

Digital Traveler ~ Asia Pacific

October 2006



Editors:

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Digital Traveler ~ Asia Pacific newsletter is part of TIES' initiatives to help build a stronger communication network among individuals and organizations involved with and interested in ecotourism and sustainable tourism in the Asia Pacific region. This free bimonthly e-newsletter is designed to increase communications and networking, and help stimulate critical discussions and debates between TIES and our members, partners and friends in the region. Back issues of the *Digital Traveler ~ Asia Pacific* are available at www.ecotourism.org along with other TIES newsletters.

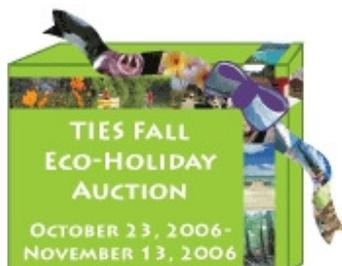


TIES is a non-profit membership organization. As the largest and oldest ecotourism organization in the world, we are dedicated to generating and disseminating information about ecotourism, which is defined as *"responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the well-being of local people"* (TIES, 1990). TIES has members in over 90 countries and serves as an umbrella organization for 40 plus national and regional ecotourism associations around the world. Visit our website (www.ecotourism.org) and if you're not already a member, please join!

HIGHLIGHTS

- **Special Feature:** The October 2006 issue of the *Digital Traveler ~ Asia Pacific* features **voluntourism** in the Asia Pacific region. The Asia Pacific region, particularly in the wake of the 2004 tsunami and other natural disasters, has seen an increasing number of travelers and tourism professionals from all over the world participating in volunteer activities. Voluntourism is a new and exciting way to integrate voluntary service and education with travel and tourism. In this issue, we will feature voluntourism programs that are particularly relevant to the ecotourism community in the Asia Pacific region. For more information on this topic and to learn about travel-related volunteering opportunities, see the *Voluntourism in Asia Pacific* section (pages 2-5).
- **TIES New Website:** Check out our brand-new website at www.ecotourism.org and enjoy many new features. We welcome your feedback on the new design and functions of the website. Please send your comments and questions to webmaster@ecotourism.org
- **TIES Events Updates:** There will be many opportunities this winter and in the coming year for TIES members and friends around the world to participate in our conferences and other events. See the TIES News & Updates section for more information (page 8)

TIES Fall Online Auction



Don't miss our Fall Online Eco-Holiday Auction this fall running from **October 23 - November 13!**

Auction items include - **Voluntourism in the Philippines** with CCC (Coral Cay Conservation), **Organic Homestay in Kerala, India** with Hiliya Resort, and more!

To access the auction site, go to www.ecotourism.org and click on the green gift box.

VOLUNTOURISM

Why Travel & Volunteer?

Emerging destinations and communities in developing countries are in an increasing need for opportunities to develop skills and train professionals to ensure environmental and financial sustainability of tourism activities. Voluntourism, which offers travelers an opportunity to volunteer their skills to help communities in their favorite destination, is an innovative approach to addressing the issues of a shortage of skilled tourism practitioners, limited financial resources and limited access to education and training opportunities in emerging tourism regions. The following articles are some examples of amazing voluntourism experiences in the Asia Pacific region.

Voluntourism Explained

by Jason Rolan, Voluntourism Director
North by North East Travel Services (Thailand/Lao PDR)

When presenting my business card to colleagues in the travel industry, I'm often asked, "Voluntourism? What's that?"

Simply, it is tourism activities comprising of varying degrees of volunteering. North by North East (NXNE) sees it as a wonderful opportunity to develop meaningful contact with people, bridging the cultural gap between "us" and "them" and to bringing us closer to a global "we."

NXNE was founded on the philosophy that meaningful cultural exchange and respect are requisite to a great travel experience. Of all our products and community projects, the one that provides the most unique and powerful cultural exchange is voluntourism. When implemented correctly, a magical and very personal exchange positively changes and enhances lives.



Our voluntourism projects vary from several days to several weeks and focus on infrastructure or educational needs of a rural community. For example, earlier this year we facilitated a group of 35 Canadian high school students to construct a school in a remote rural area of northern Lao PDR. The students raised funds to cover the travel and construction costs and even to bring along a much needed team of dentists. As there are no roads in the region, the volunteers had to travel by boat along the rivers of the mountainous northern Lao to arrive at the beautifully remote village setting. While both the Canadians and Laotians were shy at first, they quickly began working together and started sharing laughter through mini-language lessons.

The bonds of friendship that developed from living and working together smoothed the cultural exchange. On the last day of the project, when the hard work of building the school was complete, the hardest part was still to come - saying goodbye to new friends.

Successful projects such as the above are logistically easy to set up. Difficulties arise in determining local community needs, which requires sensitivity and skill. The key is keeping it meaningful for those who are to host the project. Failing to do so can result in volunteers projecting perceived needs, instead of meeting actual needs.



