ECOCLUB®.com

ISSN 1108-8931 | INTERNATIONAL **ECOTOURISM** MAGAZINE™ | Year 9, Issue **100**, March 2009

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Yannis Vardakastanis: There is no need for more hotels (in Zakynthos) and to reduce the number of visitors would ease immense pressure off the island (p.15)

director's cut Ecotourism in the Time of Crisis

evil. We see before us a huge community of producers the members of which are unceasingly striving to deprive each other of the fruits of their collective labor not by force, but on the whole in faithful
– Albert Einstein, Why Socialism? , Monthly Review, May 1949

No one really knows how long this latest systemic crisis may last or how it will end - hopefully not in tears, not like the 1929 one. But it does present a unique opportunity: it can help reveal the resilience and the necessity of small-scale, sustainable tourism, family & community-owned, and prove the unsustainability of mega-resorts, in particular all-inclusive, condo hotels and golf, the funders of which are getting weaker by the day! Within Ecotourism as well, we need to move away from discredited neoliberal recipes, dependencies on aid and other agencies, nefarious mushups like corporate social responsibility, triple bottom lines and carbon offsetting. As Murray Bookchin pointed out we live in a highly cooptative society that is only too eager to find new areas of commercial aggrandizement a 0 We need to strengthen the social, progressive, solidarity and autonomous / direct-democratic aspects of Ecotourism without losing sight of the environmental ones and without becoming part of the status quo.

Beyond small-scale tourism, we should also examine ways, big and small, to face up to the global tourism juggernaut, and gradually liberate Tourism communities from the package-makers and the chains * othing , large multinational tour & hotel operators. One way is to resist the further degradation of working conditions and labour rights in Tourism, and re-emerging racism in the workplace, and defend the right to form unions, which are non-existent in large swaths of the Tourism world. While exploitation is often masqueraded as volunteerism, internships, training and the like. For Mass Tourism to deliver its long-touted and over-hyped promises on meeting the Millennium Development Goals it must at least stop being so dependent on profit, through a concentrated, hierarchical, authoritarian and opaque, tax-evading structure. Indicative of the fact that Tourism is one of the most conservative sectors, is the lack, I am sorry to say, of an Independent, progressive Travel Journalism, that would really understand, scrutinize and reveal.
journalists to be invited and go and eulogize resorts. On top of that, an international merry go round, involving jet-set consulting, awards and funding, propagates greenwashing & dependency and discredits (or perhaps uncovers) sustainable and responsible tourism. Omerta, the code of silence, rules.

The Crisis (their Crisis) will hopefully deal blows to many things rotten, in the mean time, our aim at ECOCLUB is to take ideas from Social Ecology and develop a genuine, deeper, Social Ecotourism (or Social Ecological Tourism), both in terms of a philosophical framework and its application, so that it is relevant and can not be dismissed as utopian. difficult; we just have to turn Tourism upside down!

▷More Director's Cut

issue 100 special

Statements from Members & Friends (in the order received) on the occasion of Issue 100 and the new year 2009, which also marks the 10th year of ECOCLUB!

Arq. Hector Ceballos-Lascurain, Director General PICE , Mexico
"As the year 2008 comes to a close, there are indeed many dark clouds overhead regarding the state of the world economy, the environment (including climate change), tourism, etc. Perhaps it is still too early to notice any noticeable decline in ecotourism visitation around the world. What I have noticed, however, is that in many countries (especially Latin America, including my own Mexico) adventure tourism and activities seem to be gaining the lead over true ecotourism. Unfortunately many of the former modes of practicing tourism are not very sustainable and frequently their practice does not do much to enhance the appreciation of the beauties of nature. What is worse, many of these unsustainable activities are being described as

one must rely on excessive gadgets and contraptions: zip- . . . -skis, expensive mountain bikes, etc. In my experience, to really be in communion with nature you hardly need anything more than good hiking boots, keeping your eyes and ears open (binoculars are a big help, of course, for wildlife viewing, especially birding) and an open spirit of awe and admiration upon beholding the natural glories of our planet..."

Brian T. Mullis, President, Sustainable Travel International , United States
"Tourism is an important economic engine for the United States and beyond, so informed and sustainable tourism policies should become a national priority globally. Policies should be established to handle tourism-related issues effectively, including having the necessary support staff that are intimately familiar with how best to utilize sustainability as a means to enhance the positive economic, socio-cultural and environmental impacts of tourism. International visitors provide an important source of revenue for many economies around the world. In the U.S., for example, the Travel Promotion Act should be passed in order to better leverage the

Promotion. Provide economic incentives and tax credits to the private sector that help to offset any upfront costs and incentivize the adoption of sustainable business practices. Renewable energy and energy efficiency are key elements in our transformation from a high carbon, oil dependent economy to a sustainable low carbon economy. Investment in mass transportation infrastructure should also be a priority since reliable and affordable mass transit options enable larger and more diverse populations to travel wider distances".

Nikki Rose, Founder & Director, Crete's Culinary Sanctuaries , Greece
"Many people around the world are working hard to protect their cultural and natural heritage and offering excellent alternatives to generic tourism that destroys their communities. They are providing crucial services to society and deserve our greatest respect. Many travellers think their world should follow them wherever they go chlorine, jet skis, unlimited water and electricity. Some travellers think that residents should be their servants and free entertainment. If communities could ban anyone that contributes to their destruction (including their government), tourism would nearly grind to a halt. To sustain our world is to respect it and be the solution."

Dr Stefanos Fotiou, Tourism Programme Coordinator, United Nations Environment Programme
"We are experiencing a remarkable phase of tourism development at a time when the environmental challenges requires urgent attention and sustainability is in the top of development agendas. One billion tourists will travel around the world by the end of this decade. They will demand enormous quantities of energy, water, and natural resources to support their holidays. Sustainability in the tourism is associated with lower costs and more benefits since it is about a better management of resources. For this reason sustainable tourism should not be approached as a small niche market but as a mainstream option for successful tourism development."

Professor Harold Goodwin, International Centre for Responsible Tourism, Leeds Metropolitan University, United Kingdom

"With the Carbon Consultancy I am launching www.flysmart.org and a campaign to encourage people to fly less, if they fly then to fly more efficiently and to assuage their guilt by giving to carbon philanthropy rather than by buying a permit to pollute from an off-setting company. Other priorities for 2009 are to establish a transparent auditing system for Responsible Tourism; to encourage people to blow the whistle on irresponsible tourism (www.irresponsibletourism.info) and to work with local governments to enhance their ability to manage tourism in destinations, in order tor realise the ambition of "making better places for people to live in, better places for people to visit."

Carol Patterson, Principal, Kalahari Management, Canada

"In my new book, Reinventure, I discuss how travel adventure can change your life. With unprecedented economic, social and political turmoil facing us in 2009 a new vision of how travel can reinvent communities is needed. Despite lower incomes and employment uncertainty, I believe tourism will persevere. Government leaders should embrace tourism as a legitimate economic stimulus and support creative, grass-root initiatives that maximize community benefits. Politicians and banks have had their turn at leading change and the results have been less than stellar. Perhaps, in the New Year the voices of environmentalists and artists will be heard!"

Megan Epler Wood, Principal, EplerWood International , Founder, The International Ecotourism Society (TIES):

"What would it take to show that change is truly part of the new tourism landscape? My take is - we need to see a whole new generation of professional endeavour. Tourism 2.0 - to take a page from author Thomas Friedman's books. . ompanies that were achieving change. 0 systematized. Benchmarking the environmental and social impacts of tourism corporations worldwide, especially carbon impacts, are a critical starting point. Let the measurements begin!"

Professor Ralph Buckley, Director, International Center for Ecotourism Research, Griffith University, Australia

22: Australia. Climate change is now on the industry's agenda but is overshadowed by financial and forex issues. Adaptation options are not yet being considered at the scale of individual destinations, except ski resorts. State government budgets for some parks agencies have been cut, especially in NSW, and tourism lobbyists are using the opportunity to try to obtain development rights in conservation areas. There is a growing interest in connectivity conservation involving private lands, but the focus as yet is more on publicly-funded stewardship schemes than on

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"What is the future of ecotourism industry and environmental degradation in Malaysia? Well, it has certainly not looked too well for this naturally beautiful tropical rainforest country towards the end of this year. With intense rain (more than 250mm), massive landslides have been occurring in Malaysia with the worst being the recent Bukit Antrabangsa, a highland residential area in the outskirt of Kuala Lumpur that had left 4 dead. 'Enough is enough, stop the hillside projects', said the Prime Minister of Malaysia. But sadly calls for controlled development has fallen deaf among many hillside developers. Then comes the headline news, Tasik Chini, the second largest lake in the count . 0 The once famed lake, an ecotourism destination is totally polluted and not accessible to tourist. Yet again, the enforcement to tackle this fragile environment has failed miserably. Malaysia has to wake up and take the environmental issues more seriously before the goose that is laying the golden eggs is gone for good."

Albert Teo, Managing Director, Borneo Eco Tours, Malaysia

"Under the Asean Sky: The blue Asean Sky will be most likely be covered in red in 2009 and beyond. With the financial and economic challenges in the rest of the world, I foresee the huge increase in air traffic in Asean. The recent air liberalisation of KL-Singapore sector, the continuing introduction of new routes by Air Asia around Asean countries with its purchase of 175 new aircrafts to be delivered up to 2013, the addition of new LCCC, Tiger Air and Jetstar into the region will help drive traffic up and price down on some of the routes which has been traditionally protected and milked exclusively by national carriers. The multilateral air agreements once ratified by all ten Asean transport ministers in 2009 will further create more competition and grow the tourism arrivals to and within the Asean sky providing a much needed economic stimulus for a trying economic

times. Finally, more people can afford to fly on short and medium haul even as the rest of the world is in recession come 2009. Not all is bleak yet... Kota Kinabalu where I am based will see a boom in tourism arrival in 2009 once the new airport is completed. We will see a shortage of rooms and it will catch some of us by surprise as more 0

Burkhard Herbote, Editor, WorldTourismDirectory.com, Germany

0 end with words, which are not mine: I have a dream. I have the dream, that the nations, races, cultures, religions, any individual will be willing and able to learn from each other, to respect the differences, and to understand the values of our colourful world, to realize the common within the differences, to enable themselves to look and to feel behind of the horizon. I have the dream, the leaders of this wonderful planet will give more attention to the tourism industry being the world largest employer and having an enormous chance and responsibility for a global social, economical and ecological 'change' (an important word in 2008) in order to enable the tourism stakeholders to take over their responsibility for real active interhuman intercultural understanding and peace from heart. Money is good and important, but for tomorrow we need responsible, sustainable, holistic travel and tourism which is to create a common long term future. Listening to the economic and financial managers we should follow the church reformer Martin Luthers saying "Even if I knew that tomorrow the world would go to pieces, I would still plant my apple tree." Does the tourism industry have a chance to change? Yes, we can!"

