will be in certifying the accomplishments of consultants, NGOs and government leaders in addition to local companies and hotels. We need to insist that strategies include a broader agenda and stop the steamroller.

### Fatalism

As the individualists, it’s common to ‘think outside the box’ with the expectation that others will eventually catch on. It usually does not work according to plan.

When leaders say things such as ‘the problem is’ they need to offer a solution. An explanation of the problem is not sufficient. Many attempts fail for lack of long-term financing and support. The uncertain future in regard to employment and financing compromise the prospects for success. Lack of certainty generally leads to the lack of confidence.

**Solution?** When leaders come to the table to describe the problems, they need to do so armed and ready to offer viable solutions. Leaders should substitute the word “challenge” for “problem” and figure out a solution that might work.

### Seat Warmers

Many officials have distinguished their institutions with the information they provide. They are genuinely proud of their country or state and let travelers know how best to enjoy their visit. That said, the “true believers” are still in the minority. Those who get the job done complain that their co-workers are present “just to collect the paycheck.” Tour operators criticize government officials and NGO staff alike for doing only as much as it takes to justify their existence.

**Solution?** If we want more passionate leaders—in government, private business, academia, media or environmental groups—we need to praise the individuals and the institutions who deliver results.

### Small is Beautiful

Whatever happened to the “small is beautiful” concept made famous by E.F. Schumacher? Local environmental groups compete for funds with multinational NGOs and usually lose. Likewise, Mom-and-Pop tour operators receive insufficient support.

**Solution?** Sustainable development works when we match top-down strategies with bottom-up grassroots initiatives. And vice-versa.

### Politics

There are a number of challenges to ecotourism brought on by politics. One problem in particular is the misplaced notion that tourists understand political boundaries; for the most part they do not. Municipal and state rivalries complicate matters, as do well-intentioned associations and programs. For example, the tourist information office in downtown Mexico City represents the Corazon de Mexico program, an initiative to promote tourism in the central part of the country. Tourists seeking information for states outside of the “heart of Mexico” are told to look elsewhere. On the web many national tourism portals divide their countries by political boundaries, when for the most part tourists are not interested in knowing the division of municipal or state boundaries.

**Solution?** Simplify government regulations and educate travelers as much as -- and in the format in which -- they wish to be educated.

### On the Road Again

Have you noticed how many experts in sustainable travel and ecotourism are . . . on the road? This industry promotes travel—and so it’s no surprise to find out colleagues are often away from the office. The trouble is maintaining contact. Also, there is a great waste of time and resources when the trip to and from a particular conference often exceeds the time spent at an actual event. Officials are reduced to figurehead appearances and there is little possibility for dialogue.

**Solution?** Find better ways to bridge events in the virtual and natural worlds. Make a stronger commitment to staying in virtual touch while traveling. Patronize business events and conferences that have an interactive blog or virtual press conferences.

### Only the Lonely

Things become more complicated because many of those who work in the field are loners. They build or assist remote eco lodges because they value time alone and often sense a kindred spirit with other loners. Example : In West Virginia I spoke to a couple who ran an inn that facilitated very little guest-host interaction. ‘Put your money in the box, get a key.’

**Solution?** Recognize that the loner crowd is a key component of ▶

this niche market. Recommended reading: Party of One by by Anneli S. Rufus.

### Greed

For years ecotourism was described as a profitable, fast-growing niche. Reports were wildly exaggerated about the size and the potential of the market. For those seeking short-term profit, ecotourism has been a disappointment. For those searching for sustainable development, ecotourism is key.

**Solution?** Sustainable tourism depends on long-term investment and cross-sector sharing of responsibilities and profits.

### Conclusion

For years ecotourism was described as a profitable, fast-growing niche. Reports were wildly exaggerated about the size and the potential of the market. For those seeking short-term profit, ecotourism has been a disappointment.

### How do we make the Hospitality Industry more Hospitable?

For those searching for sustainable development, ecotourism is key. Sustainable tourism depends on long-term investment and cross-sector sharing of responsibilities and profits. There is a lot of work to be done. So we need to be honest about what works and what does not.

We also need to be creative. Ecotourism is an emerging industry. The early converts to ecotourism were drawn by the possibility of doing something that had never been done. How do we make the hospitality industry more hospitable? How we channel creativity into collaborative efforts will determine whether or not we make responsible travel and ecotourism more successful. ●

— COURTESY OF PLANETA.COM, 2006

## Ten actions that tour operators can take now!

Not everything can be done at once, but all operators can start to look at their own operations and determine priority areas for change. Here is a suggested ten-point checklist towards becoming a responsible tourism company.

- 1** Establish a **clear policy for responsible tourism** and ensure that it covers operations both in the UK and in overseas destinations, right through the supply chain. Ensure that any charitable giving is integrated into the business process and is focused on improving the situation in the destinations.
- 2** **Appoint a responsible tourism staff member** who will oversee the development and integration of these issues throughout the organisation. Ensure that there is also support for this at board level.
- 3** **Commit funds to becoming a more responsible operator** in the areas of charitable giving, developing local business partnerships, training and giving advice to clients.
- 4** **Write down best practice and seek to learn from it**, publicise it to clients and share it with others.
- 5** **Produce and disseminate a code for tourists** to help them travel in a more informed and responsible way. Include advice on how they can support local charities.
- 6** **Take time to research destinations** and speak to local development and environment groups and tourism associations, not just to the hotels. Find out which local businesses you could possibly use, and with whom you may be able to develop a partnership. This will enable you to provide better-quality holidays.
- 7** **Work throughout your supply chain** to develop and implement policies that use local labour, local foods and local crafts. Make your policies available to your suppliers.
- 8** **Build on health and safety guidelines for hotels** to include social and environmental issues such as labour standards, minimum wage levels and good recycling and waste disposal systems.
- 9** **Set clear targets for year-on-year improvement** in terms of building partnerships, using local suppliers and improving social and environmental conditions in hotels. Evaluate your activities regularly so that you can learn from them.
- 10** **Use your annual report** to publicise what you have been doing to promote responsible tourism, and to gain support from your key stakeholders.



CHRISTIAN ACTION WITH THE WORLD'S POOR

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# ESTABLISH YOUR OWN TRAVEL PHILANTHROPY PROJECT

Creating your own foundation for a travelers' philanthropy project that gives back to the people and places you visit provides an outlet for the public to contribute and further enhance your sustainability-related goals.

Identify an opportunity. Begin by identifying what type of initiative you'd like to support. If community development is of interest, determine the needs of local and indigenous people where your business operates. If you're more interested in environmental conservation, determine ways to protect any unprotected environments that you visit from exploitation.

Develop a strategy. Determine how you will contribute to your decided effort. Are you going to be managing goods, volunteers, donations or a combination thereof? Consider the following options:

To raise money, build donations into your budget as a percentage of business earnings or a percentage of traveler fees. A reasonable percentage is 5% of traveler fees or 1% of annual gross business revenues. To ensure that you realize maximum benefit for your efforts, set up a charitable foundation or partner with a tax-exempt non-profit organization like STI.

A "Donor Advised Gift Fund" allows you to set up a charitable foundation with a minimum initial investment. After the foundation is established, distributions can be made to any registered 501(c)(3) organization, and you will receive a tax deduction. As an added benefit, the money in your foundation will grow in the interim between distribution dates just as a mutual fund would.

For more information on "Donor Advised Gift Funds", contact companies such as T. Rowe Price, Oppenheimer, Charles Schwab, and Vanguard. For information on obtaining 501(c)(3) status for your organization or foundation, visit the IRS' web site, <http://www.irs.gov/charities/article/0,,id=96109,00.html>. Publication 4220 will be very helpful in providing you with legal guidelines for 501(c)(3) organizations.

Establish mutually beneficial relationships. Establish partnerships between your clients, your business, local non-governmental organizations, and governmental agencies and try to compliment their community development and aid programs or their environmental conservation programs.

From the onset, empower local people to get involved in the management of funding resources and related community development and conservation initiatives.

Educate your clients. Inspire your clients to donate financial resources and or their time to address environmental, socio-cultural and economic issues.

Let your clients discover new experiences in their own way with or without interpretive assistance. Afterwards, recap and discuss issues that may affect the experience and the means for support. It is important that you allow your clients to develop their own emotional attachment to an experience before they are introduced to negative issues and their potential roles.

By establishing your client's belief in and ownership of your proj-

ect in this manner, you can transfer their positive experiences into direct support. To increase your effectiveness, consider the following:

Learn the setting(s) where you'll be promoting your project(s) and determine how your message will be delivered to your clients. It's important that you know what it's like to be a client on your trip and what it's like to be a guide or trip leader.

Determine key messages that lead to donations. Give your clients a reason to donate. Then create visual and oral communication media in conjunction with your staff, and make them consistent both conceptually and artistically with the type of experience you provide.

The travel experience begins before departure and continues after leaving the destination. Take advantage of opportunities to communicate with your clients before they leave home, while they're on site with you, and after they return home.

## Feature Your Project on SustainableTravel.com

SustainableTravel.com is always on the lookout for Travelers' Philanthropy projects that support sustainable tourism development. If your company has set up a foundation or charity that meets a majority of the following criteria, we would like to promote your initiative through our marketing outlets:

- Organization or company must engage in business within the travel industry or actively participate in travel-related activities;
- Projects must be based in an area or areas where the organization or company operates;
- Projects must provide direct financial and or in kind support that enhance community development and conservation initiatives;
- Project funding must originate directly out of the organization or company's proceeds or their client's contributions;
- Projects should have a focus on educating stakeholders and empowering local and indigenous people to get involved in the management of funding resources;
- At least 90% of all financial donations must go directly to the project. ●

— COURTESY OF SUSTAINABLE TRAVEL INTERNATIONAL

# LATIN AMERICA ECOTOURISM

BY RON MADER

## Ecotourism in Mexico

In many Latin American countries officials intrigued by the promise of "ecotourism" have attempted to promote and/or regulate this niche market. In each case, the first challenge has been uniting energies of the tourism and environmental departments. Unfortunately, however, there have been more failures than successes here as government departments prefer sole control of a project.

Mexico should be the case example of things done right. It is one of the few Latin American examples in which the Tourism and Environmental Secretariats (SECTUR) and (SEMARNAP) signed an agreement to collaborate on ecotourism development. This took place in 1995. However, while the offices are officially working together, there have been few results, perhaps because the liaison personnel in both offices have been in great flux. The lack of continuity threatens successful coordination between the two institutions.

While government officials move in and out of office quickly -- at least ten different people have occupied positions promoting ecotourism and "alternative tourism" at SECTUR in the past administration - sexenio - alone. Lack of continuity is a problem at both federal- and state-level tourism offices.

A group of private entrepreneurs set up their own group - Mexico's Association of Adventure Travel and Ecotourism (Amtave). Created in 1994, Amtave was the outgrowth of a coincidental meeting of nine associates who met at the annual Tianguis Turistico in 1993. Unable to afford marketing their companies, they formed a group to share the promotion expenses. They signed a formal convention in May 1994 again at the Tianguis Turistico. SECTUR signed a formal convenio with this group in the spring of 1994 and sponsored the association's catalog. Amtave now raises most of its funds via membership fees (2,500 pesos or \$250/year) and profits generated at events that the organization co-sponsors and promotes. This private group boasts members throughout the country. While a larger number (20) are based in Mexico City, only one members offers trips in the metropolis. Membership requires a formal application that is reviewed on a monthly basis by the executive board. Site visits are obligatory and performed on an informal basis as often as possible.

This is not to say that everyone who offers nature or ecotourism in Mexico are - or want to be - members of Amtave. Many operators simply work out from environmental ethic and the knowledge that travelers are receptive to eco-friendly hotels and services.

"People talk about ecotourism, but the fact is that the tourism industry is always looking for a quick buck," said hotelier Doug Rhodes, owner of Hotel Paraiso del Oso in Cerocahui, Chihuahua. "Hotels throughout the Copper Canyon still lack waste treatment facilities. Some of the garbage is thrown into the canyon or disposed of near community wells." Rhodes said that tourists are willing to pay for such environmental guarantees and added that the technologies aren't that expensive. "It's just a matter of will," he said.

In July 1999, Mexico hosted its first national trade conference

on ecotourism and adventure tourism in Mexico City's World Trade Center. States with a keen interest in promoting their natural wonders -- Veracruz, Oaxaca, Michoacan and Morelos -- purchased exposition space, alongside rafting companies, natural history tours and regional airlines. It is important to add that these states offered discounted or free space at their booths to community-run projects, such as the Museos Comunitarios de Oaxaca or the Nuevo San Juan Parangaricutiro project near the Paricutin Volcano in Michoacan.

Planeta hosted the Re-Imagining Mexico Ecotourism Conference in September 2000.

## Central America

Central America is known as a prime destination for those seeking nature travel. This is due in large part to the reputation gained by Costa Rica over the past 20 years. Yet there are few efforts at developing or marketing the region as a destination for eco travelers.

Some positive signs include the development of the Mesoamerican Ecotourism Alliance and the persistence of the Mesoamerican Biological Corridor. But while these efforts appear to be initially well-funded, neither organization has developed an effective communications infrastructure -- meaning that it remains a challenge to find out what these organizations are doing, who they recommended as local operators or guides, or to have access to timely reports.

In terms of national ecotourism organizations, it is interesting to note that Costa Rica, the country with the best reputation for ecotourism practices and destinations does not have a formal ecotourism group. Says Amos Bien, the owner of Rara Avis Lodge: "The origins of ecotourism in Costa Rica can be traced to the La Selva field station, Monteverde, Corcovado, Tortugero and Rara Avis. We've always been too busy to start a national ecotourism association, preferring to work within the sub-commissions of the Environmental Secretariat or the Costa Rican Tourism Institute instead."

This cynicism arises from the fact that in the 1990s several Central American countries set up their own private ecotourism groups. Unfortunately, many of these have been created in government conferences, often at the urging of international development agencies. Few of which show a long-term commitment to national ecotourism development. USAID, for example, funded and promoted several ecotourism associations throughout Central America, most of which existed solely on paper and disappeared within a year of their creation. Like "paper parks," "paper ecotourism organizations" give the illusion of action and coordination, but lack substance and continuity.

