

Adventure Companies Blending Adventure Tourism and Volunteering Cite Corruption, Sustainability Among Chief Challenges

July 16, 2007, SANTA FE, NM - Xola Consulting, in collaboration with George Washington University's International Institute of Tourism Studies (IITS), has completed a study of best practices in adventure and volunteer tourism.

The study, *Emerging Best Practices In Adventure Tourism and Volunteering*, examines the business practices of six organizations including tour operators, non-governmental organizations (NGO's) and a new breed of "donor brokers" for traveler philanthropy. Adventure Travel Trade Association President Shannon Stowell said, "This study marks an important first step for the adventure tourism industry as it strives to respond to and truly understand traveler requests for more meaningful travel experiences."

As consumer demand for volunteer travel grows - a Travel Industry Association survey found in 2005 that one-quarter of travelers queried in the "Voice of the Traveler" survey (47% of them between the ages of 35-47) said they were currently interested in taking a volunteer or service-based vacation - more organizations find themselves at the intersection of tourism and humanitarian or environmental social work. This research was undertaken to identify operational best practices for these leading edge companies and NGOs.

Key challenges cited by organizations blending adventure tourism and service work in markets around the world include:

- Corruption;
- Program Sustainability; and
- Balancing short term and long term gains expectations.

Key findings from the study will help companies and travelers flocking to this unconventional blend of travel and philanthropy navigate these challenges and others with:

- Guidance for tour operators seeking to establish "give back" programs in regions in which they operate;
- Strategies for both tour operators and NGOs to use when identifying reputable community partners and programs compatible with tourism;
- Guidance for NGO's seeking to incorporate travelers into their programs to support and encourage fundraising; and
- Suggestions for travelers seeking to make meaningful contributions to individuals and communities they encounter in their travels.

Providing a balanced perspective and findings relevant to both start-ups and established organizations, participants in the in-depth case study analysis include companies with long history as well as new entrants operating in adventure markets around the world:

- Explorandes - www.explorandes.com

- Generosity in Action – www.generosityinaction.org
- Global Sojourns – www.globalsojourns.com
- Los Ninos – www.losninosinternational.org
- Protect the Earth, Protect Yourself (PEPY) – www.pepyride.org
- Relief Riders International – www.reliefridersinternational.com

For more details on the study or a complimentary copy of the Executive Summary, contact Christina Heyniger, Founder, Xola Consulting: christina@xolaconsulting.com or Kristin Lamoureaux, Director, The George Washington University's International Institute for Tourism Studies: klam@gwu.edu

Xola Consulting provides consulting services to tourism boards interested in adventure tourism development as well as direct support to individual adventure tour operators with marketing and organizational strategy advice. Specializing in adventure tourism development and the blend of adventure tourism and volunteer service, Xola has in-depth experience in emerging markets around the world including North Africa and Southeast Asia, particularly Cambodia, Myanmar, India and Nepal.

The George Washington University's International Institute of Tourism Studies has held a leadership role in tourism and hospitality education for over 30 years, building a global reputation for tourism research and academic programs. Today, IITS, located within GW's School of Business, offers academic opportunities in tourism administration, event management, sport management, and sustainable destination management for undergraduate, master's, and professional students.