Voluntourists come from all walks of life and also have needs. We have had school groups volunteering as enrichment to their classroom learning. Sometimes, we facilitate groups of seniors who want to share their experiences and resources with orphanages. Extremely remote villages in central Laos have benefited from the care and medical training of US and British paramedics and dentists hiking into rugged regions. Success therefore depends not only on determining the actual needs of the local community but matching that with the capacity of the volunteers.

Is voluntourism the beginning of the end for “standard” tourism? Certainly not! Many volunteers do choose to participate in sightseeing and other tourist activities while participating in voluntourism programs, which are typically designed to meet volunteers work abilities and travel preferences.

What is voluntourism - it is a wonderful and growing segment of the travel industry that is making the world smaller. We are reminded that when we give of ourselves to strangers, it makes them seem not so strange anymore.



Photos by NXNE

Jason Rolan is Director of Volunteer Programs and Lao Country Manager. North by North East (www.north-by-north-east.com) is specialty tour operator dedicated to responsible tourism, community development and voluntourism.

Further Readings:

- Jenni Lukac, “Helper’s High – The Psychological Benefits of Volunteer Tourism”: www.north-by-north-east.com/articles/06_06_2.asp
- Erin Pedersen, “Changing Laos, Changing Myself”: www.north-by-north-east.com/articles/05_06_1.asp
- NXNE, “What is Voluntourism?” www.north-by-north-east.com/articles/08_05_1.asp

Voluntourism in Southern Thailand: Community-Based Tourism in Action

By Kelly May, CTB Project Manager
North Andaman Tsunami Relief (NATR) / Andaman Discoveries

There’s nothing more rewarding than selflessly helping others. Combine this with the chance to travel to exotic destinations off the beaten tourist track and you have the potential for a memorable trip. “Volun-touring,” as it has become known in the tourist industry, is an ideal way to gain authentic experience and engage with the local people. It also gives you the chance to give back to the communities you visit, much more than you can by simply taking photographs or buying souvenirs. Voluntourism also has the potential to cater to the increasing demand of the modern-day traveler for unique experiences. Voluntourism, if managed well, therefore, can satisfy the needs of both the local community members and the travelers.

Customized voluntourism trips, such as those organized by **Andaman Discoveries** in Southern Thailand, allow socially and environmentally conscious travelers to actively engage in local community development and empowerment processes. Past projects by Andaman Discoveries have included teaching English, hospitality training with homestay host families, light construction work, planting community gardens, cleaning activities on beaches, and mangrove forest restoration.

Appropriate volunteer placement and a close working relationship with villagers are essential for the success of community-led voluntourism projects.

“The local communities were openly welcoming and were pleased to involve me in their community,” says Helena, a recent volunteer. “I believe this positive reception was a direct result of the work ethic of Andaman Discoveries to empower the local people to develop sustainable projects that fit with their lifestyle and culture.”

Andaman Discoveries is committed to the long-term rehabilitation of the North Andaman region through integrated projects and sustainable tourism development, and is encouraging interested travelers to visit the region and participate in community-based tourism. Having community-based tourism as a sustainable means of livelihood reduces the need for villagers to leave the village in search of work in larger cities and the demands on the surrounding natural resources, allowing for environmental conservation.

A contribution to the village Community Fund is included in each of the Andaman Discoveries trips, ensuring that all villagers benefit from having volunteers in their community, not only those directly engaged in tourism programs.

Volunteering is not just for students. People of all ages and backgrounds have something to offer that can have positive impacts on communities. Even being a ‘pilot’ tourist with in villages developing community-based tourism can have real empowering results for the guides and homestay host families, as they are given the chance to put into action the skills they have learnt in training workshops.

Andaman Discoveries (www.andamandiscoveries.com) is part of North Andaman Tsunami Relief (NATR)’s ongoing long-term development projects in the tsunami-impacted communities in the North Andaman region. If you are interested in being a volunteer or visiting this exceptional region, please contact Andaman Discoveries at relieffund@inet.co.th or visit www.northandamantsunamirelief.com to start planning your trip.

Testimonials:



“Living with the Thai families was a wonderful experience of the true Thai lifestyle. Due to the nature of the Community-based Tourism supported in village by Andaman Discoveries, you are able to truly appreciate the way the islanders live and give something worthwhile back to the village.”
Ko, Ban Talae Nok Village, July 2006



“Being a volun-tourist, you live the villagers’ lives. That’s the allure of a voluntourism program: the interaction, the sense of inclusion. These are the souvenirs that we bring back with us - these stories, not plastic trinkets or T-shirts.”
Jarad, Pak Triam Village, February 2006



“Being a volun-tourist is the best experience I have ever had. I cherished every moment and every interaction. The island is beautiful and provides the perfect opportunity to see the ‘Real Thailand’.”
Sarah, Tung Nang Dam Village, August 2006

“I never felt like I was an imposing Westerner during my time in village. The villagers organized and managed the project and welcomed the volunteers into their homes with genuine kindness. Volun-touring is a great way to spend time in Thailand instead of watching movies on Khao Sarn Road.”
Kerry, Tung Nang Dam Village, August, 2006



Photos by Andaman Discoveries

INFO-Nepal

**By Naresh Asim, Director
 INFO Nepal**



The Inside Nepal Friendship Organization (INFO) is a non-profit organization made up of a group of volunteers working for the well being of the Nepali community.