Honduras, for example, offers a great deal of potential in the field of ecotourism. The past few years have seen a number of new developments. Obstacles, however, include a lack of coordination in-country and throughout the region. It's difficult to get up-to-date information from the government tourism institute, let alone details about their ecotourism programs. ▶

The tourism industry can be a leader, though recent history throughout the region is a series of battles between traditional tourism and those who promote "alternative tourism." There are some bright spots. In Belize, members of the Belize Tourism Industry Association (BETA) set up the Belize Ecotourism Association. "We in the private sector have a tremendous opportunity to do something for conservation in conjunction with the government," ex-BETA President Jim Bevis told Richard Mahler as quoted in Mahler's book, *Belize: Adventures in Nature*.

What is the role to be played by the national governments? In 1999 the Costa Rican Tourism Institute launched a certification program for hotel sustainability. It's too early to tell if the program will succeed. It's very curious that the country's tourism portal makes no link to its own certification program or vice-versa.

Planeta hosted the Re-Imagining Central America Ecotourism Conference in February 2001.

### South America

Ecuador also has an organization, the Ecuadorian Ecotourism Association (ASEC), which is currently undergoing a major transition. Membership is available to tourism operations as well as municipalities, universities and individuals who wish to promote the development of ecotourism.

### The Role of Education and Information

Travelers interested in nature want to know how to get to where the wild things are and how to do so in a responsible manner. Unfortunately, governments rarely provide quality, up-to-date information for the general public. One missing ingredient is visual information, including maps. The tourism institutes of both Costa Rica and Honduras publish country maps with information on protected areas. Mexico once published such a map, but it quickly went out of print. What other Latin American countries have publicly available maps of their national parks?

Ecotourism conferences are offered throughout the region, but with few exceptions, they are either **1.** closed to the general public or **2.** prohibitively expensive. Again, international development groups as well as international governmental conferences prefer the closed-door sessions. This would not be so shameful if they provided timely access to the conference materials and participant lists. This rarely occurs. Trade conferences do offer access, but at a high cost. There should be more alternatives that can take advantage of the growing interest within the region.

Development agencies, foundations and environmental groups have combined forces to promote ecotourism in the region, with some success. Information about these efforts in the planning stage or analysis or project reports afterwards could be placed on the Web for global access. International environmental groups -- The Nature Conservancy, Conservation International, World Wildlife Fund, to name a few -- have been culpable of hoarding information. Scholarly dissertations on regional ecotourism may cite the "unpublished reports" but few readers have access. Policy information is desperately needed, not only to know what's been done well, but what has failed. These experiences need to be thought of as experiments that we can learn from. Unfortunately, environmental groups are loath to discuss, let alone divulge, instances of failure.

One of the best places for travelers to find information about ecotourism destinations is not from government offices or environmental groups, but from regional guidebooks.

Guidebooks offer a holistic vision of a country or a region and are publicly accessible. The author freely crosses political and/or vocational borders to provide a manual of use to travelers from a variety of backgrounds. One good example is Joe Cummings' *Northern Border Handbook* (Moon Publications), the definitive (actually the only) guidebook that focuses on Mexico's frontier with the United States. Another key text that deserves to be recommended is *The New Key to Costa Rica* (Ulysses Press), one of the first guidebooks that explained the concept of ecotourism and sustainable development and promoted the hotels and lodges that were working toward environmental protection. These books contrast with more traditional guidebooks that either belittle the "friendly people" or focus only on more popular coastal resorts. Both books have been instrumental not only in directing travelers where to go, but how to go as well. ●

— COURTESY OF PLANETA.COM, 2006

# DECLARATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL FORUM ON INDIGENOUS TOURISM

## Oaxaca, Mexico, March 18-20, 2002

We, the delegates at the International Forum on Indigenous Tourism, have gathered in Oaxaca to share perspectives and deliberate on the consequences of tourism in our communities. We come from thirteen primarily Western Hemisphere countries, representing Indigenous communities that are participating in activities related to tourism development, nature conservation, reforestation, environmental education, cultural heritage, and agriculture. We do this mindfully independent from the U.N.'s ongoing "International Year of Ecotourism" (IYE) because we have grave concerns over the processes leading up to the IYE and its outcomes so far, and how they will impact Indigenous Peoples in the future.

We have been told that the IYE declaration is testimony to the importance of ecotourism to conserve lands, protect cultures, and encourage economic development. Yet the realities we are experiencing of ecological degradation and cultural erosion associated with tourism development under the influence of globalization suggest that the IYE does not go far enough in its review of ecotourism. For centuries, Indigenous Peoples have suffered from displacement and dispossession, and we see the incursion of the profit-driven global tourism industry as well as the rhetoric of "sustainable development" in the IYE as the latest threats to our lands and our communities.

Throughout the process leading up to the IYE, a clear division has developed between the actors promoting the year and worldwide movements of Indigenous Peoples rejecting it. Many have rejected the IYE because of its lack of transparency. We are especially concerned that the IYE has not sought the informed participation of Indigenous representatives in its planning. It is sadly reminiscent of recent problems over the process in which U.N. Convention on Biological Diversity developed guidelines for sustainable tourism and biodiversity, which were rushed without significant Indigenous input. Divergent perspectives, values, and interests must be taken into account in global initiatives like the IYE, and we affirm the internationally-recognized right and responsibility of Indigenous Peoples to be present in them.

We register our profound disagreement with the IYE's and ecotourism's most basic assumptions that define Indigenous communities as targets to be developed and our lands as commercial resources to be sold on global markets. Under this universalistic economic framework, tourism brings market competition, appropriates our lands and peoples as consumer products, and renders our traditional knowledge vulnerable to bioprospecting and biopiracy. The IYE must not be used to legitimate the invasion and displacement of Indigenous territories and communities. Our lifeways and cultures are distinct, and we demand that the IYE and ecotourism's promoters acknowledge our fundamental rights to self-determination, prior informed consent, and the diverse ways that we choose to process and participate in such initiatives.

To be sure, some ecotourism projects might be deemed success-

ful because they have not disrupted local cultures and ecosystems. It is because these projects have been designed and implemented by Indigenous Peoples ourselves. These forms of tourism encompass the inherently holistic ways in which our communities are organized. They are based on and enhance our self-determination. They are protective of our biological and cultural diversity, sacred sites and rituals, and collective property and traditional resource rights. They affirm the fundamental ethical and spiritual dimensions of our relationships with the land and with each other.

Such forms of tourism cannot be based on concept-driven tourism development such as ecotourism, sustainable tourism, nature tourism, cultural tourism, ethnotourism, etc. Instead they are based on a long-term analysis of the pros and cons of tourism development, recognizing and following collective decision-making processes, and integrated into our long-term realities and visions of sustainable use and access to collective goods. An essential component of this is the right to decline tourism development at any point in the development process. So when we talk about "Indigenous Tourism," it is not just another marketing gimmick, but a broad category of distinctive ways in which Indigenous Peoples choose to implement tourism on our own terms.

The participants in this meeting have affirmed and determined to undertake the following:

1. Indigenous Peoples are not mere "stakeholders," but internationally-recognized holders of collective and human rights, including the rights of self-determination, informed consent, and effective participation.
2. Given that we have seen few positive results from the U.N.'s Decade of Indigenous Peoples, we do not put much stock in the effectiveness of this declaration to the U.N. We believe the real listeners of this message will be Indigenous Peoples and others who have respect for our ways of being. This declaration is also aimed at governments, conservation and ecotourism NGOs, academics, the tourism industry, and others who seek to "develop" us and our lands for tourism.
3. Indigenous Peoples are not objects of tourism development. We are active subjects with the rights and responsibilities to our territories and the processes of tourism planning, implementation, and evaluation that happen in them. This means we are responsible for defending Indigenous lands and communities from development that is imposed by governments, development agencies, private corporations, NGOs, and specialists.
4. Tourism is beneficial for Indigenous communities only when it is based on and enhances our self-determination. Outside "experts and assistance" are useful to us only if they work within frameworks conceptualized and defined by our communities. Therefore, tourism projects must be undertaken only under the guidance and surveillance of an Indigenous Technical Team, and only after a full critical analy- ▶

sis of the long-term pros and cons of tourism development.

**5.** Indigenous Peoples must be the natural resource and wildlife managers of our own environments. Communities that fall within protected areas often experience oppression by governing agencies and lack of access to our own resources.

**6.** Indigenous Peoples must establish and strengthen strategies of coordination and information sharing both regionally and internationally, in order to assert participation in initiatives like the IYE. This meeting signals the birth of the Indigenous Tourism Network, that employs the sharing of information among Indigenous communities through newsletters, gatherings, regional workshops, emails, websites, video production, and other forms of communication that are independent of the self-promotional focus of the tourism industry.

**7.** We urge an honest and transparent commitment on the part of the United Nations and other international organizations to actively open doors for the direct participation of Indigenous Peoples. This includes dedicating funds and developing mechanisms for Indigenous Peoples' representatives to participate in the planning and execution of international initiatives like the IYE, and respect for the diverse ways that Indigenous communities make decisions about important initiatives that directly impact us.

**8.** We demand that national governments implement and respect laws and regulations regarding the environment and Indigenous communities.

**9.** We urge the development and implementation of guidelines and regulations for ecotourism development and visitation based on principles of respect for local cultures and the integrity of ecosystems.

**10.** We consider illegitimate any drafting process that does not include the active and full participation of Indigenous Peoples. ●

—COURTESY OF INDIGENOUS TOURISM RIGHTS INTERNATIONAL

# TOURISM CERTIFICATION AND INDIGENOUS PEOPLES IN LATIN AMERICA

BY **LUIS A. VIVANCO**, UNIVERSITY OF VERMONT AND UNIVERSITY OF COSTA RICA, AND **DEBORAH MCLAREN**, INDIGENOUS TOURISM RIGHTS INTERNATIONAL (WWW.TOURISMRIGHTS.ORG)

Three major factors came together to weaken international tourism in 2003. Those include the U.S.-led conflict in Iraq, the outbreak of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) in Asia and Canada, and persistent weakness in many of the world's top economies. As a result, travelers tended to stay close to home, which in the Americas has meant more U.S. travel to nearby Latin America. According to the Travel Industry Association of America, during the past year the Caribbean and South America have shown rapid growth (+8% and +12% respectively), and popular destinations like Ecuador, Mexico, Guatemala, Costa Rica, and Brazil are attracting more tourists than ever.

While it is impossible to determine the percentage of tourists that fall under cultural, ethno, or ecotourism statistics, all of those areas have increased in popularity as governments and industry search for ever more aggressive ways to promote exotic peoples and places. In addition, an array of tourism strategies have become important economic "development" tools for Indigenous Peoples and rural communities, especially sustainability-oriented initiatives. These strategies are promoted by the tourism industry, multilateral lending banks like the World Bank, environmental organizations, and even poverty-alleviation programs.

Unfortunately, most of these programs have not included sufficient involvement of Indigenous Peoples to make them sustainable and long-lasting. Indeed, the political and rights issues involved for Indigenous economic development tend to be too daunting for the promoters of tourism to address. When Indigenous Peoples are recognized as having a proactive role in such programs, which has not always been the case, their historical and political status as holders of collective rights is often devalued, or reduced to the status of mere "stakeholders." But as one Indigenous leader has observed, rights to informed consent and self-determination are defining factors for just and meaningful development in Indigenous communities:

When talking about the needs and rights of indigenous peoples, we are talking about the rights of at least 300 million indigenous people around the world, often among the poorest and most disadvantaged in their countries. Therefore, it would not be correct to say that we - indigenous peoples - are opposing changes and new developments for the sake of opposing. I believe that most of us welcome changes and development, but on the clear condition that it take place in accordance to our needs and desires, and is not imposed upon us. Neither are we against business and trade per se, because we also see trade as an important element in an interdependent world. Trade links between countries and nations are crucial components in the maintenance of peace and security in the world. Unfortunately, traditional indigenous legal concepts, including in the field of intellectual property, are often seen as a threat to business interests, development and national prosperity.

Tourism has become an important arena in which Indigenous

Peoples have been asserting a similarly strong cultural and political vision, and they have begun acting in coordinated ways to ensure that they are shapers of tourism activities in their communities. One example of this is the International Forum on Indigenous Tourism, held in Oaxaca, Mexico during 2002 as a response to the U.N.'s declaration of 2002 as the International Year of Ecotourism. In the document produced there, the Oaxaca Declaration, participants affirmed, "Indigenous Peoples are not objects of tourism development. We are active subjects with the rights and responsibilities to our territories and the processes of tourism planning, implementation, and evaluation that happen in them. This means we are responsible for defending Indigenous lands and communities from development schemes imposed by governments, development agencies, private corporations, NGOs, and specialists."

Reflecting what is happening in international tourism policy circles, there are currently major efforts in Latin America to certify sustainable tourism and ecotourism so that they meet certain standards of quality and accountability. These include the Certification of Sustainable Tourism (Costa Rica), Green Deal (Guatemala), and Sustainable Tourism Stewardship Council (Brazil), Smart Voyager (Ecuador), among others. Certification seeks to redress the gap between the rhetoric – that tourism and its variants, eco- and ethno-tourism, help economic development and nature conservation in local communities – and the realities of ecosystem degradation, economic leakage, and socio-economic inequality that have often accompanied tourism, even so-called "sustainable tourism," development. Proponents of auditing and certifications in tourism argue that consumers have come to expect a certain level of transparency, integrity, and quality in the products and services they purchase, and therefore the businesses that can guarantee these gain a competitive advantage in the marketplace. It is also promoted as a way the industry can regulate itself through the implementation of best practices.

Indigenous Peoples – who have long understood tourism's unfulfilled promises and darker sides of dispossession, displacement, and exploitation – are understandably interested in such reforms. But they have also expressed concerns about the tourism certification movement, and there are currently efforts under way in Indigenous networks to deliberate on the opportunities and consequences of tourism certification. One of these was a follow-up to the Oaxaca Forum mentioned above, an online forum called "Rethinking Indigenous Tourism Certification," hosted for during the month June, 2004 by U.S.-based Indigenous Tourism Rights International, with substantial participation of Indigenous Peoples from Latin America.