Zoltan Kun, Director, Pan Parks Foundation, Hungary

er since I work for PAN Parks Foundation, I consider 2009 as probably the most important year. The main challenge will be to take forward wilderness conservation in Europe. There is a draft report on wilderness areas which will be discussed and hopefully approved by the plenary of the European Parliament on February. There will be the first ever European wide conference on Wild and Nearly Wild Land in Prague on May. The challenge for us in these processes will be to ensure that tourism is considered as a po

Ben Box, Editor, South American Handbook, Peru Handbook, Footprint Peru, Bolivia and Ecuador, Footprint Books:

"2009 and 2010 are going to be challenging years for tourism. The economic climate is going to make people give serious thought to their travel plans. They may find some very good deals on offer, but also many deterrents. For the sustainable tourism sector in South America, the challenge will be to build on the many positive initiatives, especially in community tourism, and to find innovative ways to incorporate sustainability into established markets. For the sector to continue flourishing, though, responsible means will have to be found to bring tourists long-distance to those communities and projects that want to share their lifestyle and environment."

Ron Mader, Founder of Planeta.com, host of the Tourism and Climate Change E-Conference

"With leadership changes in Australia and the United States - the two countries that held out on signing onto the Kyoto Protocol - the stage is set in 2009 for major advances in addressing climate change. What's missing, however, are practical solutions and a jargon-free language. International conferences are usually conducted in terms that only policy specialists can understand. If we want a global constituency in favor of low carbon lifestyles, we need to show how communities and countries are making practical advances. While some would argue that the eco-minded travelers should simply stay at home, I would argue that those in the Ecoclub should simply travel more slowly, choosing the greenest options and documenting what they find. If we're going to leave footprints, we might as well leave positive footprints that others can follow."

Edward L. Beauchamp, Founder, World Tourism Foundation , United States

0Perhaps the acts by sophisticated terrorist cells on tourism targets is not as good of strategy as they thought. "Mumbai" became a recognized destination brand name worldwide overnight. To anyone saying they are going to India these days, the first question they hear is "Are you going to Mumbai?" The long term 0 Mumbai, and all its positive attributes, has firmly been placed on the world map. The Trident-Oberoi Hotel is being flooded with bookings for rooms and tables at its famed restaurants Opium Den, Frangipani and India Jones, in time for the grand reopening on December 21. The global awareness of the entire Oberoi Group has been escalated. The Taj Mahal Palace & Tower is now a must-visit in minds of travelers around the world. Many more travelers are now aware of the 75 Taj Hotels, Resorts, and Palaces in 12 countries. Its corporate-wide project for energy conservation and environmental management will

get increased recognition. Sadly lives were lost, our guests and our peers, but the terrorist failed in their objective to use tourism targets. 0

Ariane Janer, Instituto EcoBrasil, Brazil
"2009 will be interesting year to see how a major financial crisis will impact sustainability concerns. In my view, both tight budgets and carbon conscience will mean that consumers will opt for looking for travel experiences closer to home. Sustainable practices that deliver cost reduction AND enhance the 0 . for location based media services for ecotourism. A Green Christmas and Fasten Your Seatbelts for a Slow Travel Year"

Pam Wight, Principal, Pam Wight & Associates, Canada
"Key issues from the 1990s still need to be addressed, including broadening and adopting sustainable tourism practices and strategies. Key environmental issues include air pollution, climate change, natural areas conservation, species reduction, negative consequences of human activities, and the lack of understanding of environmental services.
change, particularly in the Arctic where wildlife, landscapes, and aboriginal land-based economies are impacted. Southern Canada has ongoing suburban sprawl and loss of natural areas negatively impacting biodiversity. The approach to environmental issues is also a problem, with much focus on operational level piecemeal activities, vs. understanding ecosystem services, or stressing growth vs. development and ecosystem wellbeing. However, the current global economic crisis is likely to maintain the focus on economic rather than environmental perspectives in 2009."

Aivar Ruukel, Soomaa.com & Estonian Ecotourism Society, Estonia
"Estonia has enjoyed almost an automatic economic growth last 15 years. Today's crisis and changes have a good side, besides the bad ones - it is that we all have to think more. Think about what we do, and why and how? There is a clear need to communicate more often and openly, both inside ecotourism sector and across the sectors. We are depending on the shared resources, and we share a (non-existing) image as a destination. We have find the ways to work together in order to achieve success. Ecotourism in real life can not be better than the joint outcome of our individual efforts."

Bodhi Garrett, Founder and Consultant, Andaman Discoveries, Thailand
"Often, the money that supports our efforts comes from an economic system that depends on overconsumption of resources - one that is at the root of unsustainable development. So, how can we contribute to fundamental change through sustainable tourism? Emp 0 . . how they live their daily lives. If we can serve as a bridge to a holistic perspective outside the dominant paradigm, then sustainable tourism has a vital role to play in creating a better future. The more you know, the less you need!"

Mart Reimann, Proprietor, Reimann Retked, Estonia
"Estonia experienced the highest economic standards ever in 2007. The year 2008 was an interesting contrast as we experienced recession like the rest of the world. In ecotourism we could mainly feel it through the decrease of clients at the domestic market. Incoming ecotourism was rather growing. In the next year our domestic market will probably continue to fall and foreign market will grow. Estonia is still a new and growing destination for many ecotourists, and for example next year more cruise ship will visit Estonia. Harsh times will push entrepreneurs to improve product development and price quality relations will be probably better for tourists."

Peter Richards & Potjana Suansri, Community Based Tourism Institute (CBT-I), Thailand
"The challenge for community-based tourism has now moved beyond assisting community members to develop their own sustainable tourism programs. Now, we must assist communities to access manageable numbers of responsible travelers to visit and support these projects. Key tasks in 2009 and beyond will be to educate and stimulate demand among responsible travelers; and to identify and work together with genuine responsible tour partners to develop relationships which are responsive to the needs of both community members and the tour industry. This will require

balancing the time and attention to detail which is required in order to facilitate meaningful local participation from product to market, with high levels of quality and efficiency required by tour operators."

Professor Trevor Sofield, University of Tasmania, Australia
"In Asia the global economic meltdown is referred to as the "global financial tsunami", and while the 2004 tsunami resulted in a horrifying number of casualties it also swept away many unsustainable and environmentally damaging tourism developments along the affected coastlines. Out of catastrophe came new challenges and new opportunities for environmentally better coastal ecotourism development (regrettably not always achieved). Nevertheless in a similar way the current financial tsunami offers both immense challenges but also opportunities for a more enlightened approach to implementing the basic principles of ecotourism since sustainability has, paradoxically, been emphasized by the total unsustainability of so many practices and developments. Despite the stringencies facing economies all around the world, in the context of assertions by the European Community that global warming and climate change issues must continue to be tackled so ecotourism could constitute a flagship role model for the tourism industry to contribute to a better world in 2009."

Professor Kelly Bricker, Director, The International Ecotourism Society (TIES)
"As 2008 comes to a close, we see environmental and social issues reaching very challenging heights. There is indeed a connection to sustainable health and the environment, therefore our continued advocacy to protect the planet is more important than ever. Certainly human induced effects on the planet are a key issue which impacts the health and well-being of all--tourism can be a tool for conservation of natural resources and provide the economic benefits to alleviate poverty and support education. The economic woes facing our nation and many others impact not only tourism but the way in which priorities are established. A key issue facing the globe is to protect the natural capital that supports and sustains life, livelihoods and the health of the planet."

Shams Uddin, Manager, Chitral Association for Mountain Area Tourism, Pakistan
"Ecotourism in Hindu Kush in the Post-Lowari Tunnel Scenario: Chitral contains the colorful cultures of the peaceful, hospitable and friendly Kalash and Khow communities under the shade the mighty peaks of the Hindu Kush with attractions for tourists. As Lowari tunnel [8.7 km] opens, it provides all-weather access with impacts for tourism. But how the indigenous communities, in the given condition, will benefit from it is still a question mark. There are two opinions about the tourism growth in the post-tunnel scenario. Some believe the all weather road will boost tourism in the region and tourists from both north and south will be diverted to the Chitral valley resulting in more tourism related businesses and benefits. Others, however, say tourism will come but more or less will be occupied by non-local moneyed-class that will marginalize the indigenous communities both Kalah and Khow. Further, the natural forest in the south will disappear by the powerful timber mafia with disaster impacts for natural biodiversity and environment. Land price will increase 10 times higher as what it is at present. Population will grow haphazardly and so will do related social and environmental problems. Maintenance of law and order will be all the more difficult. It is high time that the indigenous communities should prepare a viable strategy to augment tourism benefits and minimize its negatives impacts."

