

PROFESSOR HARIS COCCOSSIS:

“The most important challenge is to change our thinking about Development, including Tourism”

Interview with the Greek Executive Secretary of Tourism on page 2



Director's Cut: Tsunami, two years on.

The 2004 Indian Ocean Earthquake & tsunami, and the ensuing devastation with over 230,000 deaths and devastation of a vast area ranging from Indonesia to Southern Africa was covered extensively and effectively by the classic media, and instantly & exhaustively by the Internet, with the result that spontaneous and generous aid donations flowed in from all over the world. In the annual commemorations of the event, and as good news are not news, it is tempting for media to focus on the indisputably continuing plight of affected communities and seek to blame it on mismanagement and selective distribution of aid, bureaucratic inertia, repeated zoning and construction mistakes, and even on the fact that the aid was so big that it provided sparks to half-dormant civil wars. A certain criticism is beneficial, as it helps correct things. Too much criticism however is unfair to those who try their best amid chaotic conditions and ultimately leads to cynicism. There are so many good things that have taken place, many on a voluntary basis, so many initiatives that have helped turn disaster into opportunity, but remain in obscurity, doomed as positive stories.

Some of the affected areas, such as Southern Thailand, depended on tourism as a major source of income. At the micro level, one of Thailand's great initiatives, well known to our readers, is the [North Andaman Tsunami Relief \(NATR\)](#), so in this issue as a two year commemoration, we invited NATR's Director **Bodhi Garrett** ([read our 2005 Interview](#)), to give us his perspective from the field. Bodhi was working for the Golden Buddha Resort, which was all but destroyed with the loss of many lives. With the help of friends & colleagues, Bodhi quickly set up an exemplary ground-roots relief campaign & agency that has been doing great things with it ever since, creating an incredible range of new sources of revenue for the affected communities, which now also include community-based Ecotourism, under the title of [Andaman Discoveries](#). We are also very pleased to report that [Golden Buddha Resort](#) has reopened at the end of 2006, and is once more a Member of our network. Other noteworthy ecotourism contributions include the creation of an [Ecotourism Training Centre](#) in Khao Lak, one of the worst affected areas, which provides vocational training to young Thais.

At the macro level, it must be stressed, the world of Tourism & the Environment reacted quite well to the disaster. Among numerous initiatives, we note the World Tourism Organisation's Phuket Action Plan, focusing on saving jobs and reconstruction, covering Thailand, Sri Lanka, the Maldives, and Indonesia as well as the rest of Thailand, the World Conservation Union's (IUCN) & UNDP's [Mangroves for the Future](#) (MFF), focusing on replanting mangroves, previously destroyed for tourism development, now seen as natural buffer. Hotel rebuilding started almost immediately in the affected areas, with up to 90% of pre-tsunami hotel capacity being available again. Booking figures have also long recovered, assisted by the introduction of special offers and low-priced tour packages, visa waiver programs and the emergence & targeting of new markets such as the Chinese one.

More importantly, the enduring legacy of the response to this international disaster, are the ongoing efforts to develop the Tsunami Warning System in the Indian Ocean (<http://ioc3.unesco.org/indotsunami/>), and a new globalised sense of togetherness in the face of calamity, thanks to the alternative superpower of Tourism & Leisure, which is also a type of “warning system” to those who would rather have us divided, confined to our countries, endlessly working and fighting between ourselves, for the sake of their dogmas, ideological & economic agendas...Keep travelling!

Antonis B. Petropoulos - [More Director's cut](#)



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THE ECOCLUB INTERVIEW



Professor Haris Coccossis:
Executive Secretary of Tourism
Ministry of Tourism Development, Greece



"The most important challenge is to change our thinking about development, including tourism"

Professor Haris Coccossis is Executive Secretary of Tourism at the Greek Ministry of Tourism Development. Since 2002, he has been Professor of Spatial and Environmental Planning with specialisation in tourism planning, at the Department of Planning and Regional Development, University of Thessaly in Volos. Between 1986-2002 he taught at the Department of Environmental Studies, University of the Aegean as a Professor and as a visiting professor in several universities around the world.