In a global commercial environment, certifications provide a common set of accepted practices and regulations, as well as the appearance of legitimacy, that become more important as other sources of legitimacy, such as community and the state, decline in importance. On the surface, auditing processes and certifications seem to be obscure, mundane, and neutral, since they are largely based on technical criteria. But as the definition of what and who is auditable ▶

and certifiable widens, some social critics have begun to suggest that we are witnessing the rise of a globalizing “audit society,” in which social activities are increasingly being redefined and regulated in terms of market certifications, and the logic of neoliberalism – privatization, efficiency, profitability, universal best practices and quality indicators, etc. – is more deeply embedded as the central mode of organizing society.

For the Indigenous organizers and participants of “Rethinking Indigenous Tourism Certification,” accountability, legitimacy, and responsibility are universal human problems, and yet every culture approaches and resolves these problems on its own terms. The notion of audit or accreditation carried out by an external party does not automatically translate to other cultural contexts. In many Indigenous contexts, legitimacy is demonstrated by lineage, differentiated access to specialized knowledge, fulfillment of obligatory communal responsibilities, and so on, and responsibility and accountability are guaranteed through specific cultural institutions, ceremonies, spiritualities, and social practices. Given colonial histories of dispossession and domination, not to mention rocky relationships with international environmental and development institutions, many Indigenous Peoples express reluctance to letting external actors define the legitimacy of their activities.

Of course, many Indigenous Peoples already participate in certified markets – organic and fair trade coffee, timber, cacao, textiles, etc. – but participants affirmed that the outcome of tourism is not a thing but human relationships, both between hosts and hosts, and guests and hosts. Indeed, tourists tend to go to Indigenous communities because they expect a certain kind of social experience. Certifying that tourism in an Indigenous community meets certain external standards of accountability, efficiency, best practices, etc. means voluntarily ceding to outside auditors and consultants control over tourism activities and relationships, something many communities are reluctant to do. Some participants also expressed concern that certifications create a dependency on specialized international markets, and can create social divisions within communities between those certified by external agencies and those still in the officially-undesirable “natural” state. Furthermore, as long as costs to be certified are high (in terms of program costs and sustainable technology investments), certification will remain out of reach for many communities, especially those struggling with basic issues like land rights, clean water, electricity, education, and so on.

In spite of the fact that there are currently well over one-hundred sustainability-oriented tourism certifications, tourists have yet to take to the idea. Yet major tourism and environmental organizations are pressing on with new programs and frameworks, and Latin America is a key region where these efforts are taking place. Clearly Indigenous participation and informed consent in these processes is necessary – indeed, guaranteed by international agreements like the International Labor Organization’s Convention 169 – although such participation has not yet really materialized. Just as with other development schemes generated in the North, tourism certification is likely to be irrelevant, if not further marginalize Indigenous Peoples in important civil society issues, if it does not take place through a legitimate and inclusive process. ●

The following resources are provided Courtesy of *Transitions Abroad* Magazine November/December 2005. Resources are updated annually.

"Global tourism and travel has certainly changed in the past decade. Choices regarding security, safety, health, and the environment have greatly impacted our travel choices. On the other hand, we now have amazing new options that seek to help small communities develop sustainably and economically and new choices that allow visitors to better understand the culture and realities of the places they visit.

A growing group of consumers want their travel to be less invasive, and emerging fair-trade tourism, anti-poverty tourism, and responsible tourism are changing the face of travel."

—Deborah McLaren,

Responsible Travel contributing editor for *Transitions Abroad*  
and Author of *Rethinking Tourism & Ecotravel*

### pro poor tourism resources

**Heifer International** is a nonprofit, humanitarian organization (est. 1944) dedicated to ending world hunger and saving the earth by providing livestock, trees, training, and other resources to help poor families around the world become more self-reliant. Heifer's "Study Tours" take participants to meet people whose lives have dramatically improved through their partnerships with Heifer. You'll learn about their communities, daily lives, and hardships from Heifer's country staff and gain a greater understanding of the organization's unique approach to ending hunger and poverty and caring for the earth. Heifer Project International, P.O. Box 8058, Little Rock, AR, 72203; 800-422-0474; studytours@heifer.org, [www.heifer.org](http://www.heifer.org).

**Pro-Poor Tourism (PPT)** is a web site run by development specialists to discuss tourism that results in increased net benefits for poor people. PPT is not a specific product or niche sector but an approach to tourism development and management. The aim is to assist those companies in South Africa and southern Africa that would like to do more, but could benefit from practical advice on how. PPT works in partnership with the International Centre for Responsible Tourism (ICRT), the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED), and the Overseas Development Institute (ODI). Contact them at IIED (Dilys Roe): 3 Endsleigh St., London WC1H 0DD, U.K.; Tel. 011-44-0-20-7388 2117 or at ODI (Caroline Ashley): 111 Westminster Bridge Rd., London SE1 7JD, U.K.; Tel. 011-44-0-20-7922-0300; harold@haroldgoodwin.info; [www.propoortourism.org.uk](http://www.propoortourism.org.uk).

**TearFund's Making Poverty History Campaign** Tearfund has joined with hundreds of charities, church organizations, and campaigning groups to form Make Poverty History and to ask the U.K. government to act for the benefit of poor people during 2005. Contact Tearfund to learn more

about its collaboration with travel agents and operators in England. Tearfund works with local Christian partners committed to serving people who are materially poor. TearFund, 100 Church Rd., Teddington, TW11 8QE U.K.; Tel. 011-020-8977-9144; enquiry@tearfund.org; [www.tearfund.org/Campaigning/Make+poverty+history/](http://www.tearfund.org/Campaigning/Make+poverty+history/) or <http://tilz.tearfund.org/Research/Tourism+policy+and+research.htm>

**The Tribes Foundation** believes that a country and its resources belong to the local people first, and that they, their traditions, and their environment need to be protected from negative impacts of tourism. Only within such parameters does tourism seem fair. The charity backs poverty alleviation, education, cultural preservation, and conservation projects within areas affected by tourism. Contact: The Tribes Foundation, 12 The Business Centre, Earl Soham, Woodbridge, IP13 7SA, U.K.; Tel. 011-01728-685971; [www.the-tribes-foundation.org](http://www.the-tribes-foundation.org).

### fair trade tourism resources

**Bespoke Experience** is a sustainable, fair trade tourism company set up to help poor communities. It is designing a prototype resort to minimize the impact on the environment and ecology and maximize benefits to local communities. Its first project is in Guludo, Northern Mozambique. Contact: Bespoke Experience Ltd, 16, Caburn Close, Eastbourne, East Sussex. BN23 8LP U.K.; Tel. 011-01323- 766655; contact@bespokeexperience.com; [www.bespokeexperience.com/en/1/visfai.mxs](http://www.bespokeexperience.com/en/1/visfai.mxs).

**Fair Trade in Tourism Campaign** highlights industry initiatives that promote good management and trade practice in order to achieve sustainable tourism. Contact: Fair Trade in Tourism Campaign, Tourism Concern, Stapleton House, 277-81 Holloway Rd., London N7 8HN, U.K.; Tel. 011-44-0-20-7753-

3330; info@tourismconcern.org.uk; [www.tourismconcern.org.uk](http://www.tourismconcern.org.uk). Purchase their book on community-based tourism: *The Good Alternative Travel Guide* by Mark Mann (2002 Tourism Concern/Earthscan, 246pp) £9.99 + s&h. The new edition of Tourism Concern's guidebook (formerly the *Community Tourism Guide*), remains the only guidebook for responsible community-based tourism projects, offering ethical travelers hundreds of inspiring holidays. If you are interested in responsible tourism, this is a must.

**Fair Trade Tourism in South Africa**, is an independent initiative of IUCN (the World Conservation Union) South Africa that works toward equitable and sustainable tourism growth and development in South Africa. FTSA does this by promoting the concept of Fair Trade in Tourism, and by creatively and energetically marketing fair and responsible tourism businesses through the "Fair Trade in Tourism" trademark. Their values include fair share, democracy, respect, reliability, transparency, and sustainability. Options include trips to game parks lodges, adventure tours, and guesthouses. Fair Trade South Africa, P.O. Box 11536, Hatfield, Pretoria 0028, South Africa; Tel. 011-27-0-12-342 8307/8; info@fairtourismsa.org.za; [www.fairtourismsa.org.za](http://www.fairtourismsa.org.za).

**Living Wage Company** is a free franchise system that creates for-profit and not-for-profit businesses domestically and internationally by bridging people across the world through fair trade and responsible travel. For general information contact them at info@livingwagecompany.com or visit their web site, [www.livingwagecompany.com](http://www.livingwagecompany.com).

**New Consumer Magazine** The U.K.'s first and only fair trade lifestyle magazine. By publicizing the world of fair trade, they hope to attract more customers to fair trade goods and build more support for the organizations involved in the growing fair trade movement. Contact: New Consumer, 51 Timberbush, Edinburgh, EH6 6QH, U.K.; Tel. 011-44-0-131-561-1780; [www.newconsumer.org](http://www.newconsumer.org).

**Oxfam America's "Make Trade Fair" campaign** Oxfam partners with other organizations to educate millions of people about unfair trade rules and their negative impact on poor communities. They mobilize concerned citizens through petitions and coordinated actions. Contact: Oxfam America, Fair Trade Campaign, 26 West St., Boston, MA 02111; Tel. 800-77-OXFAM; outside the U.S.: 617-482-1211; [www.oxfamamerica.org/whatwedo/campaigns/make\\_trade\\_fair](http://www.oxfamamerica.org/whatwedo/campaigns/make_trade_fair).

### arranging your responsible travel WORLDWIDE

**Action for Conservation through Tourism (ACT)** supports local communities, NGOs, governments, and tour operators in developing and marketing sustainable travel. Contact: ACT, Bristol, BS1 6XN, U.K.; Tel.011-7-927-3049; fax 011-7-930-0076; act@gn.apc.org. ▶

**Amerika Adventure** Have you ever found a tour operator that will show you a breakdown of the money you spend on their tour—including how much directly stays in a local community? Look no further. Amerika Adventure, P.O. Box 689, St-Lazare, Quebec, Canada, J7T 2Z7; Tel. 011-450-455-0376; info@amerikaventure.com; [www.amerikaventure.com](http://www.amerikaventure.com).

**Business Enterprises for Sustainable Tourism (BEST)** is an organization dedicated to the promotion of best practices. Contact: BEST, 845 Third Ave., New York, NY 10022; Tel. 212-759-0900; [www.sustainabletravel.org](http://www.sustainabletravel.org).

**Cross-Cultural Solutions (CCS)** is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization with a commitment to international volunteer work and a vision of a world where people value cultures different from their own, are aware of global issues, and are empowered to effect positive change. CCS operates volunteer programs around the world in partnership with sustainable community initiatives, bringing people together to work side-by-side while sharing perspectives and fostering cultural understanding. Cross-Cultural Solutions Headquarters, 2 Clinton Pl., New Rochelle, NY 10801, Tel. 800-380-4777, 914-632-0022; info@crossculturalsolutions.org, [www.crossculturalsolutions.org](http://www.crossculturalsolutions.org).

**EcoClub.com** is a membership-based web site that promotes responsible ecotourism through the promotion of member eco-lodges, a community of experts and concerned travelers, and regular newsletters on an ecotourism issue. The site contains a database of jobs and job seekers, experts in the field, and a library of papers. <http://ecoclub.com>.

**EarthFoot** A non-commercial web site profiling individual, very small-scale, locally produced, low-impact Ecotours. On this web site you can contact the host directly to customize your visit. They promote widely scattered, independent hosts who have developed the small-scale ecotour proposals you can see by clicking through their site. The site has been developed and administered for free by two people who help travelers organize their own trips. Small donations are accepted to help run the web site. "EarthFoot is a virtual presence, more an evolving manner of thinking about what it means to be a mobile human on the face of the earth, than a business venture." Contact: [www.earthfoot.org/](http://www.earthfoot.org/) or [george@earthfoot.org](mailto:george@earthfoot.org).

**Earthwatch Institute** Offers working vacations with scientists around the world. Earthwatch Institute, 3 Clocktower Pl., Ste. 100, Box 75, Maynard, MA 01754-0075; Tel. 800-776-0188; info@earthwatch.org; [www.earthwatch.org](http://www.earthwatch.org).

**Elderhostel** offers educational travel programs for

people over age 55. Elderhostel, 11 Ave. de Lafayette., Boston, MA 02111-1746; Tel. 877-426-8056; registration@elderhostel.org; [www.elderhostel.org](http://www.elderhostel.org).

**Global Exchange** is a membership-based international human rights organization dedicated to promoting social, economic, and environmental justice around the world. Its "Reality Tours" are founded on the principles of experiential education, and each tour focuses on important social, economic, political, and environmental issues. Reality Tours are coordinated by locals working in the host communities. Contact Malia, Reality Tours Director, malia@globalexchange.org. Global Exchange 2005, 2017 Mission St., #303, San Francisco, CA, 94110; Tel. 415-255-7296, [www.globalexchange.org](http://www.globalexchange.org).

**Global Services Corps** offers service-learning and cultural immersion in Tanzania and Thailand. Live with a village family while working on community service and development projects pertaining to sustainable agriculture, HIV/AIDS awareness, and English language training. Global Service Corps, 300 Broadway, Ste. 28, San Francisco, CA 94133; Tel. 415-788-3666 ext. 128; gsc@igc.apc.org; [www.globalservicecorps.org](http://www.globalservicecorps.org).

**GoNomad Network**, [www.gonomad.com](http://www.gonomad.com). The GoNomad Network provides free monthly newsletters, special offers, and helps support sustainable and responsible tourism. For each member of the GoNomad Network, GoNomad donates to select projects in conservation, preservation, community development, and training for locals.

**International Bicycle Fund** Promotes bicycle transport; links with autofree and bicycling organizations around the world; publishes essays on environmentally and culturally-friendly traveling; sponsors bicycle tours throughout Africa and Cuba.

International Bicycle Fund, 4887 Columbia Dr. S, #T-9, Seattle, WA 98108; Tel. 206-767-0848; [ibike@ibike.org](mailto:ibike@ibike.org); [www.ibike.org](http://www.ibike.org).

