



## Press Information

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### TO DO!2010 – Contest Socially Responsible Tourism

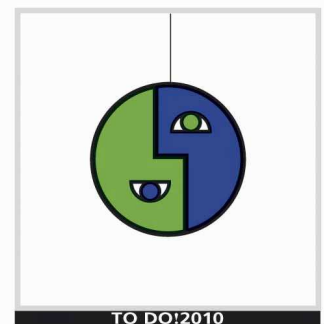
At the International Tourism Exchange (ITB), the Studienkreis für Tourismus und Entwicklung e.V. (Institute for Tourism and Development) will award three projects a TO DO! The winners of the 16th round of the contest are from Guatemala, Tajikistan, and Thailand. Prize monies have again been donated by the Swiss Foundation for Solidarity in Tourism (SST) and the Europäische Reiseversicherung AG (ERV – European Travel Insurance Corp.).

On 11th March 2011, the Studienkreis für Tourismus und Entwicklung will honour the winners of the international TO DO! Contest Socially Responsible Tourism which has been conducted annually since 1995. The TO DO!2010 will be awarded at the 45th International Tourism Exchange (ITB) in Berlin.

The three equal winners are the HISTORIC AND EDUCATIONAL CENTRE RIIJ IB'OOY in Río Negro, Guatemala, the regional development project COMMUNITY BASED TOURISM IN THE ZERAFSHAN VALLEY in Tajikistan, and the travel agency ANDAMAN DISCOVERIES in Thailand. All the three award winners have one aspect in common: They emerged from crisis situations and have successfully developed under most difficult circumstances.

The Guatemalan project of an indigenous Mayan community has to be assessed against the backdrop of three decades of civil war. After the dissolution of the USSR and the subsequent transition, the Tajik population in the Zerafshan Valley had hardly any economic perspectives, and many communities in the Southern Thai Province of Phang Na (Andaman Sea) were almost completely destroyed by the devastating tsunami in December 2004.

However, what the TO DO! experts in charge reported after their on-site visits on behalf of Studienkreis comes as a pleasant surprise (see award rationales at <http://www.studienkreis.org/engl/news.html>). All the three TO DO! winners meet the most important contest criterion extremely well: They have been developing tourism with the participation of the local population and are thus better equipped to shape their own future.



The TO DO! 2010-award ceremony will take place during ITB in Berlin:

**Friday, 11th March**  
(16.00h – 17.00h)  
Dachgartenfoyer ICC

Laudation: Hans Ulrich Schudel,  
Swiss Foundation for Solidarity  
in Tourism (SST)

Info: [www.to-do-contest.org](http://www.to-do-contest.org)

**ANDAMAN DISCOVERIES** is a travel agency in the Southern Thai Province of Phang Nga. In the area – North of the tourist centres of Phuket and Khao Lak – which has hardly been developed for tourism, Buddhists, Muslims and Moken (Sea Gypsies) live side by side and practice predominantly traditional lifestyles as fishermen and farmers.

The coastal region situated on the Andaman Sea was severely hit by a tsunami in December 2004. Many villages were destroyed. After this disaster, the US-American citizen Bodhi Garrett, who grew up in Asia and who had been living there for a long time, founded an aid organisation – the North Andaman Tsunami Relief (NATR). This NGO helped the people on the coast to reconstruct their villages. In this process, a committed network of supporters, volunteers and donors emerged, with the effect that over the years that followed, NATR was able to implement about 120 projects in 22 communities, always in direct cooperation with the villagers.

One of these projects the travel agency ANDAMAN DISCOVERIES in Kuraburi, founded by Bodhi Garrett. It started from the consideration that community based tourism could be seen as a good opportunity to generate additional income for the participating communities without them having to give up their traditional ways of living.

ANDAMAN DISCOVERIES initiates, provides guidance, and sends tourists – in cooperation with Thai tour operators. The guests can visit the villages for a day, or they can stay in the villages for more than a day. The eco and adventure tours offered are as diverse as the region itself: bicycle tours, hiking, rafting and kayaking tours lead through savannah-like areas, through rain forest with an extraordinarily diverse flora and fauna or along canals lined by mangroves near to the coast. Furthermore, ANDAMAN DISCOVERIES offers long-term stays for volunteers and students.

