



For Immediate Release
February 6, 2007

USTOA Forms Responsible Tourism Committee
To Promote Best Practices in Packaged Travel

The United States Tour Operators Association – whose members account for the vacations of 11 million travelers annually – has formed a Responsible Tourism Committee in acknowledgement of the important role tourism plays in environmental, economic and social issues worldwide. According to Bob Whitley, USTOA president, the committee will help develop and promote best practices in Responsible Tourism for USTOA’s 134 Active members.

Internal Education and Outreach are Initial Missions

The Committee has set its mission as promoting the meaning of responsible tourism to USTOA members, encouraging members to engage in best practices, and providing a forum for USTOA members to share experiences and develop solutions to challenges. Other plans call for providing USTOA’s membership with information about international accreditation and tourism certification programs in all parts of the world, and developing training programs to help members understand and meet the standards of responsible tourism in their day-to-day operations.

As part of its outreach efforts, the USTOA Responsible Tourism Committee will develop relationships with like-minded organizations, and establish guidelines or standards with countries and Allied Members that already have existing programs. Additionally, the Committee will provide information to media, consumers, travel agents and other industry members about the standards USTOA is advocating.

Responsible Tourism Defined

Under the chairmanship of Harry Dalgaard, President, Avanti Destinations, the committee’s first task has been to define Responsible Tourism. According to the USTOA definition, Responsible Tourism “enhances the well being of host communities, generates greater economic benefits and builds pride and confidence for local people, thus improving their working conditions and access to the travel industry.”

Other areas of Responsible Tourism as defined by the USTOA committee include conservation, culture and education, and access.

Conservation: Responsible Tourism makes positive contributions to the conservation of natural and cultural heritage, and to the preservation of the world's diversity

Social, Culture and Education: Responsible Tourism engenders respect between travelers and host communities, fosters greater understanding and involves local people in decisions that affect their lives. It leads to greater understanding by providing an enjoyable educational experience for travelers through meaningful connections with local people.

Access: Responsible Tourism provides access for physically challenged travelers.

In describing the association's new Responsible Tourism Committee Whitley notes, "We in the tourism industry can have a positive impact both in the way in which we operate our vacation packages and tours, and in putting out the word on the importance of taking care of the tourism footprint in every corner of the world. USTOA has been in the forefront of advocating for consumers on issues such as freedom of travel, consumer protection, and in founding the organization known today as 'Tourism Cares.' As a leading organization in the travel industry, it is important that we continue to play a vital role in helping preserve our shared cultural and environmental heritage."

For more information on USTOA's Responsible Tourism Committee, contact USTOA, 275 Madison Avenue, Suite 2014, New York, NY 10017. Or email information@ustoa.travel or information@ustoa.com.

-END-

Press Contact:

Linda Kundell
Kundell Communications
(212) 877-2798 phone
(212) 877-3387
LRKPR@aol.com