**Muir's Tours**, owned by the U.K.-based charity The Nepal Kingdom Foundation, is a non-profit organization that shares the benefits from your travels with its owners, as well as many other charities and communities such as The John Muir Trust, The Tibetan Government in exile, American Indian Heritage Association, Survival International, Tourism Concern, and WWF. It specializes in small group travel and offers wildlife safaris, trekking, white water rafting, horse riding, kayaking, biking, and climbing. There is opportunity for immersion into certain cultures by staying with indigenous people in a variety of remote places. Contact: Muir's Tours, Nepal House, 97a Swansea Rd., Reading, Berkshire, RG1 8HA, U.K.; Tel. 011-44-0-118-950-2281; info@nkf-

mt.org.uk; [www.nkf-mt.org.uk/contact\\_us.html](http://www.nkf-mt.org.uk/contact_us.html).

**National Geographic Sustainable Tourism Resource Center** provides a comprehensive listing of sustainable tourism related links. Each listing includes a brief description. Contact: National Geographic Society, 1145 17th St. NW, Washington, D.C. 20036-4688; Tel. 800-647-5463; Outside U.S. 813-979-6845; [traveler\\_tourism@ngs.org](mailto:traveler_tourism@ngs.org); [www.nationalgeographic.com/travel/sustainable/travelers.html](http://www.nationalgeographic.com/travel/sustainable/travelers.html).

**Partners in Responsible Tourism (PIRT)** promotes cultural and environmental ethics and practices. Contact: PIRT, P.O. Box 237, San Francisco, CA 94104; Tel. 415-675-0420; info@pirt.org; [www2.pirt.org](http://www2.pirt.org).

**Relief Riders International (RRI)** is a humanitarian-based, adventure travel company that organizes horseback journeys through breathtaking areas to deliver food, medical supplies, and sometimes even goats to people in developing countries around the world. RRI is designed to offer individuals not only an exhilarating journey but also the chance to use their skills, enthusiasm, and experience to promote positive change. In April 2005, following its February 2005 Rajasthan Relief Ride, RRI director Alexander Souris conducted relief assessment of the tsunami-stricken region of southern Sri Lanka. RRI is working with the Ministry of Health on a 15-day relief ride to southern Sri Lanka's coastal regions in January 2006 to address ongoing critical needs. Contact: Relief Riders International, 304 Main St., Ste 3B, Great Barrington, MA 01230. Tel. 413-329-5876; [info@reliefridersinternational.com](mailto:info@reliefridersinternational.com); [www.reliefridersinternational.com](http://www.reliefridersinternational.com).

**Responsibletravel.com** *Responsibletravel.com* is an on-line travel agent launched in 2001 for travelers who want more real and authentic holidays that also benefit the environment and local people. It markets carefully pre-screened holidays from more than 270 leading worldwide tourism brands and businesses. It does not act as a middleman—you can use the site to contact the experts who run the trips and hotels directly to make a booking. Contact: Pavilion House, 6 The Old Steine, Brighton, East Sussex, BN1 1EJ, U.K.; [www.responsibletravel.com](http://www.responsibletravel.com).

**Tribes Travel** is an award-winning travel company (global winner of the international award for responsible tourism sponsored by British Airways Tourism for Tomorrow) offering quality holidays run on fair trade principles. Tribes is for travelers who want to see the world in a different light, experiencing it through the eyes of its native people. It specializes in trips to Africa, India, Nepal, and Peru. Tribes Travel established the Tribes Foundation whose principle aim is to relieve the poverty of indigenous communities in areas outside of the U.K. that are ▶

affected by tourism. Contact: Tribes Travel, 12 The Business Centre, Earl Soham, Woodbridge, IP13 7SA U.K.; Tel. 011-72-8-68-5971; web@tribes.co.uk; www.tribes.co.uk/.

**Toronto Green Map** Not every community has to be small to pursue responsible tourism. Toronto is an example of a large city promoting cultural, environmental, and heritage options when exploring a city. The map highlights urban green tourism sites and green businesses such as parks, biking and walking trails, historic waterways, art galleries, museum and heritage sites, green accommodations and businesses, restaurants and cafes, sustainable transportation, ecotour operators, and more. Urban green tourism puts an urban twist on ecotourism, the fastest growing sector of the tourism industry. Travelers are looking for new and off-the-beaten-track, cultural, environmental and heritage options when exploring a city. The map is part of the international Green Map System™. Contact: Teresa Riczu, Toronto Green Map, 590 Jarvis St., 4th Fl., Toronto, M4Y 2J4, Canada; Tel. 416-338-5084; triczu@toronto.ca; www.greentourism.ca.

**Twristiaeth Dyfi Tourism** Communities First is a major flagship Welsh Assembly Government program aimed at cutting poverty and helping to improve the lives of people who live in the poorest areas. Twristiaeth Dyfi Tourism is the tourism association for the Dyfi Valley, a leading "green" area in Britain. Tourists can design their own programs by using their Internet system. Contact: Twristiaeth Dyfi Tourism, Ty Bro Ddyfi, 52 Heol Maengwyn, Machynlleth, Powys, SY20 8DT, U.K.; Tel. 011-01654-703965; info@ecodyfi.org.uk, www.dyfiactive.org.uk.

**Saddle Skedaddle** is a bicycling tour operator that embraces Traidcraft's fair trade and responsible tourism policies in its business. Contact: Saddle Skedaddle, Ouseburn Building, East Quayside, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 1LL U.K.; Tel. 011-44-0-191-265-1110; info@skedaddle.co.uk; www.skedaddle.co.uk.

**University Research Expeditions Program (UREP)** offers you the chance to discover the rewards and challenges of field research around the world by joining a Univ. of California research team. Field research expeditions to Asia, Africa, Europe, North America, Oceania, and South America. Disciplines include animal studies, anthropology, archaeology, arts, culture, earth sciences, ecology, and plant studies. Contact: UC Davis Extension, 1333 Research Park Dr, Davis, CA 95616-4852; Tel. 530-752-8811; information@unexmail.ucdavis.edu, urep@ucdavis.edu; www.extension.ucdavis.edu/urep.

**WorldSurface.com** aims to promote sustainable tourism to its readers and to the Internet com-

munity at large through education and action. As an online travel magazine it provides information travelers need to travel with minimal impact. All the travel providers and sponsors on the site are chosen for their commitment to supporting sustainable tourism. Contact: WorldSurface.com, P.O. Box 20432, London Terrace Station, New York, NY 10011; www.worldsurface.com.

## ASIA

**ANTENNA** A network in Asia and the Pacific promoting locally controlled tourism; publishes a newsletter. Asia Tourism Action Network (ANTENNA), 15 Soi Soonvijai 8, New Petchburi Rd., Bangkok 10310, Thailand.

**Bina Swadaya** Indonesian community-development NGO. Organizes responsible tours. Contact them at Bina Swadaya, Wisma Jana Karya, Jl Gunung Saharj 111/7, Jakarta Pusat 10610 (P.O. Box 1465, Jakarta 10014); Indonesia; Tel. 011-62-21-420-4402 or 62-21-425-5354, 62-21-420-8412; bst@cbn.net.id; www.binaswadaya.org.

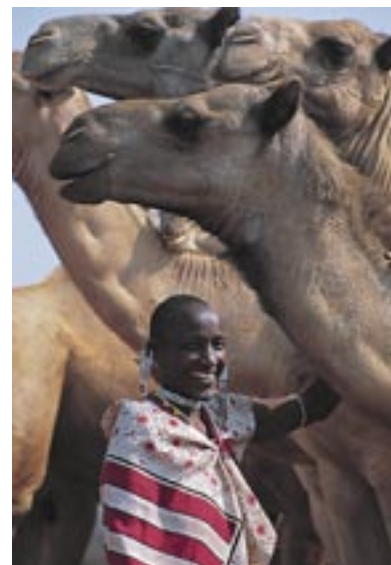
## AFRICA

**ASSET** The Association of Small Scale Enterprises in Tourism was established in April 2000 in order to bring together, advocate for, and promote a large number of small enterprises that were active in the tourism industry in The Gambia. These businesses include craft market vendors, tourist taxi drivers, official tourist guides, juice pressers and fruit sellers, as well as a number of small hotels, guest houses, and ground tour operators. Contact: ASSET, P.O. Box 4587, Bakau, The Gambia; Tel. 011-220-462057; info@asset-gambia.com; www.asset-gambia.com.

**Botswana Community Guide** Botswana is typically a very expensive destination, but community-based tours tend to be in the low to medium-budget range. The communities below provide many ways to see the desert and the delta in this country of contrasts. If you visited, you would find some communities have nothing but a campsite while others have turned an old farmhouse into the equivalent of an African B&B. Includes visits to wildlife sanctuaries, farm stays, more. Contact: www.duke.edu/~sas21/cbo/community.html.

**Botswana Tribal Tourism** offers wildlife viewing around the town of Khwai, wildlife and San (Bushman) culture, cultural programs at Xai Xai and Sankuyo, guest houses, birding, wildlife, and cultural programs. Several contacts and communities are involved. Go to www.earthfoot.org/places/bw001.htm for more information.

**Communal Areas Management Program for Indigenous Resources (CAMPFIRE)** is an explora-



**A Maasai woman with camels. The camels enable the Maasai to survive in their harsh, dry environment by providing draft power, portage, and milk.**

photo Darcy Kiefel // copyright Heifer International

tion of rural development and conservation in Africa. CAMPFIRE, designed and managed entirely by Africans, emerged in the mid-1980s with the recognition that as long as wildlife remained the property of the state no one would invest in it as a resource. Contact: Campfire, The Africa Resources Trust, P.O. Box HG 690, Highlands, Harare, Zimbabwe; Tel. 011-263-4-732625; campfir@id.co.zw.

**Kenya Tourism Concern** A Kenyan campaign for sustainable tourism. Contact: Tourism Concern, P.O. Box 22449, Nairobi, Kenya; Tel. 011-254-2-535-850.

**NACOBTA** Namibia Community-Based Tourism Association is an association of community tourism projects in Namibia. Contact: NACOBTA, P.O. Box 86099, 18 Lilliencon St, Windhoek, Namibia; Tel. 011-264-61-250-558; nacobta@iafrica.com.na; www.nacobta.com.na/en/Index.htm.

**SENEVOLU** The Senegalese Association of United Volunteers was founded in 2002 in Dakar to promote community tourism in Senegal. SENEVOLU cooperates with numerous Senegalese NGOs, host families, artists, and musicians to provide both cultural and volunteer homestays. Contact: Director Magueye Sy at senevolu@mypage.org, www.senevolu.mypage.org.

**UCOTA** Uganda Community Tourism Association is an association representing community tourism projects in Uganda. Contact: UCOTA, P.O. Box 24503, Kampala, Uganda; Tel. 011-256-41-344-986, uta@infocom.co.ug; www.visituganda.com; www.ucota.or.ug.

## AUSTRALIA & NEW ZEALAND

**Baby Dreaming Project** An Aboriginal project to develop a low-impact ecotourism project at a site named “Baby Dreaming” near Gudjekbinj in western Arnhem Land (Australia). The traditional owners of that land have decided to open the area to sympathetic visitors who wish to learn about the flora, fauna, landforms, and the aboriginal way of life. To learn more about it join their free listserve: [baby-dreaming@yahoogroups.com](mailto:baby-dreaming@yahoogroups.com).

**Manyallaluk, The Dreaming Place in Australia**, is an Aboriginal community east of the town of Katherine, in the Northern Territory, Australia. The land borders Arnhem Land, Nitmiluk, and Kakadu National Parks. A community-owned-and-operated Aboriginal, cultural tour organization runs one- and two- day tours in this region. Contact: Manyallaluk Aboriginal Cultural Tours, PMB 134, Katherine, Northern Territory, Australia, 0851; Tel. 011-61-8-8975-4727; [www.tourism.gov.au/publications/talent/manyallaluk.html](http://www.tourism.gov.au/publications/talent/manyallaluk.html).

**Tamaki Maori Village** in Rotorua, on New Zealand’s North Island, is situated on the edge of beautiful Lake Rotorua. Tel. 011-64-7-346-2823; [www.travel-nz.com/Tamaki](http://www.travel-nz.com/Tamaki).

## EUROPE

**Crete’s Culinary Sanctuaries Organic Agrotourism Programs** Nikki Rose, a Greek-American professional chef and a graduate of the Culinary Institute of America, created a business that combines the best of global travel—tours and great food. Discover Crete’s wild nature, culture, and cuisine during mountain treks and visits to historic sites, organic farms, villages, and beaches. Their team of chefs, sustainable organic farmers, botanists, archaeologists, and outdoor adventure specialists are all local. Contact: Crete’s Culinary Sanctuaries Organic Agrotourism Programs at 415-835-9923; [info@cookingincrete.com](mailto:info@cookingincrete.com); [www.cookingincrete.com](http://www.cookingincrete.com).

**ECEAT-Poland** European Center for Ecological Agriculture and Tourism works with small farmers to use ecological tourism as a tool to help farmers through the transition from conventional agriculture to ecological agriculture. Contact: ECEAT-Poland, 34-146 Stryzow 156, woj. Malopolskie, Poland; Tel./fax. 011-48-33-879-7114; [eceat@sfo.pl](mailto:eceat@sfo.pl); [www.poland.eceat.org](http://www.poland.eceat.org).

## THE AMERICAS

**Black Sheep Inn** A friendly place that practices high altitude Andean permaculture and contributes to and improves the local community and the natural environment. Contact: Blacksheep Inn, P.O. Box 05-01-240, Chugchilan, Cotopaxi,

Ecuador; South America; Tel. 011-593-3-281-4587; [info@blacksheepinn.com](mailto:info@blacksheepinn.com); [www.blacksheepinn.com/Ecological.htm](http://www.blacksheepinn.com/Ecological.htm).

**Bospas Forest Farm** Belgian-born Piet Sabbe and his Ecuadorian wife, Gabriela Peralta, manage this fruit farm on the western slopes of the Ecuadorian Andes in the lush valley of the Mira River. Volunteers and interns are welcome (1-month minimum). Contact: [bospasforest@gardener.com](mailto:bospasforest@gardener.com); [www.ecuativer.com/bospas](http://www.ecuativer.com/bospas).

