



December 2007

IN THIS ISSUE: *Greetings from TIES!*

TIES NEWS & UPDATES

The last issue of the *Digital Traveler ~ Asia Pacific* eNewsletter in 2007 includes news and updates on projects and initiatives around ecotourism and climate change in the Asia Pacific region. You will also find in this issue ecotourism best practice stories from Thailand, Micronesia and New Zealand.

ASIA PACIFIC NEWS & PROJECTS

ECOTOURISM BEST PRACTICE STORIES

Commemorating the third anniversary of the Indian Ocean Tsunami (December 26), the eNewsletter provides information on some of the areas in the Asia Pacific region affected by the disaster, and their stories of recovery and development. TIES continues to support initiatives by local organizations to effectively use ecotourism as a tool for sustainable development, to better prepare tourism stakeholders for natural disasters, to improve guidelines on hotel/lodge construction, and to empower local communities through participation in sustainable tourism development.

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Ayako Ezaki
The International Ecotourism Society (TIES)

TIES NEWS & UPDATES



TIES Advocacy Campaign on Ecotourism and Climate Change

TIES' ongoing advocacy campaign *Traveling with Climate in Mind* focuses on various aspects of tourism's contribution to global warming. Through workshops, forums, research and publication, we provide, together with our partners, resources and tools for tourism professionals and stakeholders. [Read more](#)



Events Update

TIES has organized and participate in various events and conferences, and continue to actively seek opportunities to promote ecotourism through our involvement in conferences, workshops, forums and other events. Click [here](#) to learn more about TIES' participation in past and upcoming events.

TIES Membership News

This holiday season, we encourage you to give a gift of one-year Traveler membership with TIES. Give a gift membership now, and receive a **30% discount (Holiday gift membership price: \$25)**. This offer is valid through **December 31, 2007**. [Read more](#)



ASIA PACIFIC NEWS & PROJECTS: Ecotourism and Climate Change

PATA CEO Challenge 2008: Confronting Climate Change The world's travel and tourism industry leaders can now register to participate in the historic "Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) CEO Challenge 2008: Confronting Climate Change" in Bangkok, Thailand on April 29 and 30, 2008. For more information, visit: www.ceochallenge.PATA.org



UN Climate Change Conference, Bali, 3-14 December 2007 Read updates on [13th United Nations Climate Change Conference](#) from various sources: [CareGlobalWarming](#), [Greenpeace](#), [Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change](#), [Oxfam](#), [UN Framework Convention on Climate Change](#), [UN Non-Governmental Liaison Service](#), [WorldWatch Institute](#)



Report: Voices from Communities Affected by Climate Change (Source: www.foei.org) The grassroots environmental network, Friends of the Earth International, released a report on November 26, 2007, with nine testimonies from community members around the globe who have dramatic first-hand experience of the devastating impacts of climate change. [Read more](#)



International Mountain Day: Facing the Climate Change Challenge (Source: *Mountain Partnership*) Themed "Facing Change: Climate Change in Mountain Areas," the International Mountain Day presents an opportunity to increase awareness of global climate change and its important implications for humankind. [Read more](#)



Helping Himalayan People Cope with Climate Change (Source: *International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development*) The ICIMOD's new five-year Strategic Framework addresses key issues including water management and poverty reduction, through programs to help people adapt to climate change while protecting the environment. [Read full article \(PDF\)](#)



ECOTOURISM BEST PRACTICE STORIES

Andaman Discoveries (Thailand) Press Release

A new kind of tourism for Thailand: Community-based efforts gain international recognition after the tsunami

Nartladda Klongwitti, or Chim as her friends call her, smiles as she welcomes the group of foreigners to her village on the Andaman Coast. Unlike the majority of visitors over the past few years, this group of visitors is not here to see the destruction wrought by the tsunami of 2004. Instead, they are here as tourists to enjoy the cultural and natural splendor of Tung Nang Dam, a village of 35 houses situated in between the coral reefs and dense rainforests of Southern Thailand.

