



Andaman Discoveries
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PRESS RELEASE

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From Tsunami Relief to Self Reliance: Community tourism in Thailand recognized by prestigious awards and DEFRA Minister

London, UK

Andaman Discoveries, a grassroots responsible travel group in Thailand, has won the 2008 SEED Award, Travel+Leisure Global Vision Award and is a finalist for the Virgin Holidays Responsible Tourism Award. Hilary Benn, Minister of DEFRA will honor Andaman Discoveries for their contribution to sustainable development.

Tui Chomphusri is a long way from her home on the sunny shores of Thailand's Andaman Coast. The tsunami of December 2004 set in motion an unusual chain of events that culminates in her visit to London this week. Initially working in disaster relief, Tui inspired villagers to develop alternative forms of income. These efforts spawned an innovative type of tourism that is now garnering international awards." When I arrived to help, I thought I was going to help clean up for a few weeks, and then I would go home again. What I found was something different – a chance to be a part of long-term development. Our efforts grew from simple fresh food delivery into programs that are helping people to build a better future. After all the hard work, I am finally able to take a deep breath and know that we are making a difference," Tui said.

All activities such as eco-tours, handicraft workshops, and volunteering were developed in collaboration with the villagers. In the last two years, community tourism has generated over \$30,000 USD income for villagers, while supporting a youth centre, orchid conservation, recycling, and many other community development projects. A compulsory 20% donation from visitor and volunteers ensures every member of the village benefits, not just those who interact with visitors. "Many of our visitors are British, so I feel honored to be in London," said Tui, "and I hope that the travel industry can learn from our example - that responsible tourism should make a real difference in people's lives."

In recognition of their unique approach, Andaman Discoveries recently received a number of accolades:

- Winner - 2008 Travel + Leisure Global Vision Award
- Winner - 2008, SEED Award for Entrepreneurship in Sustainable Development
- Finalist - 2008, Virgin Holiday Responsible Tourism Awards
- Finalist - 2008 and 2007, Wild Asia Tourism Awards

"Andaman Discoveries recognizes that the best custodians of Cultural Heritage are the people who make it. They have worked with communities, to empower them, create a sense of place, identify what villagers see as important."
Justin Francis, Director of Responsibletravel.com



The capstone of Andaman Discoveries' recent achievements has been an invitation to meet with the Right Honourable Hilary Benn, Minister of the Department of Environment, Food & Rural Affairs. **DEFRA is the UK's leading authority on Sustainable Development and Climate Change.**

Concurrently, the **SEED Initiative is sponsoring Andaman Discoveries presence World Travel Market**, the largest event of its kind.

When and Where

Andaman Discoveries staff will be available for interviews from November 11-13 at the World Travel Market. The Responsible Tourism Awards Ceremony will take place at 10:00 on November 12. Trade and press can contact Andaman Discoveries during the WTM at +44 7881 492 266

Links for the Media

[Andaman Discoveries](#)
[The Seed Initiative](#)
[Travel + Leisure Global Vision Award](#)
[Responsible Tourism Awards](#)
[Wild Asia](#)

Media Team

For more information and/or to set up interviews please contact:

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About Andaman Discoveries

Andaman Discoveries, a leader in sustainable travel and development in Thailand, allows visitors and volunteers to directly support community education, village-led conservation, and cultural empowerment. The organization grew from an NGO with a strong track record of work in Thailand's tsunami-hit communities.

Recent Awards

WINNER - 2008 Travel + Leisure Global Vision Award, recognizes "progressive, forward-thinking visionaries who are setting new travel and tourism standards in areas such as cultural preservation and ecological conservation." Judges included economist Dr. Joseph Stiglitz, World Monuments Fund president Bonnie Burnham and Adam Werbach, CEO of Saatchi & Saatchi.

WINNER - 2008, SEED Award for Entrepreneurship in Sustainable Development, founded by IUCN, UNEP and UNDP, is focused on locally-driven, entrepreneurial partnerships in developing countries. Andaman Discoveries was chosen from 400 applications from over 100 countries worldwide.

NOMINEE - 2008, Virgin Holiday Responsible Tourism Awards, the biggest of its kind in the world, celebrate tourism ventures that make a positive contribution to conservation and the economies of local communities whilst minimizing any negative impacts of tourism. (Andaman Discoveries was the 2007 WINNER in the preservation of cultural heritage category)

FINALIST - 2008 and 2007, Wild Asia, Responsible Tourism Awards, act as an inspiration to others to implement responsible practices for benefit of communities and their natural resources.



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