**Centro Eco Akumal (CEA)**, located in the heart of the Maya Riviera, plays an important role in research, education and protection of the Sistema Arrecifal Mesoamericano. Akumal, the oldest resort village on the Mayan Riviera, has developed with a focus on long-term sustainability and protection of natural and cultural resources. Use their directory to find eco-friendly places to stay, restaurants, shops, and things to do. Ratings based on members’ participation in recycling, protection of coral reefs, water conservation, turtle protection and eco-bathrooms. Contact CEA, Quintana Roo, Mexico, Centro Ecológico Akumal, Apartado Postal 2, Akumal, Quintana Roo, Mexico 77760; Tel./fax. 011-52-984-875-9095; [www.ceakumal.org](http://www.ceakumal.org); [info@ceakumal.org](mailto:info@ceakumal.org).

**Community Tourism in Jamaica** Community Tourism in Jamaica, [www.uwimona.edu.jm/jct](http://www.uwimona.edu.jm/jct), is a program at the Univ. of the West Indies in Monda, Jamaica. It is a multi-partner program that promotes locally owned hotels, lodges, and other tourist programs.

**Grassroots Expeditions** is primarily a bird-watching tour company for those interested in social and environmental sustainability. Based in Costa Rica, it offers personalized, small-group experiences in off-the-beaten-path destinations. It also highlights imaginative and bold examples of regional economic projects. For example, learn about sustainable agriculture by visiting organic produce co-ops, eco-friendly coffee and banana plantations, and medicinal plant nurseries. Director Alex Martinez is a native-born Costa Rican, deeply connected to his homeland, with a life-long commitment to protecting it. He has spent decades active as an educator, ornithologist, tour guide, and tireless campaigner against illegal wildlife trade, hunting, and timber cutting. Over years of traveling in his country, Alex has developed a network of family-owned lodging, dining and outdoor experience providers to which he regularly brings his guests. All of these people conduct their business with a shared vision: To provide quality services, at very reasonable prices, to visitors while giving something back to the local economy and treading lightly on the land.

Contact: Tierra Hermosa; Puerto Viejo de Sarapiquí; Heredia; Costa Rica; [hermosa@tierrahermosa.com](mailto:hermosa@tierrahermosa.com); [www.tierrahermosa.com](http://www.tierrahermosa.com).

**JavaVentures** Founded in 1996 as a coffee tourism and consulting firm with a mission to strengthen relationships between coffee-producing and coffee-consuming countries. Its current core focus is the educational coffee programs it leads to producing countries throughout Latin America by working closely with grower’s associations in Costa Rica, Hawaii, Nicaragua, Brazil, and Panama. Familiarity with the regions, the coffees, the producers and cultures of each of these countries brings unique insights to the participants’ experiences. Celebrate coffee harvest! While it is cold and snowy in the biggest coffee consuming nations, coffee producing regions are celebrating their harvest seasons. Contact: JavaVentures, 4104 24th St., Ste. #421, San Francisco, CA 94114; Tel. 415-824-1484; [www.javaventures.com](http://www.javaventures.com).

**PLANETA.com**, [www.planeta.com](http://www.planeta.com), started by Ron Mader in 1995, has grown to be the number one site on the Web for sustainable travel information about Mexico and much of Central America. Populated with articles written by a range of sources—travelers, academics, journalists, and environmentalists, to name a few—the site is a platform for discussion of experiences and research; you can find anything from a blog to a tour operator to a thesis concerning sustainable tourism.

**REDATOUR** offers lodging with families in Acosta. The lodging and tourist attractions are operated by “Acosta’s Rural Tourism Network” (REDATOUR). This network is a result of the combined effort of 125 families in Acosta, who have organized in order to offer a new alternative in rural tourism in Costa Rica. Spanish language programs, horseback riding, hiking, cloud forests, agro-tourism, and volunteer opportunities to support sustainable activities are available. Contact: REDATOUR, Fundación Acción Solidaria, Apartado 1582-2050; San Pedro Montes De Oca, Costa Rica; [info@costaricanruraltourism.org](mailto:info@costaricanruraltourism.org); [www.costaricanruraltourism.org](http://www.costaricanruraltourism.org).

**REDTURS** is a network of communities, institutions, technical skills and resources devoted to supporting the sustainable development of tourism, seeking compatibility between the objectives of economic efficiency, social equity and cultural identity. Its mission is to shape and strengthen networks of community-based tourism. The site contains information on Latin American government policy on tourism, listings of operators and accommodations. Most content is in Spanish. Go to the web site for links to each country. Contact: [info@redturs.org](mailto:info@redturs.org) or [www.redturs.org](http://www.redturs.org).

**TIDE/Belize Ecotours** Located on the southern coast of Belize, Punta Gorda is the birthplace of the Toledo Institute for Development and the Environment, more commonly referred to as TIDE. In response to the community's cry for conservation of its coastal resources, the nonprofit organization was established in 1997. They describe themselves as local people making local decisions. To date, TIDE has facilitated the development of an impressive array of kayaking, fly fishing, and cultural excursions, including multiple-day tours and homestays with Mayan families. Their web site, [www.belizeecotours.org](http://www.belizeecotours.org), is currently under reconstruction.

## resources to help you learn more about responsible tourism

### Asia-Pacific Peoples' Environment Network

**(APPEN)** is a regional anti-golf-course and environmental network. Contact: 27 Lorong Maktab, 10250 Penang, Malaysia; Tel. 011-60-422-76930.

**African Indigenous Women Organization (AIWO)** is a network of indigenous women working on community issues, including those of tourism. P.O. Box 74908, Nairobi, V6K 1X4, Kenya; Tel. 011-254-2-723-958; [iin@swiftkenya.com](mailto:iin@swiftkenya.com).

**Airline Ambassadors** is a group that brings sustainable tourism discussions to the U.N. and medical supplies abroad. Contact: Carl E. Oates, 19 South B St., Ste. 1, San Mateo, CA 94401; Tel. 214-361-1488 or 650-347-3500; [info@airlineamb.org](mailto:info@airlineamb.org); [www.airlineamb.org](http://www.airlineamb.org).

**Arbeitskreis Tourismus und Entwicklung** is a Swiss NGO working on fair trade and responsible ecotourism. Contact: Missionsstrasse 21, CH-4003, Basel, Switzerland; Tel. 011-41-61-2614-742; [info@akte.ch](mailto:info@akte.ch), [www.akte.ch](http://www.akte.ch).

**Asian Women's Association**, Sakuragaoka, Shibuyaku, Tokyo, 155, Japan; Tel. 011-81-3-346-9752. An anti-prostitution organization promoting responsible tourism.

**Badri Dev Pande** is developing a sustainable tourism master plan of the Manaslu region of Nepal. Contact: Environmental Education and Awareness, P.O. Box 3923, Kathmandu, Nepal.

**CART**, Center for the Advancement of Responsible Travel, provides information on responsible tourism in Europe. Contact: 70 Dry Hill Park Rd., Tonbridge, Kent TN10 3BX, U.K.

**Center for Responsible Tourism** is an educational group dedicated to informing the U.S. public about the prostitution of children and women in Asian tourism. Contact: D. Donnelly and Virginia Hadsell, 1765-D Le Roy, Berkeley, CA 94709; [dodyhd@aol.com](mailto:dodyhd@aol.com).

**Center for Seafarers' Rights** provides documentation about workers on cruise ships and publications on the subject. Contact: Seaman's Church Institute, 241 Water St., New York, NY 10038; Tel. 212-349-9090; [crs@seamanschurch.org](mailto:crs@seamanschurch.org); [www.seamanschurch.org](http://www.seamanschurch.org).

**Coalition Against Trafficking in Women—Asia Pacific (CATWAP)** is a network of feminist groups, organizations, and individuals fighting the sexual exploitation of women globally. Contact: CATWAP, Ste. 406, Victoria Condominium, 41 Annapolis St., Greenhills, San Juan, Metro Manila 1500, Philippines; Tel. 011-632-722-0859; fax 011-632-722-0755; [catw-ap@catw-ap.org](mailto:catw-ap@catw-ap.org); [www.catw-ap.org](http://www.catw-ap.org).

**Coalition on Child Prostitution and Tourism** is an anti-prostitution tourism advocacy network. Contact: Christian Aid, 35 Lower March, Waterloo, London SE1 7RT, U.K.; Tel. 011-44-020-7620-4444; [info@christianaid.org](mailto:info@christianaid.org); [www.christianaid.org.uk/news/stories/011210s2.htm](http://www.christianaid.org.uk/news/stories/011210s2.htm).

**Coalition of Organizations for Solidarity Tourism** offers alternative tourism in the Philippines. Contact: P.O. Box 1172, Attn: PH c/o Philcom, 8755 Paseo de Roxas, Makati 1200, Philippines.

**ECOT**, Ecumenical Coalition on Tourism, is an ecumenical and NGO effort to promote human rights and responsible tourism in Asia. It produces the respected *Contours* magazine and has organized numerous campaigns. Contact: ECOT, 96 Pak Tin Village Area 2, Mei Tin Road, Shatin, NT, Hong Kong; Tel. 011-852-2602; [ranjan@ecotonline.org](mailto:ranjan@ecotonline.org); [www.ecotonline.org/Pages/HomePagelist.asp](http://www.ecotonline.org/Pages/HomePagelist.asp).

**ECPAT** stands for End Child Prostitution, Child Pornography, and Trafficking of Children for Sexual Purposes. The offices of ECPAT International are located in Bangkok, Thailand. ECPAT is a network of organizations and individuals working together to eliminate the commercial sexual exploitation of children. It seeks to encourage the world community to ensure that children everywhere enjoy their fundamental rights free from all forms of commercial sexual exploitation. Contact: ECPAT, [info@ecpat.net](mailto:info@ecpat.net); [www.ecpat.net](http://www.ecpat.net), [www.ecpat.net/eng/index.asp](http://www.ecpat.net/eng/index.asp).

**EQUATIONS**, Equitable Tourism Options, is a responsible tourism advocate; helps travelers locate environmentally and culturally sensitive projects in India. Contact: EQUATIONS, No. 198, II Cross, Church Rd., New Thippasandra, Bangalore 560 075, India; Tel. 011-9180-528-2313; [admin@equation.ilban.ernet.in](mailto:admin@equation.ilban.ernet.in).

**Euroter** publishes principles for developing green tourism in European villages. Contact: Euroter, 82, rue Francois Rolland, F 94130 Nogent-sur-Mer, France; Tel. 011-33-1-4514-6421.

**FernWeh Tourism Review** is a tourism-watch and -advocacy group in Germany. Almost all information

available in German only. Great resource on "best of" responsible tourism groups around the world. Contact: [fernweh@iz3w.org](mailto:fernweh@iz3w.org), [www.iz3w.org/fernweh](http://www.iz3w.org/fernweh).

**Friends of the Earth (Amigos de la Terra)** is a research and networking organization on tourism industry activities and impacts. Contact: Tourism Campaign, c/o P.O. Box 19199, 1000 GD Amsterdam, The Netherlands; Tel. 011-31-20-622-1369; [foei@foei.org](mailto:foei@foei.org).

**Friends of PRONATURA** is a network of ecological groups working in Mexico. Contact: 240 East Limberlost Dr, Tucson, AZ 85705; Tel. 602-887-1188; [closfree@aol.com](mailto:closfree@aol.com).

**El Grupo Ecologista de Mayab (GEMA)** is a local group working to protect X'cacel, the most important sea turtle nesting beach in Mexico's Atlantic. Contact: Av. Uxmal 24 Sm. 2A, Cancun, Q.Roo, Mexico; Tel. 011-98-84-69-44, 99-84-98-57; [recarib@cancun.com.mx](mailto:recarib@cancun.com.mx).

**Global Anti-Golf Movement and Global Network for Anti-Golf Course Action (GNAGA)** is an anti-golf initiative that works with grassroots and indigenous groups throughout Asia and the Pacific displaced by golf development. Contact: 1047 Naka Kamogawa, Chiba, Japan 296-01; Tel. 011-81-470-971-001. GAG'M, 27 Lorong Maktab, 10250 Penang, Malaysia; Tel. 011-604-227-6930; [aatzor@tin.it](mailto:aatzor@tin.it), [utenti.tripod.it/dossierisarenas/golf.htm](http://utenti.tripod.it/dossierisarenas/golf.htm).

**Green Globe Asia Pacific** supports environmentally sustainable management for the travel and tourism industry. Contact: GPO Box 371, Canberra ACT 260 Australia; Tel. 011-61-2-6257-9102; [customerservice@ggasiapacific.com.au](mailto:customerservice@ggasiapacific.com.au), [www.ggasiapacific.com.au](http://www.ggasiapacific.com.au).

**ISEC/Ladakh (India) Project** is an educational program that supports innovative grassroots development efforts of the Ladakhi people, who live on the western edge of the Tibetan Plateau in India. Good resource materials. Provides Westerners with an opportunity to work on a Ladakhi farm in the summer. Contact: P.O. Box 9475, Berkeley, CA 94709; Tel. 510-548-4915; [isec@igc.org](mailto:isec@igc.org), [www.isec.org.uk](http://www.isec.org.uk).

**Green Globe 21 Americas**, Caribbean Alliance for Sustainable Tourism. Contact: 1000 Ponce de Leon, 5th Fl., San Juan, Puerto Rico 00907; tel: 787-725-913; fax: 787-725-910; [herawford@caribbeanhotels.org](mailto:herawford@caribbeanhotels.org), [www.cha-cast.com](http://www.cha-cast.com).

**Green Tourism Association** is an NGO committed to developing and cultivating an urban green tourism industry in Toronto. Contact: 590 Jarvis St, 4th Fl., Toronto, ON M4Y 2J4 Canada; Tel. 416-392-1288; [green@city.toronto.on.ca](mailto:green@city.toronto.on.ca), [www.greentourism.ca](http://www.greentourism.ca).

**Indonesia Resources and Information Program (IRIP)** fosters active links with Indonesians working for change. Contact: P.O. Box 1326, Collingwood 3066, Australia; Tel. 011-61-3-481-1581. ▶

**Initiatives for International Dialogue (IID)** is a Philippine NGO that campaigns for responsible tourism. Contact: 27d Rosario Townhouse, Galaxy St., GSIS Heights, Matine, Davao City, Philippines; Tel. 011-63-822-992-574; iid@skynet.net; [www.iidnet.org](http://www.iidnet.org).