Since rebuilding their lives after the tsunami, some villagers in rural Thailand are using tourism as a tool for community development. One such project, Andaman Discoveries, is based in villages along the North Andaman Coast that were among the most severely affected. With the assistance of international volunteers, villagers such as Chim now offer homestays, day tours, and other activities - allowing visitors to participate in the traditional way of life that so often eludes the casual tourist.

As she guides a group through the village, Chim explains, "The tsunami was a terrible thing, but it also helped us to open our minds to new opportunities. We are now ready to welcome the world, and share our way of life with respectful visitors."

[Read full article \(PDF\)](#)

[Read November 2007 Update \(PDF\)](#)



News from Kosrae Village (Micronesia)

The award-winning ecolodge and reef protection project

Located on the Jewel of Micronesia, Kosrae Island, [Kosrae Village Ecolodge & Dive Resort](#) combines the natural Pacific island beauty of the rainforest, mangroves and mountains with the amazing sea life on stunning, pristine Micronesian coral reefs.

Kosrae Village was featured as one of the world's best eco outfitters in the October online issue of [National Geographic Adventure magazine](#). Kosrae Village was also featured in the November issue of the Islands Magazine, and was awarded one of the five Global Sustainable Tourism Awards, announced in the December edition of the [Islands Magazine](#).

Kosrae Village's long-time partner in coral monitoring and reef reservations projects, [OceanEarth](#), has been given formal non-profit 501(c)3 status in the United States, allowing the US residents participating in these projects to write off some or all of the related expenses, including travel.

Eco-Tour and Farm Visit to Help the Planet
By Donna & Stuart Hamilton, Coast to Coast Tours

Coast to Coast Tours, an Auckland-based tour company with the goal of giving visitors a blend of Nature, Culture, Conservation and Environmental aspects, started operating in 2002, and have been bringing people into their historic Homestead of Auckland, emphasizing the New Zealand lifestyle as well as the natural scenic attractions.



The company focuses on the West Auckland region, where our family has lived and farmed since 1922. We know the area, its history, and its people, very well. We have always regarded our tour quite different from the usual sightseeing tours because of the uniquely local experiences we offer.

We have noted with interest that there doesn't seem to be many organizations in New Zealand that follow the principles of ecotourism as TIES has set forth. When we took a holiday in Australia a couple of years ago and we discovered a tourist newspaper outlining the TIES descriptions of nature-based tourism and ecotourism. This gave us an indication that we were meeting these criteria, and we have been thrilled to contribute to TIES' international network as a member.

Stuart and Donna: Stuart has been a sheep farmer all of his working life, and Donna is part Ngai Tahu Maori. (Photo by Coast to Coast Tours)

We've felt that although there are a number of eco-tours in New Zealand, many focus mainly on the nature aspects of our country, and include little cultural experience - be it Maori or Pakeha (European). Recently, however, Tourism New Zealand has begun emphasizing the importance of *Manaakitanga* (sharing exceptional and natural hospitality, knowledge and beliefs, on the basis of mutual respect between host and visitor), and *Kaitiakitanga* (the guardianship and sustainable management of natural, built and cultural resources for the collective benefit of current and future generations), so it is pleasing to see such statements starting to filter through into the New Zealand tourism industry.

Read full article:

http://www.ecotourism.org/webmodules/webarticlesnet/templates/eco_template.aspx?a=416

Virgin Holidays Responsible Tourism Awards 2007
Celebrating excellence in social and environmental sustainability

Founded by the on-line travel agent Responsibletravel.com, the Virgin Holidays Responsible Tourism Awards are the largest of their kind in the world. The central tenet of the Awards is that all types of tourism - from niche to mainstream - can and should be operated in a way that respects and benefits destinations and local people.