Dr Graham Miller, Senior Lecturer in Management, University of Surrey, United Kingdom
"I think the issues for tourism and the environment is going to be the extent to which sustainability can demonstrate itself to be an important component of tourism in times of economic difficulty. Will the tourism industry grab the excuse of the recession to relegate sustainability down the list of priorities, or will the industry understand that we need to keep moving forward on sustainability otherwise there will be no tourism resources to sell whatever the economic circumstances."

ecoclub awards

2008 ECOCLUB.com Ecotourism Awards: Four Projects Completed on Time.

Our 2008 Winners - Projects funded & part-funded by ECOCLUB®

Ecuador: Sustainable Ethnic Rescue Centre for Mindo | **Canada**: Toolkit for Greening Canada's Events | **Ecuador**: Native-Tree Nursery Using Plastic Garbage | **Ecuador**: Banishing Disposable Plastic from an Ecolodge | **Pakistan**: Raising Environmental Awareness in Kalash area visitors

Four of the five projects selected to receive funding through our 5th Annual Awards were successfully implemented by December 1, 2008. The 2008 theme was "Tourism Without Plastic" and the total funds amounted to Euros 3,000 (approx. USD 4,750) to be shared by five winners, who were to receive Euros 600 each (approx. USD 950) on successful completion of the projects. So far we have received completion reports for 4 of the 5 projects, and the prize was paid to these, and pending for the fifth. The projects were as follows:

Rachel Dodds / The Icarus Foundation, Canada - Web: www.theicarusfoundation.com
Winning Project: Greening Canada's Events
Reducing the environmental footprint of major events through a practical toolkit that consists of a guide, checklist and case studies that focus on the benefits of greening.
▷Project Proposal Details
▷Progress Report
▷**Completion Report**

Black Sheep Inn, Ecuador - Web: www.blacksheepinn.com
Winning Project: **Native-Tree Nursery Using Plastic Garbage**
Spearheading the creation of a native tree nursery in the high Andes using discarded plastic bottles and abundant organic fertilizer.
▷Project Proposal Details
▷Progress Report
▷**Completion Report**

La Selva Jungle Lodge, Ecuador - Web: www.laselvajunglelodge.com
Winning Project: The End of Disposable Plastic
For many years La Selva Jungle Lodge has worked towards becoming a disposable plastic free zone but still we fall short. In this project we would eliminate plastic in its disposable form altogether.
▷Project Proposal Details
▷Progress Report
▷**Completion Report**

Shams Uddin / Chitral Association for Mountain Area Tourism (CAMAT), Pakistan -
Web:www.ecoclub.com/c/blog/suddin
Winning Project: Kalash Environmental Protection Project
Protecting the environment of the Kalash people by introducing environmental awareness initiatives and a community-driven waste disposal campaign in Bomburate, Rumbor with an aim to make the activity sustainable in future.

Project Proposal Details
Progress Report
Completion Report

Septimo Paraiso Cloud Forest Reserve, Ecuador - Web: www.septimoparaiso.com
Winning Project: Sustainable Ethnic Rescue Centre for Mindo
In an area where traditions are being absorbed by the culture and beliefs of immigrants from other provinces of Ecuador raises the need for an "Ethnic Rescue Centre" to save and record traditions, folklore and culture.
Project Proposal Details
Progress Report
Completion Report – still awaited

The next ECOCLUB.com Ecotourism Awards 2009, will open in April 2009, with a call for proposals. The winners will be announced on 1 July 2009, the 10th Anniversary of ECOCLUB.

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interview

planet at large. STI's current priorities include developing, adopting, and marketing sustainable tourism standards and practices through Green.travel and the Sustainable Tourism Eco-Certification Program™ (STEP); providing educational resources to travellers and travel providers, and assisting them in making positive contributions to environmental conservation, cultural-heritage preservation, and local economic development; supporting the implementation of greenhouse gas reduction strategies and the use of carbon offsets, enabling travellers and travel providers to offset unavoidable greenhouse gas emissions; facilitating donations of financial resources, time, talent and economic patronage to help travellers and travel providers protect and positively impact cultures and environments around the world.

The Interview follows:

ECOCLUB.com: As the co-founder of a major international NGO promoting Sustainable Tourism, how satisfied are you with its progress in recent years?

Brian Mullis: Peter D. Krahenbuhl and I co-founded Sustainable Travel International (STI) in 2002. Since that time, STI has evolved from a relatively unknown grassroots organization to a leading internationally recognized non-profit dedicated to sustainable travel and tourism development. This process has been both very rewarding and very challenging. Our primary focus is on delivering and implementing result-oriented, market-driven approaches that are designed to empower consumers, travel-related companies, and destinations to support sustainability and . 0 -minded organizations and becoming financially sustainable through our own programming.

ECOCLUB.com: Which country or countries in your view has been more successful in implementing a sustainable tourism policy framework and why?

Brian Mullis: g to be successful and which ones are not. Although Costa Rica is often cited as exemplifying ecotourism, the country has become a victim of its own 0 coming the first carbon neutral company, which would set a new precedent globally. Other countries that are actively engaging in sustainable tourism at a national level include Dominica, Bhutan, Ecuador, and Jordan, whereas the success of tourism certification in the United Kingdom, South Africa, New Zealand, and Australia is noteworthy.

ECOCLUB.com: You have extensive experience of both for-profit and non-profit tourism organisations. Are there any significant differences (advantages, disadvantages) or are the two types gradually merging, through CSR, tax cuts, and an increasingly competitive NGO horizon in relation to donor funds?

Brian Mullis: Having a background in the private sector - I was an international tour operator for the better part of a decade - has given us a strong entrepreneurial focus. We also understand what businesses in this sector and other sectors need. For example, we ensure that we deliver a variety of benefits to our business clients in an effort to provide them with a solid return on investment. A significant part of our success stems from our ability to 0 firsthand r sales and marketing systems work makes this process much easier and increases the likelihood of success.

The public (non-profit) and private sectors are similar in some respects and different in others. In my opinion, n for limited donor funding and not enough collaboration in the public (non-profit) sector. This hinders the ability of many non-profit organizations to actualize their full potential. Another shortcoming is the lack of focus on becoming financially self-reliant too many non-profits are dependent on donors and foundations, though this is starting to change as more for-profits are starting non-profits and vice versa. Regardless, there is still a mindset of equating non-profits with wanting, if not needin . . companies would prefer to work with other for-profit companies.

One of the primary differences between public and private companies is their bottom line focus. For-profit companies inherently focus on making a profit, many without public financial disclosure and some at the expense of the environment and human rights. Non-profits, on the other hand, should focus on maintaining positive cash flow, yet their financials are publicly disclosed so supporters can determine how much is going to their actual projects versus their overhead. In addition, non-

as possible to be distributed to owners or shareholders, since by law in the U.S. all the money has to stay within the 0

ECOCLUB.com: Though there are strong doubts and criticism from both mainstream and green commentators about the ethics and effects of Carbon Offsetting, STI has enthusiastically embraced it. Do you believe that it works in actually reducing carbon emissions, or is it a convenient means of generating donations from travellers and channelling them to good causes?

Brian Mullis: I think that the perception of our enthusiastically embracing offsetting may stem partly from our success and brand awareness in this arena. Globally there is an awareness that addressing the challenge of global climate change will require a sustained effort for many years to come. Supporting legislation that requires mandatory greenhouse gas reductions is the first best solution; our policies have to operate on the same timeframe even if our politics run on election cycles. And, reducing CO2 emissions is the second best solution. But, some em .
positioned the opportunity.

To address global climate change, we need access to energy sources that are reliable and reasonably affordable, that can be deployed quickly and easily, yet are also safe and politically and environmentally sustainable. We also need to prime the economy for a surge in energy efficiency that will cut waste and improve energy productivity. And, we need to put a price on greenhouse gas emissions by implanting cap-and-trade programs or taxing carbon. In other words, we need to take a more holistic approach. Carbon offsets are part of this equation because ideally they help to fund renewable energy and energy efficien 0

There is also a significant educational benefit to offsetting. Carbon footprint calculators have enabled everyone from the average consumer to multi-national corporations to internalize their personal climate impact through measurable quantification, as well as through utilizing conceptual equivalents. For example, measuring your carbon footprint and offsetting that amount can be equated to taking a certain amount of vehicles off the road, whereas not offsetting or eliminating those activities is related to being personally responsible for putting that same amount of cars on the road. In addition, the contentiousness of the topic has helped to catalyze other first best solutions.

Our position at STI is that we do 0
engaged in sustainable tourism economically benefit the destinations they visit many of which are dependent on tourism. If people stop travelling, many tourism dependent count
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mandatory that negative impacts are not undervalued and addressed.

ECOCLUB.com: Is Sustainable Tourism a one-size concept that fits all destinations, cultures and regimes, or is "sustainability" a more or less "western" construct to counteract the effects of other western models such as industrial capitalism? And, as such more suitable to "western" countries?

Brian Mullis: 0
long term because it results in a net benefit for the socio-cultural, economic, and natural environments of the area in which it takes place. In order for this to happen, local stakeholders, particularly community leaders, need to have some control over - or stake in - tourism development. Travel providers need to actively support financial sustainability in the destinations they serve and give back to them through the donation of financial resources, time, talent and economic patronage with a focus on the facilitation of self-reliance. And, politicians need to implement legislation that favours sustainable development over short-sighted development with little to no environmental regulation.

ECOCLUB.com: With the cooperation of Universities, you have established distance-learning courses in sustainable tourism. Have you observed, a genuine interest from hard-pressed small sustainable tourism entrepreneurs in developing countries. Is online, distance-learning, the future for such an applied and outdoor science/art such as Tourism?

Brian Mullis: I think distance-learning is one approach to help build capacity. The challenge is to lower the 0 .
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result, most distance learning programs in the tourism arena are prohibitively expensive for small entrepreneurs. .

provide more introductory information on customer service, administration, bookkeeping and the like. For these reasons, STI is focused on taking a "train the trainer" approach whenever possible. This is much more suitable for small to medium enterprises in developing countries because the approach is hands-on and more personalized in that courses are designed to meet the needs of specific audiences.

ECOCLUB.com: Should Sustainable Tourism Certification limit itself to measuring environmental impact, or should it also incorporate socio-political criteria? And what are the major obstacles preventing demand and supply of tourism certification, which after all still covers a tiny share of the tourism sector?