He obtained his PhD in Urban & Spatial Planning at Cornell University (USA), his MSc in Urban Planning at California State Polytechnic University (USA) and is a licensed Architect & Civil Engineer from the National Technical University of Athens.

Professor Coccossis' extensive international scientific research experience includes directing and participating in over 50 national and international multidisciplinary research programmes covering development, tourism, spatial planning, environmental management and planning issues. For over twenty years he was a scientific advisor for the Mediterranean Action Plan of the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP/MAP) working in sustainable development, sustainable tourism, integrated environmental management, urban development and regeneration.


As a scientific advisor for many international organisations (European Commission, OECD, World Bank, FAO, UNEP, UNESCO) he acted as a consultant in issues ranging from spatial planning and environmental management, coastal area management, to planning for tourism, environment and insular development with assignments in Mediterranean and African countries (Albania, Croatia, Slovenia, Cyprus, Tunisia, Morocco, Lebanon, Israel, Syria, Malta, Kenya, Tanzania, Comoros). He served as consultant and scientific advisor to the Greek Government (Greek National Tourism Organisation, Ministry of Coordination, Ministry of National Economy, Ministry for Environment, Physical Planning and Public Works, Organisation for the Planning and Environmental Protection of Athens) and represented Greece in various international meetings including at the European Commission and the United Nations.

Professor Coccossis has published 12 books and over 50 scientific articles or chapters in international journals and books covering spatial planning and environment, tourism, sustainable development, insular development and related topic, and has made an extensive number of presentations in international and domestic scientific conferences.

The Interview follows:


 **ECOCLUB:** *It is rather rare in Greece, but fortunate, that an internationally acclaimed academic finds himself in a leading government post in a strategic sector such as Tourism¹. How easy is it however for someone to suffer the simplifications, the political expediency and the impatience of politicians, and occasionally the miscommunication and conflicting responsibilities of public administrators?*

Professor Haris Coccossis: Tourism is a world growing socio-economic phenomenon which affects many destinations. It brings social and economic benefits to local societies, often offering opportunities to disadvantaged locations (like mountain communities and small islands) but also has often significant impacts. Tourism affects the environment and more than any other activity tourism depends on the quality of the environment. Therefore tourism should be carefully planned and managed. In that sense it is a challenge to work in the policy making in tourism and it is this challenge which is attractive to many people, including academics: bridging policy and science.

 **ECOCLUB:** *The Athens Olympics, despite the creation of the Metro and the Tram, were surely not the most environmentally friendly in history, as, under the prevailing world climate, priority & funding were given to security issues rather than the environment. However, do you believe that the Olympics greatly boosted tourism in Athens? Would you recommend the Olympics to other cities that aim to revive their tourism, and if so what should they be paying attention to?*

Professor Haris Coccossis: The Olympic Games is a complex endeavour which involves many aspects of policy making and planning, not excluding the environment or safety (which is a recent societal priority). The Athens Olympics became an important catalyst to coordinate public and private sector activities towards improving infrastructure and services in a major metropolitan area: Athens. Such improvements had beneficial effects on the quality of life and the image of the city as a tourist


destination. The best advice for future candidate cities is to plan carefully the post-event (Olympics) use of facilities and include such considerations in a strategy for the development of tourism, something we missed in the past in Athens.

 *ECOCLUB: Tourism in Greece, and in many other countries, is an open profession, where anyone, irrespective of training, can try her luck, either as an employee or an investor, something surely democratic and competitive. On the other hand, do you think that the end result is an educational deficiency in all levels, which has negative connotations for service quality? In particular, do you see a need for University seats, in new fields such as Ecotourism and Sustainable Tourism?*


Professor Haris Coccossis: Tourism is changing. It becomes more elaborate and demanding and in that sense it is important to focus on the quality of the product offered (tourist accommodation, tourist assets, infrastructure and services). Such concerns require continuous education and training at all levels in both private and public sectors. In that respect, tourism education is important. In Greece we still lack in basics so any initiative is welcome.

 *ECOCLUB: If only you could cure one ill of Greek Tourism during your tenure, which one would you choose?*


Professor Haris Coccossis: Three are the great challenges of tourism policy at present in the context of developing a strategy to improve the quality of the tourist product: develop tourism in a context of a strategy towards sustainable development, improve the intelligence of Greek tourism and prepare a master plan for tourism which puts priorities and rules for tourist development on the basis of the particularities of the greek destinations.