The INFO volunteer programs aim to offer meaningful volunteer opportunities for international volunteers and to seek sustainable solutions for education, health, conservation, and development issues through volunteering through community-orientated activities where the efforts of our volunteers go directly to the poor people and their communities.



INFO volunteers participate in a variety of educational and community aid programs. This will give you a chance to make an important contribution to the people of Nepal and while doing so gain an in depth experience of the country and its culture. INFO is looking for volunteers to work for the following programs: community development, teaching English, environmental projects, cultural exchange, and orphanages. INFO also offers customized programs based on various interest and needs of the volunteers.

INFO volunteers have opportunities to participate in activities such as trekking in the Himalayas, white water rafting, jungle safaris and homestays.

In the past five years, INFO has had over 475 volunteers, and our staff includes experienced volunteers trained in the Peace Corp (US), UK SPW, GVN and other programs.

For more information about INFO-Nepal, please see www.infonepal.org or contact: Naresh Asim, Director, INFO Nepal at info@infonepal.org, or Tel: +977 01 4700210/Fax: +977 01 4701356.



Photos by INFO Nepal

PATA Sustainable Tourism Committee: Tourism Volunteers in Asia Pacific

The Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA)'s Sustainable Tourism Committee explains the goals and objectives of voluntourism as the following:

A PATA-endorsed Tourism Volunteers project would:

- Support travel & tourism in destinations across the Asia Pacific region
- Offer sustainable income opportunities for local residents
- Deliver social benefits to communities, environments, and people throughout the region
- Challenge corporations to expand their corporate social responsibility to travel-related activities
- Extend social enterprise opportunities as an income-generating strategy or venture for nonprofit organizations on a global level
- Reach current and non-traditional travel audiences with products and services that reflect connection to personal values and the desire to act with a purpose

In line with PATA's mission, the development of a Tourism Volunteer Program will enhance the growth, value and quality of Pacific Asia travel and tourism for the benefit of its membership, by ensuring:

- Opportunities for developing regions throughout the Asia Pacific to source skilled tourism personnel who provide advice and/or undertake training for specific projects in need;
- Access for skilled tourism workers seeking sponsored personal and professional development opportunities through volunteering, to short or long term projects in areas of need;
- Communication of PATA's commitment to sustainable tourism to, and adoption by volunteers and clients.
- Fostering of cross cultural relationships and international understanding within Pacific Asian tourism.

The discussion paper "Tourism Volunteers in Asia Pacific," which includes the above and more, is available for download at www.pata.org/patasite/index.php?id=1563.

ASIA PACIFIC ECOTOURISM NEWS AND UPDATES

South Asia Earthquake - One Year On

The devastating earthquake of October 8, 2005 in South Asia killed over 73,000 people and left up to 3 million homeless. The tragedy was followed by a severe winter, which froze the mountains, where many of the victims lived without basic food or shelter. According to Mr. Agha Iqar Haroon, President of Ecotourism Society of Pakistan (ESP), many casualties caused by the earthquake in the mountain areas were a result of ill-planned and shoddy building construction that did not follow the basic principles of sound mountain area construction. The importance of sustainable development of mountain areas is one of the lessons that not only those affected by the 2005 South Asia Earthquake, but also Nepal and other small mountainous countries around the world must learn from the devastating experience. The support from the international community helped avert much of the second wave of deaths from severe malnutrition or outbreak of epidemics, which many had feared would be brought by the severe winter of the mountains. A year after the earthquake, the focus of relief and efforts has shifted to long-term reconstruction and rebuilding of the affected communities: securing safe drinking water, reuniting families and restoring their lives, providing long-term support for farmers, and rebuilding schools. Socially and environmentally sustainable development of tourism would greatly help those affected by the earthquake by providing a source of income, educating them about the local environment, and instilling pride in their communities. Together with our partners and friends in South Asia, TIES continues to send the message to the ecotourism community around the world: Keep traveling - responsibly.

Resources

Ecotourism Society Pakistan: www.ecotourism.org.pk

World Bank Website on Earthquake Reconstruction: www.worldbank.org/pakistanearthquake

Asia Pacific Mountain Network: www.mountainforum.org/rn/apmn.cfm

Best of Asia Pacific Ecotourism Experiences Highlighted in National Geographic Traveler

The October 2006 Special Edition of the *National Geographic Traveler* magazine highlights 50 “Tours of a Lifetime” from around the world. We are delighted to see that the list includes many of our favorite destinations in Asia Pacific, including: Cambodia, Vietnam, India, New Zealand, Fiji, Sri Lanka, the Philippines, China, Australia, and Mongolia.