Brian Mullis: Sustainable Tourism Certification should take a triple bottom line approach, since environmental, socio-cultural and economic impacts are interconnected. The major obstacles preventing demand and supply for tourism certification revolves around the fact that most tourism companies and consumers are defining what 0

industry has been searching for practical applications of the definitions, and consumers, the industry and media have become skeptical of green claims. Certifications through programs such as our Sustainable Tourism Eco-certification Program address the need for practical application through measurement, as well as credibility through verified self assessment and possible third party audits. Yet, with many programs out there, the launch of the (Global) Sustainable Tourism Criteria initiative and global accreditation through the Sustainable Tourism Stewardship Council (STSC) will help to harmonize all of this and increase demand through brand awareness. This has been the case with other regional and global labels such as Fair Trade products, Certified Organic food, etc. in helping to catalyze industry shifts, and it will happen within the tourism as well.

ECOCLUB.com: Based on your observations, as well as your studies in psychology, do we perhaps need to recognise that voluntary certification has failed, and then proceed to obligatory certification / environmental laws for all tourism businesses? Or is it a question of a lack of both tax incentives and of real interest from travellers when it comes to making travel decisions?

Brian Mullis: I think we have to acknowledge that the concept of certification in this industry was well ahead of its 0 0

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going to go away. 0

. -party peer review (e.g., www.aito.co.uk/corporate_Responsible-Tourism.asp) and sustainable tourism award programs are becoming increasingly popular. As I alluded earlier, global accreditation through the STSC will change everything and voluntary certification through international standards will prove itself once again.

ECOCLUB.com: You will probably agree that Sustainable Tourism, like all things eco, favours the small tourism guys & gals, whom the Internet has empowered and allowed them to compete with giants without intermediaries. How important is the Web in your work, and what do you make of Web 2.0 - is there a danger that it will destroy independent websites through trojan-horse fancy gadgets operated by the big players?

Brian Mullis: The internet certainly has levelled the playing field, making it easier for local tourism providers to connect directly with the travel market. The challenge is staying up-to-date on the technology and utilizing tools like Web 2.0, social marketing, etc. to grow a business. Fortunately, most search engine optimization and e-marketing strategies are relatively inexpensive to implement, so if a company has a strong value proposition and . 0 You will see an example of this with the impending launch of Green.travel, our new consumer facing website. I should also note that Sustainable Travel International was started on the web and was strictly a volunteer effort for the first few years.

ECOCLUB.com: You have extensive outdoors experience in the US, what would be your favourite US destination, and why? And how could that destination be affected by the outcome of this years' elections? Is there a meaningful sustainable tourism lobby?

Brian Mullis: C 52 . try before 0 33 0 C .

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Policies here and in the rest of the U.S. have an impact. For example, the famous Salmon runs on the Columbia have all but disappeared, forcing leaders in multiple states to place a moratorium on fishing for certain species in the Pacific. Agricultural legislation will continue to favour industrial producers unless changes are implemented to level the playing field and encourage local processing. New renewable energy development is going to slow down unless political leaders demand the extension of federal tax credits and other incentives beyond 2008. Ethanol is clearly not the answer; we need a real, comprehensive solution to the energy crisis inside and outside of America.

ECOCLUB.com: Finally, what is your biggest aspiration?

Brian Mullis: My greatest aspiration is a first-hand understanding of the power of one . 0 footprints, which in turn can improve rather than diminish our quality of life. Millions of people around the world are waking up to this simple fact. At the same time, the environmental and social justice movements are merging into a single movement that many characterize as the largest movement in the world. I . -organized and is made up of the millions of us who want to make the world a better place. This is all very inspiring, is great cause for optimism, and is reinforcing our efforts and strengthening our cause.

ECOCLUB.com: Thank you very much!

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ecofocus

"Travellers' Philanthropy in Africa & The Media"

by Angus Begg

This article is based on a Presentation at the Travelers' Philanthropy Conference in Arusha, Tanzania, December 2008

7 0 0C . is so often found in the developed world. More often than not there is a genuine willingness to please and impress, a desire linked on one hand to sheer thankfulness to have a job, and on the other a need to do it well.

in the five and seven star establishments. They are ubiquitous to Africa. And that, mixed in with the wildlife and truly stunning landscapes of this . 0 C grown faster tha 0 . whether the then the smiles, lions and landscapes would be left in the coffee-table books and the visitors at home.

So attracting the visitor to Africa is the easy part. Perhaps less obvious is what the visitors want from their African experience? A definite trend is educated - or aware tourists - being increasingly aware of establishments that treat their staff with dignity and respect, taking their personal growth and development into serious account.

And this best answers the question of how to attract the socially or philanthropically minded traveller to a destination. It works the same with media. If you want to promote your establishment, dish up the real thing. If . 0 the glossy smoke n mirrors exposure (which unfortunately lacks substance and is the norm in travel pages today, . . glossy pic in the travel pages the next weekend.

Unfortunatel 0 0

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back in the city, I watched it develop as carefully as I could from a distance, visiting occasionally (at their expense). From the land management to wildlife management, different ecosystems and community programmes, it has been and remains a fine operation. Whether I feel the product is too expensive is not the issue, and so I have praised Phinda ever since then as one of the top wildlife destinations in southern Africa.

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that look for what we should call the Real Thing the chance to live out of their skins for a while; to interact with people from another culture; to be thrown into a different routine; possibly even to dirty their hands while escaping the humdrum of their daily lives.

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should visit Zambia without experiencing this park. Kawaza village guests at nearby lodges could sleep in the village for $40 for the all-day experience. They joined villagers in their daily routines the only modification of the experience was a real bed in the hut designated 0C C 0

Now as South Africans take it upon themselves to make the country a better place for all - we have many examples. Perfect media opportunities to tell the stories that will ultimately attract those interested.

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possibly the most magnificent bit of African coastline it comprises all the requisite elements of a good story and not just a travel piece. The narrative is compelling a couple of financial graduates, one a chief economist, decide to . . 0
Aids, and the provincial and national government have failed the community despite promises of every household having a tap by the end of this yr, people still have to walk 5km to find one. Emotion: Warm big smiles from poor people, given sense of hope. The product is excellent: right on the coast; living almost as part of a village; 100% safe & secure.

MEDIA RESULT: Highly successful, albeit it being a backpacker lodge in a remote part of Africa. Thousands exist, to tell . 0 .
visited Bulungula a couple of times, I have written a few pieces on it. I also returned to produce a ten-min TV . 1 0 .
* . - and
cost - than its worth). Bulungula is that interesting. People -yrs make the effort to get there.

Case Study 2: Gorongosa National Park - Mozambique. Narrative: Compelling. American philanthropist pumping money into a game reserve that was destroyed by the civil war in the country. Great characters, former rangers/wa . * 0
known peace or even relative prosperity, so happy. Relevant: The resurrection of a country feel-good factor.

MEDIA RESULT: Highly successful. And as people learn more of it, via international media, they are coming. . word of ours got around, and
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Case Study 3: Grootbos Nature Reserve rural southern Cape. This case-study reaffirms that like Bulungula, 0 . but it is the story that is
again so compelling. Narrative: A family buys a piece of nondescript land - at first impression from the road and 0 0 lodge,
at which youngsters from the nearest township Masakhane can study.
Relevant: Doing good for the underprivileged while providing a genuine ecotourism experience (from whales to the floral kingdom and threatened habitat) is important to the affluent, educated market they target. Environmentally 0 the smallest, but most diverse in the world. More plant
species than the entire continent of Europe. Emotion: Locals .
think of, can suddenly start studying and if they pass will be accepted to study horticulture at the University of the Western Cape. Amazing turnaround. Silence Ndlovu speaks at the Eden Project in Cornwall every year. Huge feel-good factor, media coverage followed.

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. C Tomorrow. This for a lodge with tiny

Case Study 4: Voluntours: I have not personally experienced it, but having just been awarded a Highly Commended certificate for the quality of their offering at the recent WTM in London it means they must be doing something right. As a journalist I spoke to them at the Travel Indaba in Durban earlier this year, and was impressed by what I was told. Not sexy like Grootbos or Bulungula or immediately exotic like Gorongosa, the company - based outside Johannesburg, brings out volunteers from the developed world to work on identified worthy community projects
* 0 e Pretoria, with neither wildlife nor amazing coastline to speak of. But this is the real, unsanitized African experience, devoid of lions and Maasai or Zulu, and the company has the all-important integrity crucial in a sector of the industry that has seen fly-by nights taking advantage of well-meaning tourists.

average adventure-seeking traveller as dramatic coastline and impassable roads. But for visitors from the developed
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rather beautiful. This may have nothing directly to do with media, and like Bulungula this small ventur
to fly people out to experience their product 0
Voluntours to get that message out. A regular newsletter is one way, as is linking up with as many websites as possible to get your name out there those like Ecoclub.com.

with terms like ecotourism
loosely thrown around, like green dishwasher and free- 0 k them out. Organisations like Fair Trade in Tourism South Africa serve that very purpose the first of its kind in the world, much like the Fair
82 - C 0 hat other bodies are out there to serve the interest of such philanthropically minded organizations, although, again, on the web, Ecoclub.com is such an operation.

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company. But those of us independents who show an interest and a passion for the subject inevitably get charged
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a journalist 100 x. Cover their costs, and let them write on what they see. They are giving lodges valuable editorial coverage (for which PR companies are often paid large amounts to secure).

About the Author

Angus Begg is an award-winning Photo Journalist & Producer based in Cape Town, South Africa.
Also see: ECOCLUB Interview

interview

YANNIS VARDAKASTANIS: Ionian Eco Villagers & Earth, Sea & Sky

"There is no need for more hotels (in Zakynthos) and to reduce the number of visitors would ease immense pressure off the island...There are too many tourists, turtle chasing activities, excessive light pollution, human waste and rubbish, all impacting greatly on our fragile eco-system"

When Yannis Vardakastanis was a kid in the 1960s, he would be alone in the sandy Gerakas ('falcon') beach of the Ionian island of Zakynthos (Zante) in Greece and able to go out swimming with turtles and dolphins. Every late summer the beach would turn black with turtle hatchlings which did not bother and were not bothered by anyone except sea gulls...