 *ECOCLUB: We hear today's tourism leaders talk about super luxury resorts, golf courts, richer and more, many more, tourists, indicating new source countries such as China. However, could there be perhaps an ultimate maximum limit to the number of tourists, determined by the carrying capacity of a country, both environmental and social? Have sustainable concepts been understood and accepted by the broader tourism and political leadership, or is sustainability and alternative tourism still seen as the magic trick to achieve the famous and elusive extension² of the tourism season?*

Professor Haris Coccossis: Carrying capacity is a powerful concept on which to base tourist development. It can be used as a tool to build consensus among key actors on putting tourism in the context of a strategy towards sustainable development. In essence it is focusing on adapting tourism to the characteristics and particularities of space (the destinations). Part of such a concern is to maintain tourism competitiveness by improving the quality of services but also maintaining the very basis of our comparative advantages: our natural and cultural heritage. These are the yardsticks for any decisions on tourist development and these concerns can guide growth and development of tourism.

 *ECOCLUB: Very recent studies have alerted us about the danger (refuted by some as hype) of an abrupt increase of temperature in the Mediterranean basin in the next 50 years, up to 5 degrees Celsius, due to the greenhouse effect, with the potential of wrecking summer tourism in Greece. Already, every summer, there are black-outs in the tourist, mainly insular, areas of Greece. What initiative has your Ministry taken, or is considering, so that tourist enterprises at least are both adequately supplied with energy but also environmentally-friendly?*


Professor Haris Coccossis: There are incentives for the private sector to adopt environmentally friendly practices and technologies but the most important challenge is to change our thinking about development, including tourism, and this is not a responsibility of the Ministry of Tourism alone. We are pursuing several cross-sectoral issues with other Ministries.

 *ECOCLUB: Every summer, there are incidents, limited in number in the same resorts and usually non-violent, between drunken tourists and locals, associated with the sun, sea & sand model. Is there a policy to address this particular issue, or is it in any case preferable to sacrifice a few resorts for the sake of the rest?*


Professor Haris Coccossis: The eventual crises from the poor behaviour of guests/visitors are part of a broader social phenomenon of social tensions accentuated often in tourism destinations because of the relaxed atmosphere and the easing-off in self control when one is on vacation but also induced by bad practices of certain-a few fortunately-tour operators. Of course such behaviour is unacceptable to the extent it affects social norms, values, properties, etc. and in that respect measures are taken in coordination with foreign embassies, the police, local authorities and travel agents. So far such measures have been proven quite effective.

 *ECOCLUB: Greece has changed its central tourism slogan (branding) many times in recent years. Is this positive or negative in your opinion, and were you to write a slogan for Greek tourism which one would it be?*

Professor Haris Coccossis: Branding the tourist destination-Greece is a serious challenge and for this reason we have the assistance of a specialised consultant selected through international competition. A brand name should be maintained long enough to become effective.

 *ECOCLUB: The highly seasonal character of Greek tourism is the cause (or the excuse for others) for the annual ritual of firing (and rehiring) of tourism employees³. Could perhaps this not be acceptable in the 21st century, and the winter months should be used to retrain employees?*


Professor Haris Coccossis: Extending the tourist season is an important tool in achieving one of our basic goals: to broaden and enrich the tourist product. This takes a lot of time and necessitates measures in several policy fields such as providing special tourist infrastructure (including golf courses, convention and exhibition facilities, rural tourism installations and others) and incentives for attracting tour operators and airlines beyond the tourist season.

 *ECOCLUB: The tourism sector is famously labour-intensive, thus in Greece it employs many economic migrants. However, this results in uninsured and unofficial employment, abuse of labour laws and training shortcomings. Is there some position or initiative of your Ministry for the immigrants who contribute to Greek tourism?*


Professor Haris Coccossis: The social security issues of all those who work, including in tourism, is part of the general social policy of the country, extending beyond the responsibility of the Ministry of Tourism.

