

Thailand wins Top Eco Award

Friday, 14 November 2008

Thailand took home top honours for Eco Friendly Transportation at the recent 7th Annual Skal International Ecotourism Awards which were presented by the President of Skal 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 Skal World Congress held in Taipei, Taiwan at the TICC (Taipei International Convention Centre).

Skal, founded as an international association in 1934 is the largest organisation 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. Skal 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, Skal 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, seven from Africa and five from Oceania.

The Awards show the sensitivity and awareness of Skal 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, 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



Winners at the 7th ECOTOURISM AWARDS presented during the 2008 SKAL World Congress in Taipei .



MD of Sea Kayak, Thailand, Mr John Gray (right) receives his award from Skal Intl President Mr Phil Sims.

AND GLOBAL GEOPARK, PORTUGAL

8. In the category of Global Corporate Establishment:

GLOBAL TOURISM BUSINESS, KENYA IVELIHOOD & ECO TAJ, INDIA

Source : Andrew Wood

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