In the 1970s like many before him, he left his island as a teenage sailor on freighters to the Far East to somehow end up as a centre forward playing for Lincoln City Football Club in the UK. In the 1980s, as the first package tourists from the UK started landing on his island, it was time to follow them, this time as a Gerakas beach bar proprietor serving up drinks to tourists sitting not very far from the hatchlings.

In 1990 he realised there was something wrong. In his own words: "I was witnessing the rampant growth of mass tourism and building development on the island, encroaching on and destroying the islands vital turtle nesting beaches. I decided that at Gerakas it all had to go. The number of beach umbrellas was halved, the pedaloes banned and my bar was torn down and moved off the beach, with no further building development on Gerakas to be permitted." So in 1991 he embarked again, this time on a very different journey, that of environmental activism, genuine ecotourism and conservation focusing on Gerakas, through his companies Ionian Eco Villagers and Nature World Travel, and his conservation group Earth, Sea & Sky (Web: www.earthseasky.org) which was first set up in 1993, and formally registered as an NGO in 2000.

Joint pressure with other environmentalists has since succeeded in getting all night flights banned and achieving nocturnal light and noise restrictions at beachside bars and hotels in Laganas Bay to avoid disturbing the nocturnal nesting of turtles. A key milestone was in 2006, when along with other NGO's active on the island such as Archelon, WWF and Medasset, they succeeded in a heavy fine being imposed on the Greek government by the European Union, for failing to properly protect the Zakynthos National Marine Park (est. 1999). The fine has apparently waken up the authorities and some progress has been made in the past two years.

In 2006 his organisation joined forces with Sea Life Centres throughout UK and Europe to launch a Turtle SOS Appeal (see picture). Together with Sea Life Centres Yannis Vardakastanis is currently undertaking the construction

of a turtle rescue centre on Zakynthos, so that injured and distressed turtles do not have to undergo an 8-hour journey to the nearest centre in Athens. In 2005 his work received a High Commendation in the First Choice Responsible Tourism Awards for 'Best in a Marine Environment', and once more in 2007 in the Virgin Responsible Tourism Awards for 'Protection of an Endangered Species', while Yannis and his team have been featured in many leading newspapers and TV documentaries. (The Interview follows:)

ECOCLUB.com: You are a finalist at one of the most prestigious competitions, the 2009 Tourism for Tomorrow Awards. Please explain what does your company and your NGO do, and why, that is what do you do differently from the others?

Yannis Vardakastanis: We focus on conservation work before business, tailoring the business to compliment the natural environment - through promotion and protection - and I believe this provides us with long-term stability and sustainability, as well as an edge over the other operators in Greece. There are always ways to improve a business, and for us the focus on protecting the natural environment keeps our business strong. Our small group of cottages at Gerakas offer a very different experience to the islands resorts: quiet, modest accommodation in the gardens and olive groves behind the beach. Nature World travel provides our guests with island excursions that are sensitive to the local flora and fauna. On these trips a volunteer working with Earth, Sea & Sky provides guests with vital information on our conservation projects, the unique wildlife of Zakynthos, and how our guests can contribute the protection of the area

ECOCLUB.com: In a past interview, Vassilis Kouroutos, a leading conservationist, argued that the main root of the intense strife between locals and conservationists in Zakynthos, was that the Greek state never addressed any form of compensation to the landowners / aspiring tourism entrepreneurs within the Park boundary, either by direct payment or by compulsory purchase. You however, turned from bar owner to environmental activist. What prompted your conversion, and how easy was it?

Yannis Vardakastanis: According to the Presidential Decree passed in 1981, all buildings built on/behind nesting beaches in the National Marine Park of Zakynthos (NMPZ) are illegal. And yet a comprehensive package to address the situation failed to be implemented, whether through compensation, buy-back schemes or incentives for business owners to operate in an ethical and sensitive way in partnership with the Marine Park. Tourism is an important generator of income and employment for locals living in and around National Parks, and therefore mutually beneficial. Yet these critical points were gravely overlooked, and as such land-owners continue to break the law by constructing buildings on the nesting beaches of Zakynthos in order to cash in on the tourism trade. Understandably this has created a great deal tension between locals and conservationists for many years.

For me personally it was an easy decision to make at the time, to protect and promote the area seemed a natural and logical way to run a business. Without the unique beauty of the landscape, flora and fauna there would be no tourism industry and therefore no income! But moving my business and making these changes did trigger terrific fights and disagreements with locals they thought I was crazy, and many still do! Even now people are still fighting to get a 0
nesting beach of Gerakas since the Decree was put in place. My goal to implement change and encourage others to do the right thing has proven to be the greatest challenge.

ECOCLUB.com: There are allegations of over-visitation and turtle-watching tour congestion, which causes distress to sea turtles in Zakynthos. How satisfied are you with the Park Management Authority both in terms of conservation and visitor management? What can they improve on?

Yannis Vardakastanis: Even though we have the decree to protect the Marine Park area, this message has not been effectively communicated to locals - to protect not destroy, to focus on long-term sustainability. As a result, businesses have tried to make as much money as quickly as possible which in turn puts immense pressure on the environment as a whole and in particular on turtle populations. There are too many tourists, turtle chasing activities, excessive light pollution, human waste and rubbish, all impacting greatly on our fragile eco-system. We also need to open up the channels of communication and start to learn and understand better how we can continue to run business and protect the turtles at the same time. I do believe this is possible if we find the right balance.

ECOCLUB.com: How do you manage to cooperate, rather than compete, with the multitude of NGOs operating around the National Marine Park, do you divide the area and/or the issues?

Yannis Vardakastanis: This can be difficult as we do not always see eye to eye! It is further complicated by the fact that the NMPZ and the local people are all involved as they too have their own ideas on how to manage the area and what they want from it. Ultimately I believe we have the same goal: to ensure the future safety of the Loggerhead whilst also benefiting the local community.

ECOCLUB.com: Have you witnessed a growing interest from Tourists in wildlife in the past decade? Is it at all accompanied from an interest in green issues, or is it mere curiosity? How easy is it to approach and convince those on cheap charter packages seeking little more than booze and the 4 S's on their holidays? Do you try to approach them at all, or do you go after a more discerning clientele?

Yannis Vardakastanis: Travellers today are not travelling just to see the world. They are interested in contributing to the destinations they visit, giving back to the people that host them during their stay, who kindly let them into 0 g part of the place they visit in some way, big or small.

I believe it is a sincere interest and not just a passing trend, but to attract a more discerning client we not only have to promote the area, we have to ensure that we protect it also. It is very difficult to show people this as the damage that has been done over the last 30 years is significant and change is taking place slowly. This is why I have kept my focus on Gerakas to stay as untouched as possible, as the last vestiges of natural beauty and prominence as a nesting area on this island it must be protected.

ECOCLUB.com: The Greek Governments' pro-growth National Land Use Plan for Tourism was recently voted down in the National Land Use Council, thanks to the vote of environmental NGOs but also of architects and land planners representatives (although it may still go through the parliament). Is there a need for an absolute cap in the number of visitors and a moratorium on the construction of new hotels in Zakynthos?

Yannis Vardakastanis: There is no need for more hotels, and to reduce the number of visitors would ease immense pressure off the island. So many hotels and people coming to visit over the years has turned the island into a mess, and this now cheapens the island and makes for a less desirable place for people to visit. I believe that less is more, and to offer higher quality to fewer people is the direction in which we need to turn.

ECOCLUB.com: Many successful ecotour operators around the world feel the need to set up an NGO, separating the charitable arm and the business arm of their operation. On the other hand, there is a new movement for environmental and social responsibility in tourism companies. If the law was appropriate, would you consider merging your company & NGO into one, and save overheads, or would you lose the support, public or individual offered to NGOs?

Yannis Vardakastanis: I do believe that there is indeed a movement towards environmental and social responsibility among tourism companies. However, this highlights the urgency to implement an effective screening system to ensure these companies are actually operating in an ethical way. This would need to take precedence over laws to allow amalgamation of business and NGO. I would consider it, but I feel the separation of the two helps to maintain clarity.

ECOCLUB.com: There are reports that the global economic crisis has already led to 20-30% drop in bookings for the 2009 season in Greek destinations. What are your expectations, and are ecotourism operators better sheltered in your view?

Yannis Vardakastanis: The economic situation will affect everybody, and all businesses. But we offer such a 0

ECOCLUB.com: Finally, what are your future goals?

Yannis Vardakastanis: We will continue our hard work to protect Gerakas and the nesting beaches, whilst we also hope to grow our business and spread the message by offering up other eco-friendly places to stay throughout Greece and the Mediterranean.

ECOCLUB.com: Thank you very much & good luck in the Awards!

eco-respondence

"Language School Tourism and Guatemalan Women"

by Cynthia Ord

Language school in Antigua, Guatemala

Que onda, vos? This casual Guatemalan greeting, translating to . A is one of the first things Spanish students from all over the world will learn inside schools. For the past ten or fifteen years, Guatemala has built a growing industry upon the fact that foreign tourists will pay to learn Spanish as part of a vacation experience. The proliferating supply of Guatemalan Spanish schools is as diverse as the foreign tourist market that seeks it, generating economic opportunity that reaches Guatemalans, especially women, of all background 0 reputation as a Spanish-learning destination has bolstered tourism in the country. Rather than just passing through Guatemala with cameras and guidebooks, travellers are stopping awhile to learn the language, communicate with the people, and enjoy the new dimension of access their new Spanish skills will grant them.

Guatemala predicts the arrival of 1.7 million tourists for the year 2008, a 5% increase over 2007 [1]. Tourism has experienced similar annual growth patterns since the early 1990s when the first Spanish schools started appearing. 3; ; 8 C 59-year internal armed conflict. As the political turbulence stabilized, foreigners poured in from all directions governmental and NGO (non-governmental organization) personnel, private interest developers, missionaries and religious organizations, and especially tourists . 0 C common theme among all the outsiders was that they wanted (or needed) to learn Spanish. Enterprising Guatemalans picked up on this growing demand, and the first licensed Spanish schools started opening in Antigua. Other Central American countries have since followed suit, but Guatemala still leads in price and quality of services. An internet search for Spanish Schools in Guatemala also yields more results than similar searches for neighbouring countries.