 *ECOCLUB: Women Agrotourism Cooperatives: Formerly avant-garde, currently old-guard and waning. Have they simply completed their life-cycle, or do they need state support?*

Professor Haris Coccossis: This is because the development of such associations was characterised by a spontaneity (enthusiasm and voluntary work) and lacked serious measures to assist them to reach a required level of competence and organisation to survive in the modern world. New initiatives (not always on the basis of women's associations) are being developed by the private and/or public sector at several destinations which demonstrate vitality and adaptability to the challenges of modern-day markets. These are supported through various programmes (clustering etc.) of our Ministry.

 *ECOCLUB: There is a common view that many ugly and unprofessional hotels were built over 30 years ago with easy loans handed out by the then military regime. If there were enough funds to compensate their owners, would you demolish them as other countries have done⁴ or would you withdraw them from the market by changing their use?*

Professor Haris Coccossis: The low competitiveness of the lower end of the tourist accommodations in Greece (hotels and rented rooms included) is probably the most inhibiting factor in upgrading the product. We have a policy to change the use of old hotels and study a broader policy to upgrade and/or remove from the market the lower quality of service units.

 *ECOCLUB: Greece finally has, thanks to the initiative of the current administration, a Ministry of Tourism Development. However it also has a separate Ministry of Culture and a Ministry of Environment & Public Works. If we pause to think who is responsible for administering an archaeological site in a forested area, should perhaps these three ministries be fused, as in other countries⁵ - some far larger - or do you believe that the autonomy of the Ministry of Tourism is paramount?*

Professor Haris Coccossis: Tourism is a complex activity involving several aspects: transportation, accommodation, services. Therefore in theory a Ministry of Tourism could be a Ministry of Coordination (including responsibilities to manage airports, clean the streets, etc.). This is not possible in a modern context of developed institutions (other Ministries, local authorities, etc.) The challenge is to develop mechanisms of concertation (coordination, synergy building, cooperation) with a Ministry of Tourism as a catalyst.

 *ECOCLUB: Thank you very much*

Notes:

1. Tourism, broadly defined, produces up to 15% of Greek GDP and employs around 800,000 (18% of the official labour force) and an increasing number of economic migrants. It is even more important in most insular and some rural areas. Greece only acquired a 'Tourism Development' ministry in 2004, a few months before the Olympics, after many short-lived attempts in the past. The inclusion of the word 'Development' in the title, although Greece is a mature tourism destination, probably reflected the broader 'pro-development' stance of the incoming government as the Ministry of Agriculture, was also renamed - 'Agricultural Development'.

2. Greek tourism is marked by high seasonality. Some 50% of visitors arrive in the course of just three summer months (July - September), most by charter flights from northern Europe. 'Alternative' forms of tourism are usually seen as ways to attract business, special interest and independent visitors in winter, which is a heavy one with the exception of south Aegean, Crete, and Ionian islands. Seasonality also has its pluses, as it allows the environment to recuperate and locals in rural areas to attend to their more traditional, agricultural duties.

3. We are mainly referring to cleaning personnel and other workers in large resorts. However the same is true for many tavernas, bars and other ancillary services which mostly employ temporary staff, both greek and foreign.

4. In Spain, a number of hotels built in the 70s-80s (some illegally occupying the beach, others dilapidated, or spoiling the view) have been demolished in the Balearics and Costa del Sol, as part of tourism rejuvenation policies, along with moratoria on new hotel construction.

5. An online search in gives plenty of results for "Ministry of Tourism & Culture" (and vice versa) and rather fewer for "Ministry of Tourism & Environment". Only Antigua, Lesotho and St. Kitts, all small-size, however combine all three portfolios.

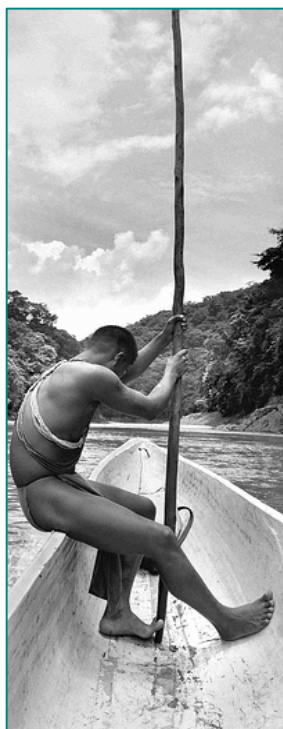


PHOTO EXHIBITION “Panama 2005, Anthropology & Photography”.