The following are some of the companies and organizations featured in the magazine:

Seacology: www.seacology.org

Seacology is a nonprofit, nongovernmental organization (NGO) with the sole and unique purpose of preserving the environments and cultures of islands throughout the globe. Seacology expeditions bring supporters face-to-face with the island habitats and communities. Combining land- and sea-based activities such as scuba diving, snorkeling, hiking and kayaking with visits to Seacology project sites, these trips provide participants with one-of-a-kind experience of travel adventures. For more information, email islands@seacology.org or call +1 510-559-3505.

Asia Transpacific Journeys: www.asiatranspacific.com

Offering in-depth regional experiences through private journeys to Asia and the Pacific, Asia Transpacific Journeys goes beyond the ordinary to promote cross-cultural understanding, encourages environmental sustainability, and fulfills long-held personal dreams. For more information email Travel@AsiaTranspacific.com or call + 1-800-642-2742

Go Differently: www.godifferently.com

Go Differently is a UK-based ethical tour operation specializing in small group and tailor-made trips, as well as volunteering/voluntourism itineraries primarily in Southeast Asia (Thailand, Cambodia, India, Laos, Bhutan, and Indonesia). Go Differently offers unique community-based tourism experience that combine cultural exchange and volunteering programs, such as homestays in tsunami-affected villages on Thailand’s North Andaman coast, and a tailor-made voluntourism tour in Southern Thailand.

Intrepid Travel: www.intrepidtravel.com

Working with reputable local partners in various parts of the world, Intrepid offers unique travel experiences exploring the world’s most amazing places, discovering real people, real cultures and having incredible real life experiences along the way. a variety of travel styles, travelers. For more information on Intrepid’s Responsible Travel Team, see www.intrepidtravel.com/about/allabout/rt/.

Myths and Mountains: www.mythsandmountains.com

Myths and Mountains provides unique educational adventure travel journeys to destinations in Asia, Southeast Asia and South America through culturally focused travel packages designed to take you inside a country’s culture and meet people. Myths and Mountains has also served as the incubator for the Rural Education and Development (READ) program (www.readnepal.org), empowering communities by increasing literacy and access to education.

Nomadic Expeditions: www.nomadicexpeditions.com

Committed to protecting natural and cultural heritage of the destinations, Nomadic Journeys offers an unmatched collection of expeditions showcasing natural and cultural wonders of Mongolia, ranging from easy walking and behind-the-scenes museum visits to camel trekking in the Gobi and whitewater canoeing through the Altai Mountains.

To read more about these and other *Tours of a Lifetime*, or to order a copy of the magazine, please go to: www.nationalgeographic.com/traveler/features/tours0610/list.html

Voluntourists without Borders Receives the SKAL Ecotourism Award

The 5th Annual Skål International Ecotourism Awards were presented at the 67th Skål World Congress held in Pattaya, Thailand, on October 16. Founded in 1934, Skål International is the world’s largest organization of travel and tourism professionals. Skål International initiated an ecotourism awards program in 2002, to encourage the conservation of the environment and help to promote the development of responsible and sustainable tourism.

Skål Ecotourism Awards highlight best practices in ecotourism around the world, with an emphasis on the importance of the interaction of the physical, cultural and social environment, the traveler’s responsibility and the need for active community participation. The primary criteria for the evaluation include contribution to the conservation of nature and cultural heritage, community involvement, educational features, business viability and innovation.

This year, Skål International received 51 entries from 28 countries (21 from Asia Pacific, 15 from Americas, eight from Europe, and seven from Africa).

Voluntourists without Borders in Thailand (www.voluntourists-without-borders.com) is the winner of the 2006 Skål Ecotourism Award, in the Tour Operators and Travel Agents category. For more information about the winners, see: www.skala.org/html/ecotourism/eco.asp?idioma=1

Source: www.travelwirenews.com/cgi-script/csArticles/articles/000099/009900.htm

CERTIFICATION

What is Certification?

Certification is a way of ensuring that a business, product, or service meets certain standards. It awards a logo to those that, based on an audit or assessment, meet or exceed a set of specific baseline criteria. Today, certification is viewed as an important tool for distinguishing genuine ecotourism or sustainable tourism companies, products, or services from those that are simply using “green” language to market themselves.

In the decade between the United Nations’ Earth Summit in 1992 and the International Year of Ecotourism in 2002, more than 60 “green” certification programs were developed, mostly in Europe. Today, there are close to 80 “green” tourism certification programs, with new programs being developed in countries in Latin America, Asia, and to a lesser extent Africa. Most are nationally-based and the majority are for accommodations. However, increasingly programs have been developed for other parts of the tourism industry: parks, beaches, guides, tour operators, transportation, destinations, etc.

For more information about certification, case studies and related articles, please go to:
www.ecotourism.org/webmodules/webarticlesnet/templates/eco_template.aspx?articleid=46&zoneid=8

Guides of Australia: Guiding Organisations Australia (GOA)’s National Tour Guide Accreditation



Guides of Australia, a national tour guide accreditation program to provide a benchmark for all tour guides in all sectors of the industry in Australia, was released in June 2006 by the Guiding Organisations Australia (GOA) (www.goa.org.au).

