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PRESENTED AT SKAL WORLD CONGRESS IN TAIPEI

## Thailand wins top eco award



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BY ETN STAFF WRITER | NOV 13, 2008

Thailand took home top honors for Eco Friendly Transportation at the recent 7th Annual Skál International Ecotourism Awards which were presented by the President of Skál International, Phillip Sims and Hulya Aslantas in the presence of the Minister of Communication and Transportation of R.O.C. Dr. C.K. Mao during the opening ceremony of the 69th Skál World Congress held in Taipei, Taiwan at the TICC (Taipei International Convention Centre).

Skál, founded as an international association in 1934, is the largest organization of travel and tourism professionals in the world, embracing all sectors of the travel and tourism industry, in five continents, 90 countries and at over 500 locations, with 20,000 members from hoteliers to travel agents, airlines, tourism media, tourism academies, etc. Skál International is aiming at quality in tourism and values sustainable development in tourism as the key to the industry's future success and considers ecotourism but one area of the various components of sustainable development and responsible tourism.

To encourage the conservation of the environment and help to promote the development of responsible and sustainable tourism, Skál International initiated Eco Tourism awards whose purpose was to highlight best practices in ecotourism around the world. They were also created with the aim of acquainting the world with this new concept that puts emphasis on the importance of the interaction of the physical, cultural, and social environment, the traveler's responsibility and the need for active community participation for ecotourism.

In their seventh year, the awards have received continued support worldwide and this year, 54 entries were received originating from 23 countries; nine from Asia, 18 from the Americas, 15 from Europe, 7 from Africa, and 5 from Oceania.

The awards show the sensitivity and awareness of Skál International towards the protection of the environment

in conjunction with sustainable tourism. Ecotourism, together with other alternative forms of tourism strengthens the local economies and contributes to sustainable development.

The applications were evaluated by three independent judges and the scores given by each separately, are added up to find the winners. The primary criteria for the evaluation is based on such points like, contribution to the conservation of nature and cultural heritage and community involvement.

The winners are announced as follows:

1. In the category of Tour Operators and Travel Agents:  
NORTHERN SOUL WILDERNESS ADVENTURES, CANADA
2. In the category of Urban Accommodation:  
THE PEFKOS BEACH HOTEL. SUSTAINABLE TOURISM AND THE ENVIRONMENT, GREECE
3. In the category of Rural Accommodation:  
BUILDING LIVELIHOOD & ECO TAJ, INDIA
4. In the category of Transportation:  
NATURAL HISTORY BY SEA KAYAK, THAILAND
5. In the category of General Countryside:  
LESVOS PETRIFIED FOREST GEOPARK, GREECE

- 6. In the category of City and Villages:  
THE ORANGE FLAG PROGRAMME: A QUALITY LABEL FOR SUSTAINABLE TOURISM AND ENVIRONMENT, ITALY
  - 7. In the category of Educational Programmes - Media:  
EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMES OF THE GEOPARK NATURTEJO MESETA MERIDIONAL - UNESCO EUROPEAN AND GLOBAL GEOPARK, PORTUGAL
  - 8. In the category of Global Corporate Establishment:  
GLOBAL TOURISM BUSINESS, KENYA IVELIHOOD & ECO TAJ, INDIA
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