**Indigenous Tourism Rights International** is dedicated to collaborating with Indigenous communities and networks to help protect native territories, rights, and cultures. Contact: Indigenous Tourism Rights International, P.O. Box 4657, Saint Paul, MN 55104; Tel: 651-644-9984; deborah@tourismrights.org; [www.tourismrights.org](http://www.tourismrights.org).

**International Institute for Peace Through Tourism (IIPTT)** facilitates tourism initiatives that contribute to international peace and cooperation. Contact: Fox Hill 13, 685 Cottage Club Rd., Stowe, VT 05672; [www.iipt.org](http://www.iipt.org).

**Okologischer Tourismus in Europa (OTE)** is a responsible tourism organization; resources in German. Contact: Bernd Rath, Am Michaelshof 8-10, 53177 Bonn, Germany; oete-bonn@t-online.de; [www.ote.de](http://www.ote.de).

**Sahabat Alam Malaysia (Friends of the Earth Malaysia)** works on tourism issues. Contact: 1 No. 27, Lorong Maktab, 10250 Penang, Malaysia; tel: 011-604-227-6930; smidris@tm.net.my; [www.surforever.com/sam](http://www.surforever.com/sam).

**Respect (Austrian Center for Tourism and Development)** is an organization that stands up for responsible and sustainable tourism in developing countries. Contact: A-1150, Vienna, Diefenbachgasse 36/4, Austria; Tel: 011-43-1-895-62-45; office@respect.at; [www.respect.at](http://www.respect.at).

**Third World Network** produces a magazine and other information about development issues in the global south, including tourism. Contact: 228 Macalister Rd., 10400, Penang, Malaysia; Tel: 011-604-226-6728, 011-604-226-6159; twn@igc.apc.org; [www.twinside.org.sg](http://www.twinside.org.sg).

**Sustainable Travel—Travel Without a Trace** is an organization focused on promoting global sustainable tourism development and providing eco-certification for U.S. tourism providers that incorporate financially viable, environmentally and socially responsible practices into their operations, so consumers can buy and book with confidence. Contact: Sustainable Travel International—Travel Without a Trace, 3250 O'Neal Cir., Ste. H-11, Boulder, CO 80301; Tel: 303-544-9836; info@SustainableTravelInternational.org; [www.SustainableTravelInternational.org](http://www.SustainableTravelInternational.org).

**Tourism Watch, Church Development Service**, coordinates a European network of responsible travel organizations. Contact: Ulrich-von-Hassell-Str. 76, 53123 Bonn, Germany; Tel: 011-49-0-228-81010;

[tourism-watch@de.org](mailto:tourism-watch@de.org); [www.tourism-watch.de](http://www.tourism-watch.de).

**Transverses** promotes responsible tourism and has a resource center on tourism and the Third World. Pre-Travel Information on human rights, fair labor, etc. Contact: 7 rue Hayrault, F-92100 Boulogne, France; Tel. 011-33-1-4910-9084; transver@club-inter.net.fr; [www.chez.com/transverses](http://www.chez.com/transverses).

**ASOC** If you are planning a trip to Antarctica, read about ASOC's Antarctica Tourism Campaign, which supports regulation of commercial Antarctic tourism. ASOC is concerned about the rapid growth of commercial tourism, which presently is not regulated by the Environment Protocol, including size of ships, number of visitors to various areas, on-shore infrastructure development, use of helicopters, and other issues that affect the environment. Note that ASOC is not opposed to tourism but does believe that it should not be left unregulated. Contact: The Antarctic and Southern Ocean Coalition, 1630 Connecticut Ave., NW Third Fl., Washington, D.C. 20009; Tel. 202-234-2480; [www.asoc.org/what\\_tourism.htm](http://www.asoc.org/what_tourism.htm).

**Equality Now's Campaign Against Sex Tourism/Trafficking** addresses the commercial sexual exploitation of women. It has been responsible for shutting down sex tour operations, as well as supporting laws such as the enactment of a Hawaii state law prohibiting the activities of sex tour companies. Other initiatives Equality Now has undertaken in the campaign against sex tourism and trafficking include working for the passage of international and U.S. legislation on trafficking. Contact: Equality Now, P.O. Box 20646, Columbus Circle Station, New York, NY 10023; info@equalitynow.org.

*Equality Now Africa:* P.O. Box 2018 KNH 00202, Nairobi, Kenya; Tel. 011-254-20-271-9913/9832; equalitynow@kenyawe.com.

*Equality Now London:* P.O. Box 48822, London WC2N 6ZW, U.K.; ukinfo@equalitynow.org.

**Freedom from Hunger** brings innovative and sustainable self-help solutions to the fight against chronic hunger and poverty. Together with local partners, it works to equip families with resources they need to build futures of health, hope, and dignity. Go to Freedom from Hunger's web site to take a virtual journey; learn more about the history and economic background of 16 countries around the world including Haiti, Mali, and Uganda. See color photos of the various plant and animal life native to each country, and find links to other useful web sites. Contact: Freedom from Hunger, 1644 DaVinci Ct., Davis, CA 95616; Tel. 800-708-2555; info@freedomfromhunger.org; [www.freedomfromhunger.org/mali.html](http://www.freedomfromhunger.org/mali.html)

**"I'm Not Going to Burma: Speak out about tour-**

**ism to Burma"** More than 70 celebrities and politicians are backing this new public awareness campaign asking people not to holiday in Burma because of human rights concerns. In Burma many human rights abuses are directly connected to the regime's drive to develop the country for tourists. More than one million people have been forced out of their homes in order to "beautify" cities, suppress dissent, and to make way for tourism developments, such as hotels, airports, and golf courses. "Burma will be here for many years, so tell your friends to visit us later. Visiting now is tantamount to condoning the regime," says Democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi. Contact: [www.burmacampaign.org.uk/tourism.php](http://www.burmacampaign.org.uk/tourism.php).

**The International Porter Protection Group (IPPG)** works to improve the conditions of mountain porters in the tourism industry worldwide. This means porters carrying for individual trekkers, organized groups, climbing expeditions and those who supply lodges. Contact: Dr. Jim Duff, 53 Dale St., Ulverston, LA129AR Cumbria, U.K.; Tel:/fax: 011-44-0-12295 86225; info@ippg.net; [www.ippg.net](http://www.ippg.net). ●

The following resources are provided Courtesy of *Transitions Abroad* Magazine November/December 2005. Resources are updated annually.

Responsible travel and ecotourism are a cornerstone of local, regional, national, and international sustainable development. Travelers play a pivotal role, whether we are independent travelers or part of a larger group tour. As we rethink and re-imagine tourism we are redefining the traditional guest-host relationship as an activity that motivates a new eco-friendly, people-friendly action.

The best place to seek information about ecotourism is on the Web, and we offer key ideas here for starting your search. Travelers seeking appropriate alternatives to conventional tourism will find helpful information in this section as well.

—Ron Mader,

Ecotourism and Latin American contributing editor for  
Transitions Abroad and host of Planeta.com

## google it

While there are many drawbacks to searching for "ecotourism" via search engines, it makes better sense to consult **Google**, [www.google.com](http://www.google.com), rather than a particular organization. National and international associations generally promote only their own projects or members.

For a comprehensive index of environmental groups working in tourism and conservation, go to **Planeta.com's Spotlight Index**, [www.planeta.com/ecotravel/tour/tourism\\_cspot.html](http://www.planeta.com/ecotravel/tour/tourism_cspot.html). Details about banks and financial support of sustainable travel and ecotourism are online at Planeta's Financing Sustainable Tourism Index, [www.planeta.com/ecotravel/tour/ecotourism\\_fspot.html](http://www.planeta.com/ecotravel/tour/ecotourism_fspot.html).

## index

**Planeta.com**, [honduras@planeta.com](mailto:honduras@planeta.com), [www.planeta.com](http://www.planeta.com). The "global journal of practical ecotourism" debuted in 1994. This content-rich archive is regularly updated and is the Web's most popular hub for serious ecotourism. Online conferences scheduled for 2006 will focus on connections between tourism and migration.

**EcoClub**, [www.ecoclub.com](http://www.ecoclub.com). Based in Athens, Greece, this organization has one of the most popular web sites spotlighting eco-lodges and activists around the globe. Features, news services, and real-time chats are first-rate.

**Mexican Conservation Learning Network (IMAC)** This non-profit focuses on conservation strategies, including ecotourism and sustainable travel. This is an active organization with a content-rich web site. The resources are mostly in Spanish. Highlight: the site includes news about "green" jobs in Latin America. Contact: IMAC, Damas No.49 Col. San José Insurgentes, Mexico City, MEXICO 03900; Tel. 011-52-5611-9779; [www.imacmexico.org](http://www.imacmexico.org).

## best ecotravel books

**The Business of Ecotourism** by Carol Patterson (*Explorers Publishing, Wisconsin, 2002, 178 pp., \$29.95*). Recommended business strategies for those developing ecolodges and services related to nature-based travel. Includes CD and is available in a teacher's edition.

**Saving Paradise: The Story of Sukau Rainforest Lodge** by Albert Teo and Carol Patterson, (*Sabah Handicraft Center., 2005, 220 pp., \$15.00*).

**Wilderness Lodge Vacations** by Kimberly Lisagor (*Norton, 2004, 256 pp., \$22.95*). Great ideas for outdoor travel in North America. This book features more than 100 unique getaways.

**Rethinking Tourism and Ecotravel: The Paving of Paradise and How You Can Stop It** by Deborah McLaren (*Kumarian Press, 2nd ed., 2003, 220 pp., \$23.95*). Excellent overview of the pros and cons of ecotourism and responsible travel, particularly as tourism impacts indigenous people.

**Tourism, Recreation and Climate Change** edited by C. Michael Hall and James Higham. (*Multilingual Matters, 2005, 320 pages, \$49.95*). The editors of this anthology have prepared the first comprehensive examination of the relationship between tourism and climate change.

**Global Ecotourism Policies and Case Studies** by Michael Luck and Torsten Kirstges (*Channel View Publications, 2002, 216 pp., \$44.95*). Academic anthology that introduces case studies from different parts of the world.

**Marine Ecotourism** by Brian Garrod and Julie C. Wilson (*Channel View Publications, 2002, 266 pp., \$79.95*). Academic introduction to the concept of marine ecotourism and assessing its value as a sustainable development option.

**American Indians and National Parks** by Robert Keller and Michael Turek (*Univ. of Arizona Press, 2001, 319 pp., \$19.95*). This work examines the relation-

ship of parks and Indian cultures.

**Chile: The Bradt Travel Guide** by Tim Burford (*Bradt Travel Guides, 2005, 680 pages, \$24.95*). The most comprehensive guide to Chile. Burford explores the length and (very narrow) breadth of Chile to capture the mind-boggling diversity of a country that encompasses the world's driest desert, towering snow-capped mountains and the lush coastal rainforest of Patagonia.

**The New Key to Costa Rica** by Beatrice Blake and Anne Becher. (*Ulysses Press, 2004, 17th ed., 560 pp., \$18.95*). This classic guidebook highlights some great places and now features more information on rural community visits.

## ecotourism organizations

**Alaska Wilderness Recreation and Tourism Assn. (AWRTA)** Membership organization of small, locally-owned ecotour operators with the goal of promoting and protecting wild places in Alaska. Contact: 2207 Spenard Rd., Ste. 201, Anchorage, Alaska 99503; Tel. 907-258-3171; [info@awrta.org](mailto:info@awrta.org); [www.awrta.org](http://www.awrta.org).

**Conservation International—Ecotourism Department's** Ecotourism Program supports the development of lodges, trails, visitor centers, and services provided by locals. Contact: 1919 M St., NW, Ste. 600, Washington, DC 20036; Tel. 202-912-1000; [www.ecotour.org](http://www.ecotour.org); [ecotour@conservation.org](mailto:ecotour@conservation.org). **Green Tourism Association** works collaboratively with a network of local businesses, environmental groups, government agencies, heritage and cultural organizations, and individuals. Contact: 590 Jarvis St., 4th Fl. Toronto, Ontario, Canada M4Y 2J4; Tel. 416-392-1288; [info@greentourism.ca](mailto:info@greentourism.ca), [www.greentourism.ca](http://www.greentourism.ca).

**The International Ecotourism Society (TIES)**, 733 15th St. NW, Ste. 1000, Washington, DC, 20005-2112; Tel. 202-347-9203; [ecomail@ecotourism.org](mailto:ecomail@ecotourism.org).

**COMECO** New Mexican non-profit focusing on ecotourism. The council was created by Jorge Chavez de la Peña, who created Mexico's first academic ecotourism program. Contact: COMECO, Damas No.49 Col. San José Insurgentes, Mexico City, MEXICO 03900; Tel. 011-52-5611-9779; [www.comeco.com.mx](http://www.comeco.com.mx).

**The Nature Conservancy** Responsible travel to natural areas can be an excellent way to learn about biodiversity and local cultures while contributing to conservation and the sustainable development of local communities. The Nature Conservancy and its partner organizations are stewards of many of the world's "Last Great Places." Contact: 4245 North Fairfax Dr., Ste. 100, Arlington, VA 22203-1606; Tel. 703-841-5300; <http://nature.org/aboutus/travel/ecotourism>.

**Rain Forest Alliance** is an international organization developing a sustainable tourism program. Contact: 665 Broadway, Ste. 500, New York, NY 10012; Tel. 212-677-1900; [www.rainforestalliance.org](http://www.rainforestalliance.org).

photo Nicholas Wilkinson



**South American Explorers (SAE)** promotes ecologically responsible tourism. Has clubhouses in Quito, Ecuador and Lima and Cusco, Peru. Publishes quarterly magazine and sells books and maps. Contact: 126 Indian Creek Rd., Ithaca, NY 14850; Tel. 607-277-0488; explorer@saexplorers.org, [www.saexplorers.org](http://www.saexplorers.org).

**Toledo Ecotourism Association (TEA)**, located in San Miguel Village, Toledo District, Belize, is a network of indigenous ecotourism, cultural presentation, and

adventure tours. Contact: Pabzo Ack, BTB Information Center, Punta Gorda, P.O. Box 180, Belize; Tel. 011-501-722-2096; ttea@btl.net, [www.southernbelize.com/tea.html](http://www.southernbelize.com/tea.html).