Guides of Australia ensures best practice in services to tourists visiting Australia, and provides visitors with an assurance that a guide has met specific standards and has a commitment to the best practice standards outlined in the Australian Tour Guides’ Code of Guiding Practice (www.goa.org.au/default.asp?d=35589). The accreditation is suitable for tour guides in all sectors of the tourism industry and encourages professional development and promotes training in all relevant skills.

Accreditation components link to the National Tourism Training Package and involve a tour evaluation and employer references. The Application Kit with all documentation for application, a Fact Sheet and a recent Media Release are available for download at: www.goa.org.au/default.asp?d=121893

Established in 2003, GOA serves as an umbrella body for individual guiding organizations and associations throughout Australia. GOA has a long-term commitment to identifying required standards, encouraging training, promoting best practice and reducing unethical guiding practices. Dr. Alice Crabtree, TIES Asia Pacific Director, was the Inaugural President of GOA. For more information, please see the GOA website or email goa@goa.org.au.

NOTES: We would like to thank Mr. Rick Murray, Manager of Savannah Guides, for providing information on the Guides of Australia program. Savannah Guides is a member of GOA. Please see the TRAINING AND EDUCATION section below for information on Savannah Guide.

TIES NEWS

Global Ecotourism Conference 2007 Updates



www.ecotourismglobalconference.org

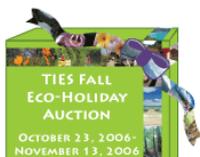
We are pleased to announce and invite you to the preparatory regional meetings which will be held in Australia, Malaysia and Costa Rica in October and November. Thanks to the help of our partner organizations, these international meetings will unite many ecotourism stakeholders to begin discussions which we will address in the Global Ecotourism Conference 2007.

International Meeting for Ecotourism Associations (October 29-30, Townsville, Australia): Hosted by Ecotourism Australia and TIES, the meeting for national ecotourism associations will take place in conjunction with **Ecotourism Australia's annual conference in Townsville (Oct 30 - Nov 3)**. For more information about the conference, please visit: www.ecotourism.org.au/conference. Both Lone Lamark of Ecotourism Norway and Ayako Ezaki, TIES Asia Pacific Coordinator, will be participating in the Townsville meeting to ensure feedback into the Oslo conference.

International Ecotourism Forum: "New challenges in Ecotourism" (November 10 - 11, Turrialba, Costa Rica): Hosted by CANAECO and TIES, the Forum will address important topics in ecotourism including carbon emissions, ecolodges, scientific studies in ecotourism, social and corporate responsibility, and agroecotourism, through a series of roundtable and small group discussions. A number of TIES Board and staff members - including Kelly Bricker, Chair of TIES Board, and Martha Honey, TIES Executive Director, will be participating in the Forum. To request an electronic registration form and a copy of the program, please email: mikael@ecotourism.org

Asia Pacific Ecotourism Conference (APECO) 2006 (November 2-5, Taman Negara National Park, Malaysia): In partnership with the Malaysian Association of Tour and Travel Agents (MATTA), TIES is organizing a regional preparatory meeting at the upcoming Asia Pacific Ecotourism Conference. The results of APECO 2006 will be brought to Oslo through an official report, with specific recommendations for the Oslo conference organizers, and through delegation. Please see www.apeco2006.com for more information on APECO 2006.

TIES Fall Online Auction



We welcome you to participate in the **TIES Fall Online Eco-Holiday Auction** taking place at www.cmarket.com/catalog/landingPage.do?vhost=ecotourismauction from **October 23 - November 13, 2006!** Featuring leading ecotourism experiences from around the world, our Fall Online Eco-Holiday Auction promises to quench any traveler's thirst for discovery and will offer a great alternative to the traditional holiday giving common at the end of the year. Online bidding begins on October 23 (12:00am Eastern Daylight Saving time).

Good ecotourism comes in all forms and price ranges, covers all geographic regions, and encompasses a wide range of activities. The vast majority of trip donors are TIES members who have signed a Code of Conduct stating that they follow the guidelines of responsible ecotourism travel. All these companies demonstrate a commitment to socially and environmentally sound practices and outstanding service.

Auction items include the following amazing trips in Asia Pacific - "Explorer Natural and Cultural Wonders of Micronesia" (Kosrae Village Ecolodge), "Adventure in Nepal" (Dream Nepal Travels and Tours), "Organic Homestay in Kerala, India" (Hiliya Resort), and "Voluntourism in the Philippines" (Coral Cay Conservation).

This auction follows the successful pilot online auction we ran in conjunction with our annual Celebration of Ecotourism and Eco-Holiday Auction this spring (www.ecotourismgala.org).