From the over 1700 nominations, this year's winners have been carefully selected in a highly competitive process. [Read more](#)



*Photo by Andaman Discoveries
(Winner, Conservation of Cultural Heritage)
World Travel Market 2007, London*

Winners/Nominees from the Asia Pacific region include:

- **Gecko's Adventures**, Australia (Winner, Best Tour Operator)
- **Shakti Uttaranchal Tours Pvt Ltd**, India (Highly Commended, Best in a Mountain Environment)
- **Andaman Discoveries**, Thailand (Winner, Best for Conservation of Cultural Heritage)
- **Intrepid Travel**, Australia (Highly Commended, Best for Conservation of Cultural Heritage)
- **Arugam Bay**, Sri Lanka (Highly Commended, Best Destination)

6th Annual Skål International Ecotourism Awards
Recognizing leaders in ecotourism and responsible travel

Skål International, an international association of travel and tourism professionals, embraces all sectors of the travel and tourism industry, from 87 countries and five continents. Established in 2002, during the United Nations' International Year of Ecotourism, the Skål International Ecotourism Awards recognize best practices in ecotourism and their contributions to sustainable development and responsible tourism. By highlighting best practice examples in ecotourism, the Awards aim to encourage environmental conservation, promote the development of responsible and sustainable tourism, and raise awareness of the importance of the interaction of the physical, cultural and social environment. [Read more](#)

The winners of the 2007 Skål Awards, announced at the Skål World Congress in November 2007, include:

- **Aqua Trek's Fiji Shark Conservation and Sustainable Tourism Program**, Fiji Islands (Tour Operators and Travel Agents)
- **Marari Beach, CGH Earth Experience Hotel**, Mararikulam, India (Rural Accommodation)

TSUNAMI - THREE YEARS ON

December 26, 2007 marks the third anniversary of the 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami that devastated a number of coastal communities in the Asia Pacific region and affected the lives of millions across the region and beyond. As reported in the December 2006 edition of the *Digital Traveler ~ Asia Pacific* eNewsletter, many of the communities in the Indian Ocean countries affected by the 2004 Tsunami are well on their way to recovery, and there have been numerous encouraging and inspiring stories about reconstruction efforts, many of which have utilized ecotourism activities to rebuild the lives of local people.

Ecotourism Training Center (ETC)
Empowering young professionals through career training

The ETC, a non-profit training program for Thai nationals, was formed in response to the 2004 Tsunami disaster and is now located in Khao Lak, Thailand, with the core mission of teaching and training young Thai people for a new career in environmental tourism. While many of the ETC students lost their homes, jobs, and in many cases their loved ones to the oceans fury three years ago, they have learned to embrace the ocean as the key to their future. The ETC Class of 2007 graduates, 11 new PADI dive masters and five new Thai Open Water Scuba Instructors are ready to serve the industry in their new careers. Read more about the ETC programs, students and supporters, and find out how to help: www.etcth.org

Seacology
Win-win solutions for the environment and communities

Seacology is the world's premier nonprofit environmental organization with the sole purpose of preserving the highly endangered biodiversity of islands throughout the world. Seacology seeks practical solutions that help protect the local environment and provide tangible benefit for islanders.

Seacology has been involved in post-tsunami reconstruction efforts in the following regions: Andaman Islands, Maldives (Kendhoo Island), Sri Lanka and Thailand (Trang Province). Read updates on Seacology's tsunami projects: <http://www.seacology.org/projects/TSUNAMlupdates.htm>

Voluntourism Opportunities to Support Tsunami-Affected Communities

For responsible travelers interested in visiting the coastal communities in the Indian Ocean area that have been affected by the 2004 Tsunami, the following websites provides information on how to get involved in community projects and make a difference while having a great time.

- [Go Differently Tsunami Volunteering](#): Off the beaten track in Southern Thailand
- [Openmind Projects Tsunami Volunteer](#): Hands-on teaching and learning
- [ResponsibleTravel.com](#): Tsunami support & volunteering holidays

NEXT ISSUE: CALL FOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Share Your Stories: Ecotourism in Asia Pacific: We welcome submissions of articles that illustrate best practice examples of ecotourism projects and their positive impacts on the environmental, social and economic challenges of climate change.

For more information, please contact: [newsletters"at"ecotourism.org](mailto:newsletters@ecotourism.org).



FINAL THOUGHTS

We hope you've enjoyed the December 2007 edition of the *Digital Traveler ~ Asia Pacific* eNewsletter. As always, we welcome our members and friends to send comments and suggestions.

Thank you very much for your contiued support for TIES and your commitment to ecotourism. We wish you a wonderful holiday season and a happy new year!

*During this special season and beyond
May peace travel around the world...!*