A photo exhibition by travel photographer / lawyer and ECOCLUB Member Dr. Yiannis Tzortzis. Twenty six photos immortalise the wisdom and simplicity of the every day life of the Kuna, Embera Wounaan and Ngphotobe-Bugle peoples. The photos were taken during a research trip in the Darien indigenous region, organised by the University of Bristol UK with the support of the governments of Panama & UK. Yiannis Tzortzis was the Royal Photographic Society Travelling Photographer of the Year 1993, and has won numerous other awards. The exhibition will be hosted at the Fnac Forum, at The Mall, Marousi, Athens, Greece from 24 February to 13 April 2007.



HOPE RETURNS TO SOUTHERN THAILAND

*by Bodhi Garrett**

On 26 December 2004, my world changed forever. Before the tsunami, I was the marketing director of [Golden Buddha Beach](#), a small eco-resort on the island of Koh Phra Thong in the North Andaman Sea. Then the killer waves destroyed the resort and its surrounding communities. I happened to be in the United States at the time, but I came back to do what I could for the people I had come to love and respect. In the first week of January, working with a mobile phone, a borrowed computer, some salvaged furniture and a small group of volunteers, we started [North Andaman Tsunami Relief](#).



Ban Talae Nok is a traditional Andaman Muslim fishing community called divided by a river into lower and upper sections. Lower Ban Talae Nok was wiped off the face of the earth by the tsunami - everyone was killed except for two adults who climbed trees. The village school was swept away, with eight children and their teacher inside. A government official sent to assess the situation said he could see no sign that humans had ever lived there. The only trace was a kids' swing left swaying in the wind.

In the aftermath of this horror, many of our projects in Ban Talae Nok have focused on women's income generation and education. By focusing on women, a group previously discouraged from economic activity, the new projects are helping to change conservative attitudes. Parents now see how a daughter's income can contribute to their recovery and future well-being.

As the months go by, local people are putting their lives back together and looking to the future - more aware than before that they need new skills to adapt to the world around them. To do this, however, they are navigating an often-confusing array of relief projects.

In reality there were three tsunamis - the physical wave, the ensuing flood of relief aid and now, the withdrawal of that relief. Many villagers became dependent on free cash and hand-outs from relief organizations. One of our biggest tasks is to help them make the transition from crisis relief to post-tsunami development. NATR is sponsoring a number of livelihood improvement

projects, including long-tail boat repair and replacement of fishing nets – because we recognize that traditional fishing practices must be restored as the foundations of the local culture and economy. But this alone is not enough.

Many villagers of Ban Talae Nok have returned to traditional coastal fishing, but some are choosing to embrace new livelihoods— including community-based tourism. As Thailand has developed, many small communities have watched helplessly as investors have bought up land and drained the profits of tourism away from the villages. The people of Ban Talae Nok, however, are determined to learn the necessary skills for themselves, and see that tourism serves the goals of the community. NATR is running training programs in tourism management, hospitality, and English that will help them to meet these goals.

In addition, NATR is helping to attract visitors to local community-based tourism efforts. More information can be found at www.andamandiscoveries.com

After the Wave – A Tsunami Devastated Village Embraces Respectful Tourism

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 70 houses situated in between the coral reefs and dense rainforests of Southern Thailand.

Life has not always been so easy for Chim – the majority of her village was destroyed in the tsunami, and, due to a lack of initial relief, she was unable to replace her lost boat and fishing nets. With the development of community-based tourism, however, her luck is turning around. She has been able to receive vocational training and a steady income from the small stream of tourists that visit Tung Nang Dam.

Nearly two years after the devastating wave, in an area largely overlooked by the ensuing relief efforts, lives are turning around as villagers are creating new models of living in their post disaster worlds. Unusually, the new opportunities have been created by and for the community, allowing progress to coexist with the traditional fishing culture.