*Please contact our Special Events Director Courtney Baggett (events@ecotourism.org) if you have questions about the fall auction or wish to donate. The donation deadline is **Wednesday, September 27, 2006**.*

FEATURED DESTINATION

Putting Communities at the Center of Ecotourism Development in Lao PDR

By Steven Schipani, Team Leader
Mekong Tourism Development Project, Lao PDR



With nearly half the country covered in dense monsoon forest, 49 officially recognized ethnic groups, two UNESCO World Heritage Sites and 13% of its land set aside in a network of 20 National Protected Areas, Lao PDR has the resources to become one of the top ecotourism destinations in Asia. In 2005, Lao PDR welcomed over 1 million international tourists. More than half say they came to experience the country's rich cultural and natural heritage. In an effort to ensure that ecotourism benefit the environment, traditional culture, and make meaningful contributions to poverty alleviation, the Lao Government, with technical assistance from SNV, a Dutch NGO, implemented its National Ecotourism Strategy and Action Plan in 2005

The strategy is centered on empowering local people to better understand, develop, operate and monitor ecotourism destinations and services in National Protected Areas. In Laos, since the boundaries of protected areas were drawn long after indigenous people were already living there, government policy supports for local people's sustainable use of natural resources - including ecotourism- on ancestral lands, even if they fall inside a National Protected Area.

The country's first successful example of how to use ecotourism as an alternative livelihood strategy and to assist with environmental conservation in a protected area was conceived and tested by the UNESCO-LNTA Nam Ha Ecotourism Project.



This ongoing project has been awarded a British Airways Tourism for Tomorrow Award and the UN Development Award for Poverty Alleviation in Lao PDR. Shortly after the Nam Ha Project commenced in 1999, a number of international organizations also joined the government's efforts to support community-based ecotourism projects throughout the country.

Part of the step-by-step development process practiced at the community level involves baseline heritage resource and socio-economic surveys, ecotourism seminars, guide training, gender and ethnic minority participation programs, development of educational materials and the construction of small-scale support infrastructure such as information centers, markets, river piers and sanitation.

Hospitality management training, continuing foreign language training, handicraft marketing seminars and environmental and socio-economic monitoring follow. The Lao government and its main development partners such as ADB, UNESCO, SNV, WWF, and the EU, work closely with the private sector on designing tour programs, negotiating contractual agreements between communities and tour companies, marketing and promotion, and continuing education for tour guides. A strong component of all programs involves the generation of funds for protected area management. Now that a number successful pilot programmes have been put in place and produced good results across the "triple bottom line," private sector investors are stepping in to develop ecologically sensitive accommodations, tour programs and launch ecotourism support services.



Though off to a good start, many challenges still remain. The illegal wildlife trade, dwindling forest cover, illegal trade in antiquities, weak implementation of zoning and land use plans and a critically under-funded and under-staffed Protected Area Management system threatens to undermine the resources that make the country so attractive to ecotourists. *For more information about Lao ecotourism opportunities or to download the Lao PDR's National Ecotourism Strategy and Action Plan, visit www.ecotourismlaos.com*

Photos by Ecotourism Laos

JOBS & VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Swalanka Foundation (Sri Lanka)



Organization: Established in 1993, Sewalanka Foundation (www.sewalanka.org) is a non-governmental organization working to address the needs of disadvantaged communities in Sri Lanka. Sewalanka has been involved in communities affected by conflict and war, as well as the 2004 tsunami, providing humanitarian relief and facilitating the transition to rehabilitation and long-term development through community-centered development process.

A diverse team of 700-plus professionals, Sewalanka works in 20 districts throughout the country. Sewalanka recently signed a 3 year partnership agreement with an Italian NGO to develop sustainable tourism projects in the Ampara, Kandy and Badulla districts. Sewalanka's current projects include sustainable tourism projects in the Sinharaja Rainforest area, one of the world's last low land rainforests and around the UNESCO World Heritage Site and in Unawatuna. Sewalanka Foundation has worked closely with the Sri Lanka Ecotourism Foundation (SLEF) to develop community-based ecotourism projects in Sri Lanka.

Job Description - Tourism Development Advisor

Responsibilities:

- Developing and implementing a national level community based tourism programme to bring alternative tool for income generation to rural communities in post-tsunami Sri Lanka
- Working with local staff to develop and implement initiatives including developing home stays, guide training programmes, and tourism association capacity building.
- Advising district-level staff on implementation and liaise with donors and other stakeholders in the private sector.
- Conducting marketing and business development programs on a local, national and international level on behalf of participating local communities.

Qualifications:

- Preference will be given to applicants holding a graduate degree and/or relevant work experience abroad.
- Applicants should possess strong skills in the following areas: *Strategic planning, project planning and implementation, budget development, business development, marketing, strong English written and verbal communication skill, ability to interact with high level stakeholders in government, NGO and private sector.*

Sewalanka Foundation seeks an expatriate volunteer for a one year (renewable) placement for the above position. The Advisor is based at Sewalanka Headquarters in Colombo, but regular visits to project sites are expected. Return airfare, a stipend comparable to local salary, mobile phone (local calls only), accommodation and transportation will be provided. For more information, please see: www.sewalanka.org/tourism.htm or contact **Thomas Ramsson**, Tourism Development Advisor at Sustainabletourism@sewalanka.org or Tel: +011 254 5362-5/Fax: +011 254 5166.