**United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP)** (The program was more active a few years ago.) Contact: Tourism Programme, 39-43, Quai André Citroën, 75739 Paris Cedex 15, France; Tel. 011-33-1-44-37-14-41; [www.uneptie.org/pc/tourism](http://www.uneptie.org/pc/tourism).

**World Tourism Organization (WTO)** is an international organization with a number of resources of interest, including Web guides to the Sustainable Development of Tourism ([www.world-tourism.org/sustainable](http://www.world-tourism.org/sustainable)), eliminating poverty via tourism ([www.world-tourism.org/step/menu.html](http://www.world-tourism.org/step/menu.html)), and the International Year of Ecotourism ([www.world-tourism.org/sustainable/IYE-Main-Menu.htm](http://www.world-tourism.org/sustainable/IYE-Main-Menu.htm)). Contact: Capitá Haya 42, 28020 Madrid, Spain; Tel. 011-34-91-567-81-00; [www.world-tourism.org](http://www.world-tourism.org); omt@world-tourism.org.

### online forums and bulletin boards

To find out more about ecotourism, take part in the global conversations that occur on the Web. Forums

(or listservers) are interactive discussion groups. Bulletin boards are a virtual counterpart to university message boards. Each of the following resources has its own rules, so be attentive to the differing protocols.

**Green-Travel:** <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/green-travel>. Established in 1990 by Marcus Endicott, Green-Travel was the first specialty tourism community of any kind online and dedicated to culturally and environmentally responsible tourism worldwide. To subscribe, send an email to [green-travel-subscribe@yahoo.com](mailto:green-travel-subscribe@yahoo.com).

**Planeta's World Forum:** [www.planeta.com/worldforum.html](http://www.planeta.com/worldforum.html). The Planeta web site hosts more than a dozen regional and topical forums ranging from community tourism to ethical marketing. Registration is free, though financial contributions are appreciated.

**Thorn Tree—Responsible Tourism:** <http://thorn-tree.lonelyplanet.com/categories.cfm?catid=42>. Run by Lonely Planet, this bulletin board focuses on how global travelers can visit places in a responsible manner. The Thorn Tree is one of the most popular message boards for travelers, and registration is free. ●

The following resources are provided Courtesy of *Transitions Abroad* Magazine September/October 2005. Resources are updated annually.

These resources are updated by **William Nolting**, International Education and Work Abroad editor for *Transitions Abroad* and Director of the University of Michigan International Center, [www.umich.edu/~icenter/overseas](http://www.umich.edu/~icenter/overseas).

\*\* *must-have resources*,

\* *of broad interest*,

no asterisk = *of specialized interest*

\*\* **Alternatives to the Peace Corps: A Directory of Global Volunteer Opportunities** by Jennifer Willsea. 2003 (10th ed.). 144 pp. \$9.95 plus shipping from Food First Books; [foodfirst@foodfirst.org](mailto:foodfirst@foodfirst.org), [www.foodfirst.org](http://www.foodfirst.org). Thoroughly researched guide to voluntary service, study, and alternative travel overseas and in the U.S. that "addresses the political and economic causes of poverty."

**Archaeological Fieldwork Opportunities Bulletin**. 2005. 256 pp. \$19.95 from the Archaeological Institute of America; 800-791-9354, [www.archaeological.org](http://www.archaeological.org). Available free online (under "Fieldwork") this is a comprehensive list compiled by the AIA of almost 300 archaeological field schools, volunteer positions, and programs throughout the world with openings for volunteers, students, and staff.

**Archaeology Abroad**, Council for British Archaeology, 31-34 Gordon Square, London WC1H 0PY, U.K.; [archabroad@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:archabroad@ucl.ac.uk), [www.britarch.ac.uk](http://www.britarch.ac.uk). Two bulletins each year in April and November. Lists worldwide projects for volunteers and professionals.

**Global Work: InterAction's Guide to Volunteer, Internship and Fellowship Opportunities**. 2004. \$18 from InterAction, Publications Department, 1717 Massachusetts Ave. NW, Ste. 801, Washington, DC 20036; 202-667-8227, fax 202-667-8236; [publications@interaction.org](mailto:publications@interaction.org), [www.interaction.org](http://www.interaction.org). Describes opportunities in the U.S. and abroad with over 70 major organizations working in international relief and development. Most require professional skills, though some are open to students. Indexes for location and type of work.

**Green Volunteers: The World Guide to Voluntary Work in Nature Conservation** edited by Fabio Ausenda and Erin McCloskey. 2005. 256 pp. \$14.95. Universe Books (Italy). Information on conservation organizations that accept volunteers and how to apply. See [www.greenvolunteers.com](http://www.greenvolunteers.com).

\*\* **How to Live Your Dream of Volunteering Abroad** by Joseph Collins, Stefano DeZerega, and Zahara Heckscher. 2002. 467 pp. \$17. Penguin-Putnam; [www.volunteerverseas.org](http://www.volunteerverseas.org). This highly-recommended book (and its web site) provide a comprehensive overview of volunteering abroad, including evaluations of over 100 volunteer organizations. Twelve chapters cover topics such as: *Is Volunteering Overseas Right for*

*You, Pros and Cons of the Peace Corps, Doing it Without a Program, Overcoming Financial Obstacles, How to Be an Effective International Volunteer, and Staying Involved When You Get Back.*

**How to Serve and Learn Effectively: Students Tell Students** by Howard Berry and Linda A. Chisholm. 1992. 77 pp. \$7.00 from Partnership for Service Learning, 815 2nd Ave., Ste. 315, New York, NY 10017; 212-986-0989, fax 212-986-5039; [pslry@aol.com](mailto:pslry@aol.com), [www.ipsl.org](http://www.ipsl.org). Reality-testing and exploration of motivations for students considering volunteering overseas. Not a directory of opportunities.

\* **International Directory of Voluntary Work** by Victoria Pybus. 2005 (9th ed.). 319 pp. Vacation Work (U.K.). \$19.95 from Globe Pequot, 246 Goose Ln., P.O. Box 480, Guilford, CT 06437; 888-249-7586, [www.globepequot.com](http://www.globepequot.com). Directory of over 700 agencies offering volunteer jobs and how to apply. Most comprehensive listing of volunteer opportunities in Britain and Europe of any directory, plus worldwide listings.

\*\* **International Volunteer Programs Association (IVPA)**, [www.volunteerinternational.org](http://www.volunteerinternational.org). Web site of this U.S.-based nonprofit association features a searchable database of volunteer-abroad programs. IVPA's members are encouraged to follow IVPA's principles (listed on the web site) for good programs.

\* **International Volunteer Projects (CIEE)**. Free brochure from CIEE, 7 Custom House St., 3rd Fl., Portland ME 04101; 800-40-study, [www.ciee.org](http://www.ciee.org). Describes over 600 low-cost short-term summer voluntary service options available through CIEE in over 25 countries of Europe, Africa, and North America.

\* **International Workcamp Directory (SCI-IVS)**. Updated each Apr. \$5 postpaid (or free on their web site) from SCI-IVS USA, 5505 Walnut Level Rd., Crozet, VA 22932.; Tel./fax: 206-350-6585; [sciinfo@sci-ivs.org](mailto:sciinfo@sci-ivs.org), [www.sci-ivs.org](http://www.sci-ivs.org). Describes low-cost short-term volunteer options in available through SCI-IVS in over 50 countries. Their web site has links to many other volunteer organizations.

\* **International Workcamper (VFP)**. Free brochure available from VFP, International Workcamps, 1034 Tiffany Rd., Belmont, VT 05730-0202; 802-259-2759, fax 802-259-2922; [vfp@vfp.org](mailto:vfp@vfp.org), [www.vfp.org](http://www.vfp.org). The

VFP International Workcamp Directory (290 pp.), available each April for \$20 from VFP (or free on their web site), describes over 2,400 low-cost short-term voluntary service placements in over 90 countries available through VFP.

\*\* **Peace Corps Information Packet, The Peace Corps**, 1111 20th St., NW, Washington, DC 20526; 800-424-8580; [www.peacecorps.gov](http://www.peacecorps.gov). Peace Corps seeks individuals to serve as volunteers in overseas communities in the areas of education, small business development, the environment, health, youth development, and agriculture. Tour is 27 months with \$6,075 readjustment allowance upon completion of service. Must be U.S. citizen, over 18, in good health, and have education and/or experience relevant to programs.

\* **Response: Directory of Volunteer Opportunities by the Catholic Network of Volunteer Service**. Free online from CNVS, 1410 Q St., NW, Washington, DC 20009; 800-543-5046 or 202-332-6000, fax 202-332-1611; [volunteer@cnvs.org](mailto:volunteer@cnvs.org), [www.cnvs.org](http://www.cnvs.org). Directory of lay mission opportunities in the U.S. and abroad. Indexes by type of placement, location, length of placement, whether married couples or parents with dependents are accepted, age requirements, etc.

\* **South American Explorers Volunteer Opportunities**. Database free online at [www.saeexplorers.org](http://www.saeexplorers.org) by nonprofit organization SAE, 126 Indian Creek Rd, Ithaca, NY 14850; 607-277-0488. Directory of volunteer possibilities with local and U.S.-based non-governmental organizations.

\* **So, You Want to Join the Peace Corps...What to Know Before You Go** by Dillon Banerjee. 2000. 178 pp. \$12.95 from Ten Speed Press, 800-841-BOOK or 510-559-1600; [www.tenspeed.com](http://www.tenspeed.com). By a former Peace Corps volunteer, book provides comprehensive information in a question and answer format on topics ranging from applying and training to "living like the locals," health concerns, and returning home. A must-read for anyone considering Peace Corps.

\* **Volunteer Vacations: Short-Term Adventures That Will Benefit You and Others** by Bill McMillon, Doug Cutchins, and Anne Geissinger. 2003. (The 9th edition will be published in spring 2006.) 373 pp. \$17.95 from Chicago Review Press, 312-337-0747, [www.ipgbook.com](http://www.ipgbook.com). Describes more than 250 organizations sponsoring projects in the U.S. and abroad. Indexed by cost, length of time, location, type of project, and season. Opportunities from 1 weekend to 6 weeks.

**World Volunteers: The World Guide to Humanitarian and Development Volunteering** edited by Fabio Ausenda and Erin McCloskey. 2003. 255 pp. \$14.95 from Green Volunteers, [www.greenvol.com](http://www.greenvol.com), [greenvol@iol.it](mailto:greenvol@iol.it), or Rizzoli International Publications, Inc. through St. Martin's Press. [www.worldvolunteers.org/links.html](http://www.worldvolunteers.org/links.html). Listings and descriptions for over 150 projects worldwide. Includes work-camps and internships, short-term voluntary work for those with work experience, and long-term voluntary work. ●

The following are only a partial listing of comprehensive resources for those in the travel trade. Providers, suppliers, and operators will find it helpful to consult the responsible travel, ecotourism, and volunteer travel resources, as well.

**The Educational Travel Conference** (for a full description, see page 4)

**Generosity in Action** can assist tour operators and travel organizers to help people in destinations where you travel. Generosity in Action should be considered a conduit to allow your travelers' funds to be donated to a qualified 501(c)(3) charitable organization, receive confirmation of a charitable tax deduction, and yet have the funds be directed to a project that you organize. GIA can work with you to manage the flow of funds to any worthwhile project that you are sure will be completed. Contact: Generosity in Action, c/o Philanthropic Ventures Foundation, 1222 Preservation Park Way, Oakland, CA 94612-1201; info@GenerosityInAction.org, [www.generosityinaction.org](http://www.generosityinaction.org).

**Green Travel Market**, [www.greentravelmarket.info](http://www.greentravelmarket.info)—the online B2B Marketing and Information Service for Sustainable Tourism—offers professionals in tourism comprehensive, reliable, up-to-date information on sustainable tourism products that are currently available in the global marketplace. To ensure quality and sustainability, all of the products in its marketplace have been pre-screened. Tour operators who join Green Travel Market (GTM) can browse through hundreds of innovative projects and products, including green accommodations, protected areas, inbound tour operators, community-based tourism initiatives and more. Searching the GTM product database is easy and free. Visit its site and register on-line. Green Travel Market is also designed to help travel suppliers, media journalists and travelers.

**Indigenous Tourism Rights International (Tourism Rights)** (for a full description, see page 4)

**Planeta.com** (for a full description, see page 4)

**Sustainable Travel International (STI)** promotes sustainable development and eco-friendly travel by providing programs that help travelers and travel-related companies protect the environmental, socio-cultural, and economic needs of the places they visit, and the planet at large. While many parts of the world have taken a leadership role in creating and promoting sustainable travel and tourism initiatives, such as tourism certification and carbon-offset programs, similar programs are virtually non-existent in North America and many developing countries. STI aims to change that. The University of Colorado Leeds School of Business' Center for Sustainable Tourism (CST) and Sustainable Travel

International (STI) have formed a new partnership aimed at promoting responsible travel and sustainable business practices within the travel community and tourism industry. Together CST and STI offer educational training courses to increase awareness and demand for sustainable tourism. These programs are designed for tourism industry professionals, students, conscientious consumers, and community groups. Contact: Sustainable Travel International, 2060 Florida Dr., Boulder, CO 80304; 720-273-2975; info@SustainableTravelInternational.org, [www.sustainabletravelinternational.org](http://www.sustainabletravelinternational.org).