Like other sectors of the Guatemalan economy, the Tourism industry and the Spanish School industry are plagued 0 . Department of Tourism (INGUAT) and the Ministry of Education (MINEDUC), making a total count of Spanish schools impossible to find. For example, 66 Spanish schools are registered through INGUAT on the national level, whereas MINEDUC has only accredited 33 [2]. Regionally, INGUAT reports 29 Spanish schools in the area of Antigua alone; however, Conexion.com, an internet portal, lists the names and websites of 41 Spanish schools in Antigua. Likewise, 20 Spanish schools are registered with INGUAT in Quetzaltenango, but another portal Xelapages.com lists 24 [3]. Registered schools will publicize their certification with INGUAT and MINEDUC, but schools find that an internet presence is more important to the credibility of their schools. The most competitive schools maintain well-developed, professional websites with features such as online payment options.

Most Spanish schools follow the same basic formula. In order to serve foreigners for a short term, schools offer individualized classes that often consist of one-on-one instruction on a week-by-week basis. Students can often customize their classes to fit how many hours a day they want to spend studying, the level of Spanish instruction they require, and the style of learning they prefer. As schools have proliferated, they have competed by adding all

the extras that a student might want. Some host social mixers such as games, pot luck meals, parties, and salsa dance classes. Others advertise excursions and tours to nearby attractions. Many offer to connect their students to volunteer opportunities with local non-profits, hospitals and elementary schools. Some Spanish schools make contracts with local Guatemalan families who take students into their homes and provide room and board. Others have their own guesthouse accommodations adjoined to the school. Many offer the choice between the two. Beyond simply giving Spanish lessons, schools market themselves as multi-service providers to travellers.

Spanish school sign in the street in Quetzaltenango, GuatemalaFinding the right school in Guatemala

With so many different schools to choose from, how is a prospective student to decide which one will be the best
A C . C .
Quetzaltenango. More intrepid travellers can find Spanish schools in the remote areas of Quiche and Peten. Each of
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C . -capital and a World Heritage Site, offers some of the most high-end services and accommodations to be found in Guatemala. With its diligently-maintained cobblestone roads, charming central park, Spanish colonial architecture, romantic ruins, and refined dining and shopping options, the small city attracts visitors with money, both foreign and Guatemalan elite. Quality of life in Antigua has risen above the Guatemalan norm, as has the cost of living. The Spanish schools in Antigua follow this trend, meeting international standards of professionalism and quality. The priciest schools have been operating the longest, some for over 15 years. Their services include live online Spanish instruction through Skype, and their alliances with Guatemalan universities allow them to offer classes worth transferable college credit. Antigua is the choice destination of professionals wanting to learn business Spanish or other field-specific Spanish. For retirees learning Spanish as a hobby, Antigua is accessible and comfortable. Relatively safe and easy to navigate, Antigua is also good for high school and college- 0 C
attractiveness as a Spanish-learning destination has become almost self-defeating; among Spanish students, other tourists, volunteers, ex-pat business owners and ex-pat retirees, everybody speaks English, including the Guatemalans who live there.

C C .
epicurean, less expensive, and slightly less foreigner-infused environment. The lake possesses its own set of assets both cultural and natural. Its surrounding villages are home to native Mayan people that don their traditional costume and speak the indigenous tongue, and its surrounding volcanoes form a landscape of primordial tranquillity. The town of Panajachel is the portal to other favourite lake destinations such as San Pedro. Panajachel and rism, catering largely to backpackers on low budgets looking for high times. With prices for food and accommodation so low, visitors can afford to enjoy the avid nightlife. Spanish schools around the lake are also some of the most affordable, appealing to young and independent travellers on spontaneous and open-ended schedules. The schools in the area take advantage of the richly Mayan culture, using Mayan names and offering perks such as traditional weaving demonstrations, Mayan rituals, and visits to markets where traditional artisan crafts and textiles are sold. A Spanish student at the lake will probably find
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youthful traveller culture.

A third concentration of Spanish schools has sprung up in Quetzaltenango (also known as Xela), the second-largest city in Guatemala. Big and bustling, it is decidedly urban with all the implications arts and culture, pollution, nightlife, crime, higher education, industry, etc. Located in the disadvantaged western highlands region, the city is -profit organizations. They range in size and purpose, from public health to environmental protection to micro-credit to human rights to fair trade to responsible tourism. Accordingly, Xela is a Mecca of volunteerism. EntreMundos, an organization that links foreigners to non-profit activities, publishes lists of volunteer opportunities, sponsors lectures on social issues, and hosts lively benefit parties where Spanish students and volunteers can mingle and drink for a good cause. For nature-lovers, a number of non-profit organizations guide treks to the surrounding volcanic highlands then hand all the proceeds over to community projects. In this climate of mission- . 0
volunteer, Spanish students in Xela can make a difference with their dollar. They can choose Spanish schools with social projects, fair trade coffee shops, eco-tours to coffee farms, and the NGO-initiated laundromat where victims of domestic abuse learn work skills. The used book store sells peanut butter and jelly made by Guatemalan
0 Xela, options are plentiful for socially conscious consumers.

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where a student decides to spend her Spanish school doll whole
a source of great economic opportunity for thousands of Gua isparity
men and women remains wide in Guatemala. However, indexe mong
ale population over age 10. In 1996, 42.2% of women were found 3.2%
4 and 24.5% in 1989 [4]. Spanish schools are offering new jobs to w
e before, while wages for Spanish teachers are competitive. Teachers
een Q1600 and Q1700/mo (between USD$216 and $229/mo) whereas th n
704/mo (USD$230) and Q1447/mo (USD$195)[5] for women. Women
ols earn an income that is above average for women and on par with their

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room.

Spanish school. Emerging Spanish sc
challenge of a seasonally fluctuating ma
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school at any given time is never a constant, a
be hard to predict. Larger, well-established scho
can count on a minimum volume of students and
offer constant work to full-time teachers. Smaller
Spanish schools such as Sar
with the demand by sharing a pool of experienced
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her rather than switch at the end of the week. Even with ten years of teaching experience and a fairly regular work . 0 . . . -week basis. The popularity of homestays has created another source of income for Guatemalan women. Like Spanish teachers, they align themselves with a number of Spanish schools who certify them and hire them on a student-by-student basis. an, meeting other needs they might have, and practicing Spanish with them. Often, host families make ends meet each month by hosting students in their homes. Sary concedes that the most difficult part of her business is coordinating students with families that will be a good match. Given the short supply of happy, whole families and developed- . expectations can be hard to meet. Nevertheless, homestay experiences are generally positive and beneficial for both the students and the families.

The growth of the Spanish school phenomenon in Guatemala has meant more variety among the schools while creating meaningful income opportunities for local women from every background. With a little internet research or some in-country explo . for herself. Self-starters such as Sary reach out to the market, while for others the market reaches out to them. Either way, more Guatemalan women are crossing the threshold into economic activity. They are entering a field that offers benefits ranging from part-time flexibility and convenience to personal enrichment and positive cultural exchange for everyone involved. Que buena onda.

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About the Author

Cynthia Ord is Assistant Editor of XelaWho Magazine (Web: www.xelawho.com). Originally from Denver, Colorado, she has been living in Quetzaltenango for nine months volunteering for various non-profit organizations and co-editing the monthly culture and nightlife magazine XelaWho. Cynthia may be reached at cynthia.ord [at] gmail [dot] com.

eco headlines

News from our Members around the World

AFRICA

South Africa: New Elephant conservation & voluntourism program from Afreco Tours

27 January 2009 - Shalstone, Buckinghamshire - UK

African bush adventure specialists Afreco Tours are offering the opportunity for travellers to work with animals, wildlife, horses and domestic cattle on a community-based project in South Africa.

The new program focuses on conservation and wildlife management in conjunction with the local community and animal husbandry aspects such looking after the elephants, horses and cattle.
The motto is 'Conservation through Education and Interaction' offering student volunteers a holistic view of conservation issues today.

Running the conservancy will require that students participate in activities such as anti-poaching patrols, fence patrols, bush clearing, maintenance of infrastructure, research on wildlife and flora within the reserve and at times game capture and release.

Duration is 14 day, 28-day, 42-day or 56 days. Rates start
: 97 0

>> For more information
Contact Adrian Faulkner at Adrian@afrecotours.com
Related Link: http://www.afrecotours.com/Elephant-Whispers-Volunteer-Programme-South-Africa.asp

Tanzania: Travelers' Philanthropy Conference in Tanzania Exceeds Expectations

Arusha Tanzania & Washington DC, 9 January 2009

Over 225 delegates attended the 2008
Philanthropy Conference held in Arusha, Tanzania, making it the largest and most diverse conference ever held on this theme.
The 3-day conference, at which Nobel Laureate Dr.
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Belt Movement, gave the opening keynote address, also

addressed in Africa.

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rapidly growing into a worldwide movement and becoming part of the definition of responsible travel. At its core,

financial support, expertise, and material contributions to local projects and community initiatives. Tourism frequently takes place in biodiversity and culturally rich but economically poor regions of the world.

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only did more delegates attend than we had expected, but the conference is also generating a number of new

. . -Director
of the Center on Ecotourism and Sustainable Development (CESD) that organized the conference and runs the
Travel 0
help provide, for the first time, the tools to help tourism businesses and host communities initiate and effectively
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In the wake of the conference, CESD plans to:

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the conference. This handbook, which is being produced together with the Basecamp Foundation, will be launched in March at the ITB Berlin, th 0
* Create a CD with the conference proceedings, presentations, photos, and other documents, as well as post them online.
* Promote and distribute the first ever documentary on
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* Launch a new discussion board and blog for conference
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* Expand the Experts Bureau to include more professionals who can work with companies, community organizations,
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projects.
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businesses and travelers involved in supporting projects in the host communities.
* Incorporate additional companie

website which has the capacity to receive online, tax deductible donations.