With an award winner from Tajikistan, it is for the first time that a TO DO! goes to a region which is rather "unknown territory" for Western tourists. During the Soviet era, the Zerafshan Valley, surrounded by peaks above 5,000 meters, was an attractive and popular destination not far off the silk road.

The objective of the regional development project **COMMUNITY BASED TOURISM IN THE ZERAFSHAN VALLEY** is to provide additional job opportunities and income to the local population through tourism development. Subsistence agriculture has so far been dominating, which forces many local people to go to Russia or Kazakhstan as migrant workers.

With the support of the umbrella organisation Zerafshan Tourism Development Association (ZTDA), home stay facilities for interested visitors have been created (about 20 home stay providers). So-called Tourism Initiative Groups (TIGs) have been set up, which offer their services in three districts of the Zerafshan Valley: home stays, guided trekking tours and trips to cultural sites, horseback riding, transport services (vehicles, donkeys),

The focus of the criteria of the **TO DO! - Contest Socially Responsible Tourism** is, among others, on considering different interests of the local population in the planning and implementation of tourism projects. They are to be taken into account through active participation of the local people. The chances and risks of such endeavours as well as the extent and spread of the economic benefit must be transparent to all stakeholders.

Info:  
[www.to-do-contest.org](http://www.to-do-contest.org)

In 2011, the TO DO! will be announced again.

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folkloristic performances, demonstration of the making of local products. All in all, there are about 100 small-scale service providers. The TIGs also ensure that the quality of home stays is maintained. The service providers involved determine themselves to what extent they want to engage in tourism, how much they want to invest in infrastructure, and how much of their work time they want to spend on it. The former German Development Service (DED) – since 2011 incorporated as Entwicklungsdienst der Deutschen Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) – is involved in developing and financing the project.

For the visitors, helpful information has been compiled, including tips on respectful behaviour in the home stays. Apart from education and training programmes for home stay providers, about 30 women are supported in the production and marketing of handicraft. Furthermore, marketing efforts are being made to make the region better known as a travel destination in order to make the project financially independent.

With the **HISTORIC AND EDUCATIONAL CENTRE RIIJ IB'OOY**, the award goes to a project run by a Mayan community in Río Negro, an area in central Guatemala where Mayas began to settle more than 2,500 years ago. This historic and educational centre – which is at the same time used for tourism – has been constructed against a violent backdrop: In and around Río Negro, 440 people – about half of the members of the community – were killed in 1982. The reason: In connection with the construction of the Chixoy Dam during the civil war, local families protested against their forceful eviction. As a consequence, several massacres of the indigenous population ensued. The remaining Mayas took refuge in the mountains. Some of them returned to their home region only in the early 1990s.

Against this backdrop, the community of Río Negro decided in 2007 to build the **HISTORIC AND EDUCATIONAL CENTRE RIIJ IB'OOY** – with a memorial room, a library, a hall for events as well as accommodation facilities for guests. Apart from this main house built in traditional style, they also built another two houses with accommodation facilities and a kitchen. The material was financed by the German Development Service (DED/now GIZ). DED had already been active in the region as part of their work on peace building and conflict resolution. The project made it easier for the community members, who had more or less lived in isolation from the outside world, to talk about their experiences with strangers. The centre and the two guest houses (also in traditional style) were constructed by the villagers of Río Negro themselves. They were from the beginning involved in planning and conceptualizing the centre, they are the owners and they are running it.

One of the most important aspects when developing the centre was to establish a basis for additional sources of income for the families who mainly live on subsistence farming and fishing. Therefore, it was an obvious idea to develop tourism programmes and to market them as part of day trips or

#### **Tajikistan:**

##### **Zerafshan Tourism Development Association (ZTDA)**

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excursions. This is now happening with the help of the Community Education Centre Pokomchi (CECEP) in San Christóbal.

Visitors do not only learn about the holy sites that were submerged when the dam was built. They also get information on people's lives in the Mayan community today. Talking with the villagers of Río Negro, guests also get an idea of the joy of living they regained. Excursions to the surroundings give visitors an impression of the beautiful scenery of this region.

This year's laudation for the TO DO! winners will be held by Hans Ulrich Schudel, Vice President of the Swiss Foundation for Solidarity in Tourism (SST). He will also talk about the socio-political relevance of participation, loosely based on the motto "If not now, then when?"

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