**Transitions Abroad** (for a full description, see page 4); for a direct link to Responsible Travel and EcoTourism resources and articles, go to: [www.transitionsabroad.com/listings/travel/responsible/resources.shtml](http://www.transitionsabroad.com/listings/travel/responsible/resources.shtml)

**TravelMole** is a UK-based site for travel professionals, with industry news, discussion forums and links to resources. The sustainable travel section contains global news about responsible/sustainable travel events, resources and debates. An e-mail bulletin of sustainable travel news is also available. Contact: Richard Hammond, Editor-in-Chief, 53 The Chase, London SW4 ONP; 011-44-0-20-7622-8738; richard@travelmole.com, [www.travelmole.com/news/sustainable/index.html](http://www.travelmole.com/news/sustainable/index.html)

**World Tourism Forum for Peace and Sustainable Development**, [www.desti-nations.net](http://www.desti-nations.net), aims to change destinies for people, communities, regions and nations through sustainable tourism. With projects and initiatives identified by its global brand, Destinations, the Forum is a permanent and continuous movement supported by organizations and individuals from around the world, united behind a cause: working to develop new concepts and practices for the tourism industry worldwide, that promote:

**Cultural diversity**—Economic and social development, Biodiversity preservation, and Conditions for peace. The Forum is set up to reach those goals through three main strategies: establishing dialogue through a "network of networks"; promoting and disseminating innovative, concrete initiatives, which become illustrative projects; organizing annual summits, where new concepts and results obtained through illustrative projects are explained, analyzed, and disseminated.

**VolunTourism.org** (for a full description, see page 3) ●

# RESPONSIBLE TRAVEL SURVEY 2005

Planeta.com and Transitions Abroad conducted a brief first-time Responsible Travel Survey for independent travelers. The following are some of the results from the survey, which was posted online from November-December 2005. Summaries are based on a total of 79 responses.

## PERSONAL STATUS

Single .....	51.9%
Married .....	27.8%
Significant Other .....	12.7%
Married with Children .....	7.6%

## AGE

45-60 .....	29.1%
25-35 .....	26.6%
15-25 .....	22.8%
35-45 .....	13.9%
60-70 .....	6.3%
70+ .....	1.3%

## DO YOU CONSIDER YOURSELF A RESPONSIBLE TRAVELER?

No .....	3.8%
Yes .....	96.2%

\*Those who responded "yes" were asked to define responsible travel. For a selection of responses, see "In the Words of Travelers" (page 92).

## HAVE YOU VOLUNTEERED OVERSEAS?

No .....	56.4%
Yes .....	43.6%

## DID YOU STUDY ABROAD OR PARTICIPATE IN A FOREIGN EXCHANGE BEFORE THE AGE OF 21?

No .....	57%
Yes .....	43%

## HAVE YOU EVER PARTICIPATED IN A COLLEGE OR UNIVERSITY ALUMNI TOUR?

No .....	92.4%
Yes .....	7.6%

## HOW MANY TRIPS A YEAR DO YOU TAKE?

Frequent Traveler (3+ trips per year on average) .....	48.1%
Annual Traveler (1-2 trips per year on average) .....	44.3%
Infrequent Traveler (less than 1 trip per year) .....	7.6%

## PERCENTAGE OF INTEREST IN TRAVELING TO THE FOLLOWING REGIONS IN THE NEAR FUTURE:

South America .....	42%
Caribbean/Central America/Mexico .....	41%
Asia .....	40%
Middle East .....	36%
Africa .....	35%
Canada .....	30%
Eastern Europe .....	30%
Pacific Islands .....	27%
United States .....	26%
Western Europe .....	24%

On a scale of 1-5 (1 being the least, 5 being the most) please rate the following:

## IT IS IMPORTANT TO ME THAT MY DESTINATION OR TRAVEL PROVIDER PRESERVES ITS NATURAL, HISTORIC, AND CULTURAL SITES AND ATTRACTIONS.

1 .....	0%
2 .....	1%
3 .....	3%
4 .....	18%
5 .....	78%

## MY TRAVEL EXPERIENCE IS BETTER WHEN I HAVE LEARNED AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE ABOUT MY DESTINATION'S CUSTOMS, GEOGRAPHY, AND CULTURE.

1 .....	0%
2 .....	3%
3 .....	4%
4 .....	19%
5 .....	75%

## IT IS IMPORTANT TO ME THAT TRAVEL PROVIDERS AND ACCOMMODATIONS I USE EMPLOY LOCAL RESIDENTS AND SUPPORT THE LOCAL COMMUNITY.

1 .....	3%
2 .....	0%
3 .....	6%
4 .....	32%
5 .....	59%

**IT IS IMPORTANT TO ME THAT MY VISIT TO A DESTINATION HAVE AS LITTLE IMPACT ON THE ENVIRONMENT AS POSSIBLE.**

1 .....	3%
2 .....	3%
3 .....	6%
4 .....	13%
5 .....	76%

**I WOULD BE WILLING TO PAY MORE MONEY TO A TRAVEL PROVIDER OR FOR ACCOMMODATIONS IF I KNEW THEY DID THE FOLLOWING (CHECK ALL THAT APPLY):**

Took measures to reduce their impact on the environment and protect it: .....	93.6%
Employed local people and supported community projects: .....	89.7%
Actively worked to preserve local historic and cultural sites: .....	82.1%
Donate part of their proceeds to charitable organizations: ...	51.3%
**Other .....	21.8%

**\*\*These are some of the "other" responses:**

- Educate tourist on responsible tourism
- Don't grow to accommodate demand over impact on environment
- Encouraged kindness toward animals
- Made security a priority
- Promote adventure sports
- Participate in conservation programs of local organizations
- Allow tourism to happen with the people of the host country not to them. Offered service projects as part of the programs.
- Provided right balance of safety and comfort with ecotourism values
- Promoted sustainable community enterprises

**PERCENTAGE OF INTEREST IN THE FOLLOWING:**

Travel on my own .....	60%
Travel on an independently planned trip with family .....	49%
Business Travel .....	22%
Travel with an organized program .....	7%
Travel on a group tour .....	4%

**IF TRAVELING INDEPENDENTLY, TRAVELERS WOULD PREFER:**

Stay in small-scale accommodations run by local people .....	69.6%
Participate in a homestay with a local family .....	12.7%
Stay in a internationally-known hotel .....	11.4%

**IF TRAVELING WITH A GROUP OR ON PREARRANGED TRAVELS, THE FOLLOWING FACTORS WOULD BE MOST IMPORTANT:**

Respect for workers and human rights .....	65%
Local suppliers/providers and interaction with local people .	64%
Environmental conservation .....	53%

Participation in cultural activities (visiting historic and archeological sites, museums, traditional events, etc.) .....	51%
Cost .....	47%
Volunteering and/or perform community service .....	26%

**ON A SCALE OF 1-5 (1 BEING THE LEAST, 5 BEING THE MOST) PLEASE RATE HOW MUCH YOU USE THE FOLLOWING REFERENCES WHEN SEEKING INFORMATION AND TIPS ON RESPONSIBLE TRAVEL**

**Web**

5 .....	76%
4 .....	18%
3 .....	6%
2 .....	0%
1 .....	0%

**Personal Contacts**

5 .....	63%
4 .....	17%
3 .....	14%
2 .....	5%
1 .....	1%

**Guidebooks**

5 .....	45%
4 .....	29%
3 .....	13%
2 .....	4%
1 .....	9%

**Magazines**

5 .....	13%
4 .....	29%
3 .....	21%
2 .....	17%
1 .....	20%

**Newspapers**

5 .....	8%
4 .....	10%
3 .....	31%
2 .....	18%
1 .....	32%

**Radio**

5 .....	3%
4 .....	0%
3 .....	11%
2 .....	16%
1 .....	71% ●

# IN THE WORDS OF TRAVELERS

what it means to be a responsible traveler...

**The following are a selection of comments from the *Planeta.com* and *Transitions Abroad Responsible Travel Survey*:**

- ▶ Donations to destination conservation groups; Patronage of local (not chain) businesses; Travel in moderate to small size groups; Education on local culture.
- ▶ Being conscious of the social, cultural, political, economic, and environmental climate of where I am traveling; seeking out locally owned businesses (hotels, restaurants, outfitters, retailers); travelling in small groups and mingling with locals; attempting to learn the local language.
- ▶ Minimize negative impacts on environment. Minimize negative impacts on people and culture. Provide economic benefits to locals who need it. Supporting parks, protected areas & conservation.
- ▶ Try to stay in small locally owned hotels, eat at locally-owned places, buy from cooperatives where the option exists. Where the options are available, I choose more "green" hotels. I try to interact with local people to the extent that they are comfortable with interacting with outsiders. Finally, I try to be respectful of cultures and customs, dressing appropriately, not taking pictures of people, etc.
- ▶ Trying to spend my money in places and with people who are practicing tourism in a consciously responsible way, whether it be lodging or services. Sometimes it might mean paying more, but I prefer to spend a little more knowing that the money is more directly benefiting the environment or local populations.
- ▶ Types of activities I undertake and consequences to the environment and people; where my money goes—direct to manufacturer/homestay rather than hotels; try to cut out the middlemen in transactions; disposal of rubbish; mode of transport (rowboats rather than motorized, etc.); who works at places—foreigners/local people, and I am especially interested in women being employed.
- ▶ Pay correct prices; INSIST on ecological treatment of supplies and wastes; good treatment of employees; appropriate use of ecosystem.
- ▶ Tread lightly on natural resources and people resources of places. Tip generously. Use vendors who sell fair trade goods. Use indigenous vendors of services.
- ▶ Rather than only considering my personal growth from travel experiences, I also take into account my "footprint" which may be positive or negative. I am not a voyeuristic traveler, rather, I am active and engaged in the places I travel.
- ▶ Use local transportation. Do not rely on canned tours that show only the tourist sites.
- ▶ Engaged in cultural activities with local people. Buy crafts from local artisans.
- ▶ Destinations and hotels that include environmental management in their practices, more specifically, a responsibility toward waste, coral reef protection, energy, including the local community in tourism.
- ▶ Patronizing tourism providers and visiting destinations where priorities are biodiversity conservation; environmental responsibility; providing economic and development support to local people; conserving culture and uniqueness of place; and educating visitors and locals, alike.
- ▶ Engaging with local communities and culture. Using locally available resources with out depleting them. Employing local people as guides etc.
- ▶ "First, do no harm." (Hippocratic Oath)
- ▶ Buy local goods and use local services, where the profit stays in the country (or in local communities); Visit nature destinations, and, whenever I can I try to promote the importance and advantages of conserving them and community participation in this; Minimize impact (nature & culture—however, zero impact does not exist).
- ▶ Support local services, not international chains. Never use rental cars—utilize public transportation and locally owned taxis. Travel light. Pack out the garbage.
- ▶ When the trip is done is the earth slightly better off? The obvious points include fuel efficiency, recycling, cultural sensitivity, leave no trace, do not judge, local support, sustainability programs in action. Learning ahead of time about the location, customs, and heritage
- ▶ Giving something back; making careful travel supplier choices.
- ▶ An open mind with a willingness to learn from different cultures. The desire to ensure that as much of the money spent on one's trip benefits the local community and economy.
- ▶ Community-based travel: i.e., volunteering with local organizations. Conservationist travel: using public transit, buying food from local grocers and small restaurants, staying at local hostels/guesthouses. Traveling to learn, not indulge. Not being financially stingy with tips, etc., especially when visiting developing areas. Defer to local language and customs.
- ▶ Travel that generates positive environmental, cultural and local economic impacts. ▶

- ▶ Supporting local economy (individuals & small business); preserving or improving local environment; respecting customs & traditions.
- ▶ I visit places that have sustainability and environmental preservation as a high priority. Also, places that promote understanding of indigenous Cultures.
- ▶ Respecting others cultures—not imposing beliefs upon other cultures, being a gracious representative of your host country, respecting the physical and social environment you travel to.
- ▶ Having a basic knowledge of the place you are visiting, understanding your role as a tourist in that place.
- ▶ Small group size; travel off season; stay in locally owned accommodations; use local transport when possible; buy locally; eat the local foods; learn about the local customs and be sensitive to local etiquette, etc.
- ▶ Go to experience the people, culture, customs, language, the way locals live, and experience life rather than to photograph monuments, etc. Go to EXPERIENCE rather than have a guided tour.
- ▶ Leave it as it was.
- ▶ To travel in a way that respects local culture and customs, seeks as much to integrate with local economic levels and benefits local people economically, is careful in how one treats the environment and the natural world, and does not disturb the regular life of local communities.
- ▶ Traveling light, not producing too much waste, refilling water bottles, avoiding big multinationals in terms of hotels.
- ▶ I think that learning about culture from a non-judgmental stance is the most important part of responsible travel.
- ▶ I try to learn as much of the local language [as possible].
- ▶ I am a seasoned traveler. Whenever I travel, it is always on backpacking, stays at homestay facilities, try to learn a bit on their culture and tradition, avoid carrying plastics, etc.
- ▶ Taking account of local communities and their needs: aiming to use tour operators who have a similar philosophy. Following guidelines to have as little environmental impact as possible. Learning about and making connections to a place before traveling there. Making wise economic choices that directly benefit the local communities. Supporting community-based tourism.
- ▶ Travel that seeks to connect with a culture through education and interaction. Travel that aims to improve a situation or right a wrong whether through an organization or on an individual basis. Travel that opens different cultures and peoples to each other without imposing one's values and systems over the other.
- ▶ Working with the people, learning from them, avoiding "touristy" places and experiencing the culture, not exploiting people or the environment by my traveling.
- ▶ Supports conservation / sustainable natural resource management. Wherever possible or relevant local people are active stakeholders in defining the objectives, direction, and limits of tourism in their communities. Tourism facilitates interaction, mutual understanding, and respect between host and guest. The benefits and impacts of tourism are defined and measured holistically (at least social, cultural, environmental, economic).
- ▶ Treating people ethically—the way I would like to be treated. ●

WE THANK THE FOLLOWING ORGANIZATIONS FOR THEIR PARTICIPATION.

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www.thetravelfoundation.org ●

## ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTS OF INTEREST

The following documents are included on the responsible travel handbook CD:

**INSIDER GUIDE: MAKE A DIFFERENCE WHEN YOU TRAVEL //**  
THE TRAVEL FOUNDATION

**INSIDER GUIDE: FOR OVERSEAS STAFF, PLAY YOUR PART //**  
THE TRAVEL FOUNDATION

**GLOBAL CODE OF ETHICS FOR TOURISM //**  
WORLD TOURISM ORGANIZATION AND UNITED NATIONS

**PRO-POOR TOURISM //**  
HAROLD GOODWIN

**RESPONSIBLE TOURISM AND THE MARKET //**  
HAROLD GOODWIN

**RESPONSIBLE TRAVEL SURVEY //**  
ABORIGINAL TOURISM AUSTRALIA