Participants to the conference, which was held December 3-5, 2008 at the Ngurdoto Mountain Lodge, came from over 20 countries. Nearly half received full or partial scholarships to attend, thanks to funds provided by the Ford Foundation, USAID, the United Nations Foundation, and the United States Institute for Peace.

opportunity for the
east African tourism industry and local community-based enterprises to engage with developments related to responsible and sustainable forms of tourism, with roughly
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says Fred Nelson, the lead local organizer for the conference.

The conference included 18 workshops on topics such as

philanthropy; the responsibility and response of the travel industry to climate change; movin
from a charity model to social empowerment and entrepreneurship; and bad practices and best practices for engaging travelers.

In addition, the conference examined several issues critical to Africa, including the failure of many tourism businesses to adequately address the HIV/AIDS pandemic. At the conference, several delegates pledged that their companies would, within the next year, develop HIV/AIDS policies and programs for staff and visitor education, as well as initiate travel
HIV/AIDS clinics, orphanages, education and other types of programs in the host communities.

In his keynote address at the conference, Dr. David Western, founder of the Africa Conservation Centre and former director of the Kenya Wildlife Service, described

local community. He said it derives from the concept of the
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The conference was endorsed and supported by a wide range of sponsors. These include 31 companies, organizations, and development agencies. In addition to CESD, the leading partners in organizing the conference were the Honeyguide Foundation in Tanzania, Basecamp Foundation in Kenya, and the African Safari Lodge Foundation in South Africa.

>> For more details:
http://www.travelersphilanthropyconference.org

ASIA & PACIFIC

Bangladesh: New Blog records ecotourism strategy development in Bangladesh

Burlington, VT Jan 06, 2009

EplerWood International is kicking off the new year with a new Blog - A Day in the Life of an Ecotourism Consultant (Web: http://meganeplerwood.blogspot.com). Follow Megan Epler Wood on her journey to Bangladesh where she will develop an ecotourism strategy for the Teknaf Peninsula on the Bay of Bengal. This far-flung peninsula borders Burma, and is becoming a target for rapid local development. Forest reserves here harbor the threatened Bengal tiger.

Megan is focusing on the process involved in developing a new ecotourism destination - providing her thoughts on every aspect of creating a cultural, natural and sustainable site that serves local people and sustains the environment. Check it out!

We are also proud to release our second essay for TravelMole's VISION on Sustainable Tourism called Tourism Change We Can Believe In. Epler Wood discusses Tourism 2.0 - a new generation of professional endeavor.

There is increasing evidence that sustainable tourism models, including ecotourism, geotourism, voluntourism and responsible tourism are all performing better in the market place than mainstream tourism. But EplerWood International argues that only by more concerted work on benchmarking and sustainably managing mainstream tourism, will there be genuine change in the tourism marketplace.

About EplerWood International

EplerWood International works in partnership with development agencies, private companies, universities, and NGOs worldwide to develop a sustainable tourism economy.
Website: http://www.eplerwood.com

Pakistan: The Weavers of Human Soul at Lok Virsa, Islamabad, Pakistan

Chitral, Pakistan - 22 February 2009

The Chitral Association for Mountain Area Tourism (CAMAT) coordinated the participation of the goat-hair carpet "daree" and woolen carpet "qaleen" weavers in the Lok Mela Islamabad 2009 handicraft exhibition held February 14-22. The traditional craftsmen from Chitral attracted many visitors, who not only photographed the traditional weaving and learned about the traditional weaving practices of the Hindu Kush region. It is worth noting that the traditional handicrafts of both the Kalash and Khow communities, just like the traditional music and folk dances, are under enormous pressure of extinction given the fact that no proper arrangements have been undertaken to preserve the practice or market the products. A proper policy could provide economic incentives to the craftsmen and craftswomen, traditionally considered the 'weavers of human soul' owing to the delicacy and beauty of the patterns.

Thailand: Community Based Tourism progresses in Southern Thailand

Kuraburi, Phan Ga, Thailand - 18 February 2009

Andaman Discoveries, in cooperation with the SEED initiative and The Thailand Community Based Tourism Institute (CBT-
Nok in December. Stakeholders at the community- and district-level attended the forum, as well as several NGOs interested in working with the Ban Talae Nok community-based tourism (CBT) group. There were several objectives to the forum, including assessing the progress of CBT in the village, exploring options for sustainable expansion, and identifying problems. Villager feedback was overwhelmingly positive. "Income from tourism benefits the whole community. People did not realize this before, now they see others benefiting," commented Ekarat "Hem" Chuengyang.

The forum succeeded in raising awareness of CBT as a community activity. The chief conclusion was that for CBT to be sustainable as a long-term community development tool in BTN, community members must work together with a common vision of CBT as a tool to tackle shared 0 only bringing them income, but also helping to develop their comm . 0 . BTN Community Coordinator. Increased collaboration between the CBT and other community groups will help build awareness of the possible benefits cultural and environmental preservation, economic stimulus, and strengthened community ties of CBT to the whole village.

The forum concluded with a presentation of a copy of the SEED award, which will be proudly displayed at the community center.

>> For more details: http://www.andamandiscoveries.com

EUROPE

Greece: Ionian Eco Villagers among Finalists for 2009 Tourism for Tomorrow Awards

London, UK - 3 February 2009

The World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) today announced the 12 finalists for the 2009 Tourism for Tomorrow Awards which recognise best practices in sustainable tourism in four different categories - Destination Stewardship, Conservation, Community Benefit and Global Tourism Business. ECOCLUB Business Members Ionian Eco Villagers (Web: www.relaxing-holidays.com) are one of three finalists in the Conservation Award category.

Announcing the finalists, Costas Christ, Chairman of Judges said: "We have reached a global tipping point in the travel industry, as more businesses and countries realise that sustainable tourism is not only about protecting the environment and safeguarding cultural diversity, but that it is also an important economic opportunity. The Tourism for Tomorrow Awards judging process goes beyond just what a company says it is doing in sustainable tourism. Our next phase of judging involves an on-site expert evaluation of each finalist to assess what they are doing in practice, leading up to the selection of one winner in each category. "

Founded in 1994, Ionian Eco Villagers is an agency run by award-winning local conservationist providing carefully selected self-catering villas, cottages & apartments in the peaceful village of Gerakas within the Zakynthos National Marine Park.

Related:
http://www.relaxing-holidays.com
http://www.tourismfortomorrow.com

Latin America & Caribbean

Belize: Ancient Mayan Ball Game revived, Belize

Punta Gorda, Toledo, Belize - 10 February 2009

Visitors to Southern Belize will get a rare chance to witness the famous ancient Mayan ball game on Sunday March 29, during the Maya Day events organized by the Tumul Kin Center of Learning in Blue Creek village in Toledo district. The ball game had ritual associations and the Popol Vuh, the Mayan religious narrative establishes its importance which may have included human sacrifice. There will also be a performance of the traditional Cortes dance which tells the story of the arrival of the conquistadores in central America. The finale to the day will be a fireball game where players use s! ticks to strike a burning ball. Other activities throughout the celebrations include the finals of marimba and harp playing competitions and poetry competitions. This colourful festival attended by hundreds of villagers from the district is being repeated after being successfully staged for the first time in 2008.

To assist visitors, The Lodge at Big Falls is offering "The Living Maya 4 day/3 night Package"
March 28-31, 2009

On the second full day guests will visit the ancient Mayan site of Lubaantun where in 1926 the famous crystal skull was discovered by Frederick and Anna Mitchell-Hedges. After leaving Lubaantun they will travel through Mayan villages with traditional palm thatched roofs to the Rio Blanco National Park.

The Package includes accommodation, all meals, tours and transfers US$699 + tax

>> For more information:
http://www.thelodgeatbigfalls.com

Dominica: Dominica prepares for EcoFest, May 1-8, 2009

Rosalie, Dominica - 9 February 2009

EcoFest is getting closer, May 1st to May 8th 2009. Tickets and packages are now on sale with a 25% early bird 25% discount.

This unique one-week event, under the theme "A celebration of
planet" is organised by Rosalie Forest Eco Lodge with the support of the Environmental Coordinating Unit of The Government of Dominica.

It aims to showcase the the advances the world has made towards preserving the planet for generations to come, including the latest renewable energy technology, and how it is being put into practice on both local and nationwide scales on the Nature Isle of the World.

In collaboration with The BioGas Helpline, there will be a workshop on BioGas, and an opportunity to meet the experts as the organisers, Rosalie Forest Eco Lodge install their own BioGas plant.

There will also be displays of local crafts & music & cuisine, village homestay programs, visits to some of the

world's most spectacular nature and diving sites, hikes to the highest peak, treks to the boiling lake, and the hot springs,

This initiative is a collaborative effort between Planeta.com and the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity to showcase best practices in web-based technologies helping indigenous people manage tourism in a biodiversity-friendly way. Tourism services owned and operated by indigenous people and communities are eligible for the Indigenous Tourism and Biodiversity Website Award.

The award is part of a larger initiative by the Secretariat, aimed at building capacity for indigenous and local communities with the view to support and strengthen sustainable tourism initiatives through the use of new information and web-based technologies. It is a complement to the Indigenous Communities, Tourism and Biodiversity Workshop Series in which indigenous and local communities from each region are developing their own web based tools and methods with a view to improving their websites and their capacity to reflect traditional ways in conserving indigenous land, and to allow potential visitors and clients to learn about indigenous practices and cultures.

Planeta.com hosts a number of awards aimed at improving the quality of communication about responsible travel and ecotourism. Coverage of indigenous people and tourism are highlighted in the regional guides.

>> Details: http://planeta.wikispaces.com/itbw

NORTH AMERICA

United States: CESD becomes Center for Responsible Travel

Washington, DC , March 11, 2009: The Center on Ecotourism and Sustainable Development (CESD) announced today its new name, Center for Responsible Travel (CREST), and a new web address, www.responsibletravel.org.