ROSE (India)

Organization: Rural Organisation for Social Elevation (ROSE) (www.rosekanda.info) was founded in 1981 by a small group from the Kanda community as a non profit making charitable organization. ROSE's initial aim was to try and improve the plight of the rural poor by means of education, good environmental practice and raising social awareness. Since that date, the activities of ROSE have expanded into the fields of volunteer tourism, environmental and agricultural work, community and health care, sanitation and income generation schemes.

Ecotourism at ROSE: ROSE defines ecotourism as "*people-centred, small scale, community-led tourism that causes minimum negative side effects.*" Recognizing the social and environmental benefits of ecotourism to the host and guest communities with high regard for environment and conservation, ROSE undertakes various eco-friendly and socially responsible projects using ecotourism and sustainable travel as a tool for community empowerment.

Volunteer with ROSE: To apply to become a ROSE volunteer, contact Jeevan Lal Verma at: (Mail) Vill.-Sonargaon P.O. Kanda, Bageshwar, Uttaranchal, 263 631 India or (Phone) +59 63 24 10 81. The application form is available online through www.rosekanda.info/volunteer.htm (see the 'Applying to ROSE' section on the side menu).

ROSE is the winner of the 2005 First Choice Responsible Tourism Award - Best Volunteering Programme (www.responsibletravel.com/Copy/Copy900782.htm).

TRAINING & EDUCATION

The 40th Savannah Guides School

“Climbing the Peak of Tour Guiding: Best Practice and Professional Development”
October 27-30, 2006, Townsville, Australia



Savannah Guides (www.savannah-guides.com.au) is organizing the 40th Savannah Guides School, to be held in Townsville, Australia, in conjunction with Ecotourism Australia's International Conference (October 30 - November 3) (See www.ecotourism.org.au for more information). The School will focus on tour guiding practices, and offer numerous workshops to build the skills of new and experienced guides. The majority of the School will be field-based, showcasing the areas of natural attributes. Workshop presenters include local experts and Savannah Guides members, and there will be elements for both guides and business managers.

For more information on the Savannah Guides School, please go to www.savannah-guides.com.au/page6.html (brochure and registration form available for download) or contact Rick Murray, Manager, Savannah Guides, at info@savannah-guides.com.au or phone: 08 8985 3890.

Savannah Guides is a network of professional tour guides with a collective in-depth knowledge of the natural and cultural assets of Northern Australia. As a non-profit organization, Savannah Guides has enterprise and individual members, and works with many of Australia's leading tourism, environmental and community organizations. Savannah Guides is a member of the Guiding Organizations Australia (GOA). For more information on GOA and its programs, please see the CERTIFICATION section.

New Publication on Indigenous Ecotourism

CABI Publishing (www.cabi-publishing.org) presents: *Indigenous Ecotourism: Sustainable Development and Management* by Dr. Heather Zeppel, James Cook University, Cairns, Australia.

Drawing on case studies from the Pacific Islands, Africa, Latin America and Southeast Asia, this book examines ecotourism enterprises controlled by indigenous people in tribal reserves or protected areas. It compares indigenous ecotourism in developed and developing countries and covers cultural ecotours, ecolodges and bungalows, hunting and fishing tours, cultural attractions and other nature-based facilities or services. The book reviews indigenous ecotourism as a special type of nature-based tourism and examines the conservation and community benefits of indigenous-owned and operated ecotourism businesses. It concludes by analysing prospects for sustainable development of indigenous ecotourism and the growing links between biodiversity conservation, ecotourism and indigenous rights.

Main Contents: The Context of Indigenous Ecotourism, The Pacific Islands: Village-Based Ecotourism in Community Rainforests, Latin America: Rainforest Ecotourism, Andes Mountains and Indian Territories, East Africa: Wildlife and Forest Ecotourism, the Maasai and Community Lands, Southern Africa: Ecotourism on Wildlife Conservancies and Communal Lands, West Africa: Community-Based Ecotourism in Forest Areas, Southeast Asia: Forest and Mountain Ecotourism, Hilltribes and Island Nations, Sustainable Development and Management of Indigenous Ecotourism

For more information, see www.cabi-publishing.org/bookshop/BookDisplay.asp?SubjectArea=&Subject=&PID=1976 or contact Dr. Zeppel at: heather.zeppel@jcu.edu.au.

Travelers' Philanthropy www.travelersphilanthropy.org

Throughout the world, a new source of international development aid called "Travelers' Philanthropy" is evolving. Civic-minded travelers and travel businesses are giving *time, talent and treasure* to further the well-being of the host communities they visit. This emerging voluntary movement empowers communities by providing jobs, skills, business and home ownership, and lasting improvements in health care, education, and environmental stewardship.