Tourism, as Chim sees it, is complex - it's inevitable spread across Southern Thailand has led to great economic benefit, but also to cultural and environmental degradation. So, with resorts rebuilding and guests returning after the tsunami, Chim and other villagers formed a committee to decide how tourism might be used as a tool for community development.

The village committee approached North Andaman Tsunami Relief (NATR), and requested assistance in developing community-based tourism. With the help of the International Labour Organization and CARE International, NATR was able to provide English lessons, marketing, and vocational training.

The ultimate result of the collaboration is the newly launched Andaman Discoveries – a non-profit effort to support community-based tourism in tsunami affected villages. “We provide services that will allow communities to develop a form of tourism that does not undermine their traditional way of life,” said Kelly May, director of Andaman Discoveries.

This month, twenty-two individuals graduated from Andaman Discoveries’ vocational training program. The six month intensive focused on guiding, small business, and community development. Despite being from villages that suffered widespread devastation, the graduates have come to recognize that their communities are once again attractive to foreigners.

When asked about how she feels about the last two years, Chim replies, “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”



► Bodhi Garrett is Director of North Andaman Tsunami Relief - www.northandamantsunamirelief.com & www.andamandiscoveries.com

TASMANIAN FIRES FIRE UP CONSERVATION & IMAGINATION

by Peter Power*



We have just survived the recent bushfires that started on the 10th of December 2006. We were very lucky we had been busy through the Winter season clearing around the main Lodge and accommodation cabins and the wildlife refuge areas. Having said that the fires were dangerously close to all the facilities and we were very lucky the local volunteer fire brigade came and saved our assets.

The fire brigade were here for over 48 hours back burning and fighting the devastating fires, we cannot thank them enough!!! The bad news is we lost about a third of our native animals and the forest has been burnt to ground level.

The good news is that just before the fires, with a dedicated group of volunteer carers, we have formed a new non for profit organisation “Carers for Wildlife Tasmania Inc”. to rehabilitate

orphaned and injured native wildlife. We are registered with the Wildlife Management Branch of Tasmania and we are supported by Parks and wildlife, the local police and the Break O Day Council.

A majority of the wildlife are victims of roadkill, caused by reckless drivers. The local community find these poor creatures and contact us and we go out and collect the animals, if the animal needs medical treatment we consult the local Vet who provides their service, no charge! We then take the animal home to rehabilitate them and then release them back into the wild. We also have the unfortunate task of euthanising injured wildlife that have come out of the bush and have been affected by the fires.

We are calling for members and corporate sponsors to help fund the relief effort to help support and build housing enclosures for bushfire affected wildlife through our new website www.wildlifetasmania.com (or by phone on 0417017105) people are able to make donations or become members online.

We had a blind Bennett’s Wallaby before the fires and we were very concerned for her well being after the fires came through, after about two days we gave up on her being alive, then one morning I woke up and checked outside and WOW she was there, singed and worst for wear but OK, it bought me to tears, so I knew after that, if she survived that others would have but unfortunately most never.

Last night our hand-reared wombat Walter came home after two weeks of not knowing how he was, I must say he was in great condition, no burns and looking very healthy.

Our main mission now is to set up native animal hospitals and assist carers from all over Tasmania!

► Peter Power is Owner Manager of ECOCLUB Ecolodge “Rainbow Retreat Wilderness Eco Cabins”
<http://ecoclub.com/rainbowretreat> & www.rainbowretreat.com.au



FACES OF ECOCLUB SALLY BROOM



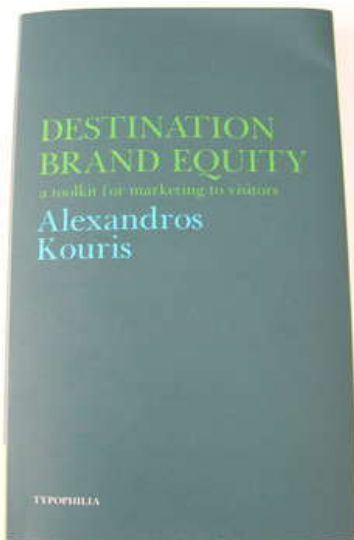
I am 23 years old and come from the Lake District. I graduated as top of my year from University College London (UCL) in Human Sciences BSc. It was during my second year at university that I decided to develop the concept of [Your Safe Planet](http://www.yoursafeplanet.co.uk). The idea for a global network of friends for travellers had been brewing for some time, but was cemented during a trip to S E Asia in 2004. On a border crossing between Laos and Cambodia I was confronted by corrupt border guards who tried to bribe me into handing over \$600. The situation was frightening and not one I would wish on anyone. It was only on meeting a local person and explaining to them the situation (in French) that the guards were persuaded to release me and my new friend drove me to the nearest town. I have travelled throughout my life and independently from the age of 14 so am not easily phased but this really shook me. If I had not met that person I have no idea what would have happened. Local friends really are worth their weight in