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covering all sectors of the tourism industry, not just
. -founder and Co-Director,
Dr. Martha Honey who heads the Washington, DC office.
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The Center for Responsible Travel is an international nonprofit institute affiliated with Stanford University and headquartered in Washington, DC. It conducts policy-oriented research, programs, and field projects designed to minimize the negative impacts of tourism and maximize the positive contributions to host destinations and conservation.

eforms across all
sectors of tourism. Over the past three decades, ecotourism charted a path of principles and practices for sustainable
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-founder and Co-Director. Durham is a
professor of a
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like to help. There is great potential for tourism, the
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The name change is being officially announced this week at
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4.1 and the Center for Responsible Travel will exhibit in Hall 4.1 at stand 211.

The Center was founded in 2003 as a unique bicoastal institute with one foot in a strong academic institution and the other in the policy world of Washington, DC. Its staff, collaborating scholars, and international network of experts provide interdisciplinary analysis and innovative solutions through research and field projects, publications, conferences, and courses.

Its core programs include: Coastal and Marine Tourism,
. . .
Philanthropy which helps tourism businesses and travelers contribute to projects in the host communities. Last
Dece

The award winners were selected after six months of short-listing the finalists and as a unique feature for awards, the final eight properties were inspected by Wild Asia representatives. This year Wild Asia introduced a new set of criteria which included: 1) Sense of place whether tourists understand their destinations better through operators' efforts. 2) Sustainability whether these efforts are long-term. 3) Involvement of guests do the operators involve their guests in their practices? 4) Internalization how much is sustainability part of the day-to-day operations?

The 'Budget Accommodation' Award, one of four award categories was given to Tree Tops Jungle Lodge.

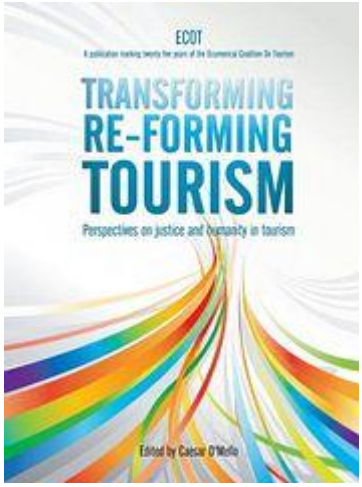
Dr. Reza Azmi, Director and Founder, Wild Asia, commented: "What's great about the Awards is we always find a gem - a property that challenges us in our evolving views of what makes a 'sustainable' business. I had a preconceived idea of Sri Lanka's Tree Tops Jungle Lodge as yet another wildlife lodge but what we discovered was how local everything was. From the design of the mud huts to the entire wildlife experience. Despite being a small operation, the lodge serves as important business, educational and conservation catalysts for the area".

"The Wild Asia Award is an incredible encouragement for me and my team as well as attracting well deserved international attention to Sri Lankan ecotourism" - Lars Sorensen said, Chief, Tree Tops Jungle Lodge.

Explaining what makes Tree Tops special, Lars Sorensen adds: "The jungle lodge vision developed from 2001 was quite a daring combination of adventure, experience and minimal facilities. However we went our own ways and have proven to be a world class Sri Lankan ecotourism product in terms of real and authentic experience. Our concept is tailor made for the particular area and aims to preserve local culture, nature and wildlife - call it 'living in the wilderness with local people'. The concept puts weight on the human resource part and environmental conservation rather than the actual physical hotel. Organization and service make the magic more than conventional comfort". This is all depending on the preservation of the surrounding nature because living amidst jungle, birds, spotting leopard paw marks and observing an occasional wild elephant is the core attraction for visitors".

Initiated in 2006 by Malaysia-based conservation group Wild Asia (www.wildasia.net), the Awards showcase exemplary Asian ecotourism ventures that are committed to sustainable practices. This year's Awards attracted a diverse group of tourism operators from Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia, the Philippines, Laos, the Maldives, Sri Lanka and India. Wild Asia organized various learning seminars attended by pioneers of Asian nature conservation and leaders in ecotourism from the finest Asian eco-chic resorts to basic community based accommodation places.

>> For more information:
http://www.treetopsjunglelodge.com



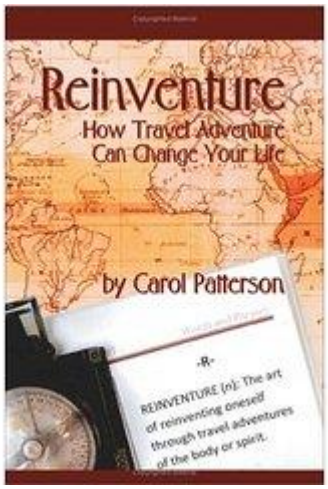
eco reviews

Transforming Re-Forming Tourism - Perspectives on justice & humanity in tourism
Edited by Caesar D'Mello
248 pages, Ecumenical Coalition on Tourism, Chiang Mai, Thailand, 2008

Marking the 25th anniversary of the Ecumenical Coalition On Tourism, a church-led NGO based in Thailand which campaigns for an Ethical Tourism, this highly-readable volume brings together a lot of writer talent, tourism knowledge & activism from around the world. Contributions from 29 authors are organised in 7 sections covering a great range of issues such as the lack of representation of women in Tourism, the very small progress of the mainstream tourism towards meeting the Millennium Development Goals, the neo-colonial & neoliberal aspects of mainstream Tourism and its intrinsic unsustainability, the problematic morality of Tourism from the Christian, Islamic and Buddhist viewpoints, the still-persisting phenomenon of sexual exploitation of minors by tourists in certain countries, the high-promises and shortcomings of pro-poor and community-based tourism, the futility of certification, and the misuse of Ecotourism and sustainable tourism. Besides convincingly arguing that Tourism is neither a panacea, nor a smoke-free industry, nor a guaranteed wealth generator, nor welcome by all *communities* (which should not be called "hosts" as the book points out), the book includes many shrewd if a bit cruel observations - such as the misuse of the Millennium Development Goals by UNWTO to advance even more Tourism Development - and should therefore find its place in the library of the serious Ecotourist and on the desk of the Tourism undergraduate as an introductory alternative textbook with interesting case study material. Ecotourism practitioners may not agree with some of the authors, especially those who seem to show some aversion towards all forms of Tourism, including sustainable ones, without necessarily producing the data to back this aversion. Academics may feel that what are essentially complex political-philosophical issues are discussed in a relatively casual, journalistic yet apolitical manner, without references to academic or political frameworks. The non-religious will appreciate that theology is kept at a minimum, but may observe that a critical examination of the role/participation of the Church and Religion

in Tourism (and broadly in the economy) and its own cooperation or tolerance of the powerful tourism interests, local & multinational, that the book chastises is also absent. But overall this is a very useful book from a very useful, and refreshingly progressive faith-based initiative - *A.P. - 26 Feb 2009*

▷For more details & to order visit http://www.ecotonline.org



Reinventure - How Travel Adventure Can Change Your Life
By Carol Patterson
160 pages, Trafford Publishing, Victoria, BC, Canada, 2008

A personal, blog-style, light-hearted but detailed
worldwide, travel experiences. The author convincingly argues that travel, beyond transforming communities can also transform the lives of individual travellers,

leading ecotourism consultant. Forty short stories, including tales from or about friends

0 not listed in any particular thematic, geographic or chronological order, although some seem to end abruptly as the reader is immersed in the action. Each story starts with a carefully chosen travel-related quote from a famous author, one of the best being a typically sardonic (and prophetic) one

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Academic readers and seasoned travellers aware of the many wrongs of and within Travel would probably expect a less exuberant and more critical approach, and more stories like the one about the Kenya Lodge employees only being able to see their relatives 6 weeks per year. However the author, better known for other works focusing on the business side of travel, aims in this book and succeeds, to reassure ordinary package travellers that it is safe for them to make the extra step and try independent, adventure and/or nature travel. Thus the book should prove a successful and useful example of travel pop psychology and self help through travel - *A.P. - 22 Feb 2009*

▷For more details & to order visit http://www.reinventuretravel.com

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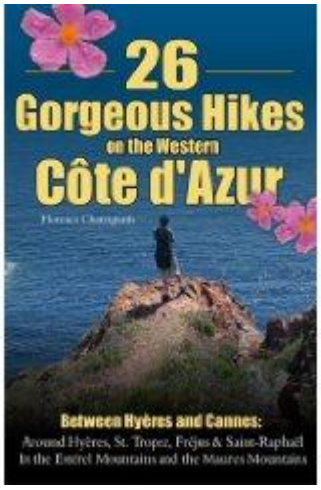

26 Gorgeous Hikes on the Western Cote d'Azur
By Florence Chatzigiannis
150 pages, AzurAlive, San Carlos, California, 2008
An alternative, pleasant to read, guide for experiencing a renown region, in an ecological way - hiking - a world away from the glitz and the crowds. Includes over 50 colour pictures and detailed maps of trails, including hiking time - most hikes can be completed in a half-day, distance, difficulty, elevation gain, best time to visit, as well as practical information such as contact details and links to further online information. The right size & weight for hikers, still manages to include interesting information on select flora such as Poseidonia and the Cork Oak, history and geology and guidelines on responsible hiking. The hikes themselves present great variety, from sea paths, gorges, lagoons, to Roman Aqueducts, medieval forts and monasteries, and other ancient ruins, to modern ruins and disaster sites such as the Malpasset Dam. The guide is written with those travelling by car in mind, perhaps in a future edition more information on how to reach the starting point of each trail could be provided for those hiking all the way from the train or bus station and also include some sort of rating for the hikes, for those who do not have many days at their disposal and need to pick just two or three out of the 26. The publishers should also consider replacing the glossy paper with recycled, to do justice to the content. We look forward to more hiking guides from the author! - *A.P. - 20 Feb 2009*

▷For more details & to order visit http://www.azuralive.com/order.html

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ECOCLUB®, T
ISSN 1108-8931
Year 9, Issue 100 - Published: March 2009

Free e-Magazine mostly based on the best content published at www.ecoclub.com .
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