UPCOMING EVENTS

Asia Pacific Ecotourism Conference (APECO) 2006

Taman Negara National Park, Malaysia
November 2-5, 2006

The Malaysian Association of Tour & Travel Agents (MATTA) and the conference co-organizers invite you to participate in the **4th Asia Pacific Ecotourism Conference (APECO) 2006**, taking place in the spectacular 130 million years old tropical rainforests of Taman Negara National Park.

Prominent international and national speakers will lead the interactive seminar sessions which will focus on ecotourism and its relations with the marine environment, wetlands, local communities, and rainforests. Combining diverse and relevant topics, the conference will provide a forum for discussion of current issues, solutions and best practice case studies. For more information on the program and to register, please go to: www.apeco2006.com.

A number of TIES members will be participating in the conference, including the following distinguished speakers:

Frederick S.E Gunasinghe, Sri Lanka Ecotourism Foundation (Sri Lanka)
Bijaya Pradhan, Dream Nepal Travel & Tours/Discover Nepal (Nepal)
Peter Richards, Responsible Ecological Social Tours (REST) Project (Thailand)
Steven Schipani, Ecotourism Laos (Laos)
Masaru Takayama, Japan EcoLodge Association (Japan)
Albert Teo, Borneo Eco Tours (Malaysia)
Anthony Wong, Asian Overland Services (Malaysia)

We are pleased announce that TIES and MATTA are organizing a special meeting at APECO 2006 that will serve as a regional preparatory meeting for the Global Ecotourism Conference 2007 (Oslo, Norway, May 14-16, 2007) (www.ecotourismglobalconference.org). The results of APECO 2006 will be brought to Oslo through an official report, with specific recommendations for the Oslo conference organizers, and through delegation.

PROFIT in the PACIFIC 2006

Port Vila, Vanuatu
November 29 - December 1, 2006

Hosted by the Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) and CDE/PROINVEST, an European Union program promoting investment in the South Pacific, PROFIT in the PACIFIC delivers a unique platform for business and investment opportunities to tourism entrepreneurs who seek investment support for their projects and investor enterprises from the EU and other countries.

PROFIT in the PACIFIC features 'one-to-one' meetings between prospective partners and addresses the most significant issues and trends in Pacific tourism, and is aimed at tourism stakeholders including: private sector entrepreneurs, national tourism offices, international finance intermediaries, finance houses, and other tourism leaders in the region.

For further details of the event, and to register, go to: www.profitpacific.com

ATLAS Asia-Pacific Conference 2006 ~ Tourism After Oil

University of Otago, Dunedin, New Zealand
December 4-6, 2006

The theme of the conference stresses the need to take a long-term perspective on current and future issues with respect to tourism in the Asia Pacific region. As one of the main focuses of the discussion topics, the conference will provide a specific examination of the implications of rising oil prices and the overall implications of increases in the cost of energy for tourism.

A combined field-trip and graduate workshop will be held on December 8-9, to examine issues of research and method in undertaking community based tourism research.

For more information, see: www.atlas-euro.org (Events > 2006 > Dunedin).

NEXT ISSUE ~ CALL FOR COTRIBUTIONS

In the December 2006 edition of the *Digital Traveler ~ Asia Pacific*, we will be focusing on ecotourism in the South Pacific region. With amazing natural attractions and unique and diverse peoples and cultures, the South Pacific islands have long been favorite destinations for travelers from around the world. In the next issue, we hope to highlight projects and initiatives around ecotourism and responsible travel in the South Pacific region. If you wish to submit an article, please contact Ayako at ayako@ecotourism.org with a brief description of your story.

The following websites provide the map of the South Pacific region and information on travel and tourism, destination, and the environment of the region.

South Pacific Tourism Organization (SPTO): www.spto.org

South Pacific Map: www.mapsouthpacific.com

WWF South Pacific: www.wwfpacific.org.fj

We also welcome articles for other regular sections of the newsletter, including Training & Education, Certification and News & Updates.

FINAL THOUGHTS

We hope you've enjoyed the October 2006 issue of the *Digital Traveler ~ Asia Pacific*.

With the launch of our new website, TIES now has the opportunity to hold online discussion forums for our members and partners (Please go to www.ecotourism.org and see the Bulletin Board section). In the next few months, we plan to hold forums specifically for the Asia Pacific region, focusing on select topics. Please send your ideas for discussion topics.

As always, we welcome your questions, comments and suggestions on the design and content of the newsletter, TIES' activities, and our services for our members. If you would like to share your comments on the newsletter with the editors and/or with other readers, please email to Ayako and indicate if we can publish your comments in the newsletter.

You have been placed on this free mailing list because you are a TIES member and have indicated that you are based in or operate in the Asia Pacific region, or you have been referred to us. Please feel free to refer other interested parties to Ayako if they wish to subscribe. If you no longer wish to receive TIES Digital Traveler ~ Asia Pacific Newsletter, please email Ayako with subject line "Unsubscribe."