gold when you are in an unfamiliar place. Even if it's just to ask for a hotel recommendation or to find out about local community projects, a friend abroad can mean the difference between a good trip and a really great life experience. And if something is wrong it makes a huge difference to have a knowledgeable person on the end of the phone. The people in our network are my friends and contacts from school, university and organisations such as ECOCLUB. I have also had some wonderful support from the Round Square organisation of schools (of which my own school, Windermere St Annes, is a member). It has been amazing to see how many people are passionate about travellers visiting their country in a responsible way and how knowledgeable they are about the opportunities brought by ecotourism.

► *Ms Sally Broom was our December 2006 – Most Helpful Member. Sally is the founder of Your Safe Planet, www.yoursafeplanet.co.uk*

NEW PUBLICATION REVIEW

**“Destination Brand Equity, a toolkit for marketing to visitors”, Author: Alexandros Kouris
Typophilia Pub., Thessaloniki, 2006, ISBN 960-7285-33-6, 78 pages.**



This handy manual examines how destinations can differentiate themselves from the competition, and succeed in capturing the imagination & memory of visitors through a strong brand. The author, Executive Director Designate of PRC Group, a leading marketing consultancy, draws on his vast experience with branding in Europe & Middle East to methodically examine the relatively new concept of destination brand *equity*, which he believes to be the central component of destination marketing. Mr Kouris proposes a destination *equity* model comprising of brand awareness, brand image, brand response and brand significance. The book offers specific research questions for conducting analysis & assessment, the writing is fittingly vibrant, the text is pleasantly interrupted by many relevant images of successful and not so successful destination brand equity examples, and there are useful references to online material. We did not find many references of how new trends such as sustainability & environmentalism in Tourism affect the substance and perception of destination branding, but maybe this is telling. We hope that future editions will be as handy and detailed but more extensive, include a recommended bibliography and perhaps an accompanying CD with multimedia examples. That said, this book is already very useful to tourism professionals but also to discerning tourists who would like to learn what ‘tricks’ destinations may throw at them to attract their attention!

► *Available from Typophila Publishing, 42 Polemi Street, 542 48 Thessaloniki, Greece, Tel: +30 2310 323 067, Fax: +30 2310 322 251. Email: [niki \[at\] altervision.gr](mailto:niki[at]altervision.gr) (Ms Niki Sioki)*

UPCOMING EVENT

For more events, check <http://www.ecoclub.com/events>

Lao Ecotourism Forum, Bridging the Mekong Region 26-29 July 2007

From 26 - 29 July 2007 the Lao National Tourism Administration will organise the third annual Lao Ecotourism Forum at the Don Chan Palace Hotel in Vientiane, Lao PDR. This exciting event will bring together and display the highest quality and most innovative ecotourism products and services on offer in the Mekong Region. Under the theme 'Bridging the Mekong Region' tour operators, travel agents, accommodation providers, development agencies, National Tourism Organizations and indigenous people from throughout the Mekong Region will gather under the same roof to network and expand business opportunities in their respective countries. This event is a must for anyone interested in shaping the course of ecotourism development in the Mekong Region.



In addition to the 'Mekong Ecotourism Mart' where buyers meet sellers on the first and second day of the Forum, an ecotourism conference, gala dinner, food festival, 5km fun-run, concert, handicraft exhibit and trade show are planned. For international buyers and the media, special pre and post familiarization tours will be offered.

► Registration for the Forum opens on 1 March 2007, with online registration and a complete overview of events planned available at www.ecotourismlaos.com/forum2007

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