

Tour Operators Contribute to CSR and Community Development Initiatives

Harnessing the power of travel to make a difference in people's lives, many tour operators around the world are contributing to conservation, sustainable community development, education and capacity-building initiatives in the destinations they work in. Below are just a few examples of how tour operators can utilize their local and global networks to give back to destinations and local communities.

Basecamp Explorer & Basecamp Foundation (Masai Mara, Kenya) – Basecampexplorer.com

Basecamp Explorer operates a network of destinations in Kenya, India, Norway and the French Pyrenees. Basecamp Foundation, currently working in Kenya and India, supports community empowerment through improved access to water, energy, education, health services and technologies. Faced with the dire effects of climate change in Masai Mara such as frequent droughts and water scarcity, Basecamp Foundation's Climate Program aims to mitigate the negative impact of climate change through tree planting on leased land that guarantees that the trees will stand for a minimum of 20 years; training Masai women to become solar engineers and to help power homes in their communities; and offering capacity building to assist alternative livelihoods less dependent on land. Basecamp Explorer guests have the opportunity to visit these projects in order to learn about and spread global awareness of the local impacts of climate change and solutions needed to sustain communities. Contact: Grace Nderitu (info@basecampfoundation.org), Project Coordinator, Basecamp Foundation.

Borneo Eco Tours (Sabah, Malaysia) – Borneoecotours.com

Award-winning nature, culture and wildlife tour operator Borneo Eco Tours in Sabah, Malaysia runs the Sukau Rainforest Lodge (featured in "Authentic Ecolodges" as a leading example of ecotourism visionary contributing to biodiversity conservation), and the company also funds and operates a non-profit BEST (Borneo Ecotourism, Solutions and Technologies) Society, helping develop social entrepreneurship programs and environmental projects in Sabah. The BEST Society's "Living Water" project, for example, has successfully provided clean well water to local villages in Northern Borneo, offering a lasting solution through volunteer efforts in geological survey, drilling, and water tank and filter installation, as well as awareness and literacy programs. The project has also helped build public toilets, so the coastal communities can better take advantage of local ecotourism opportunities. Contact: Melissa Lim (info@bestsociety.org), Research and Admin Executive, BEST Society.



Photo by BEST Society

Global Vision International (UK, worldwide) – Gvi.co.uk

The winner of the 2011 Virgin Holiday's Responsible Travel Award for "Best Volunteering Organisation", Global Vision International (GVI) is a leading volunteer travel provider, with over 100 volunteer projects in the fields of environmental research, conservation, education and community development in 25 countries. In 2005, GVI established the GVI Charitable Trust (Gvi.org) to fund and support local sustainable development initiatives. The National Scholarship Program (NSP), the GVI Charitable Trust's flagship initiative, provides opportunities for local students and adults to receive access to education, training and opportunities that may lead to long term well-being of their communities. In addition to supporting education in the various destinations where GVI volunteers travel to, the NSP also works in the UK and the USA, helping fund training for disadvantaged individuals and offering them the tools to make a difference in their own lives, contribute to their community and impact global issues. Contact: Andy Woods-Ballard (andy@gviworld.com), Director of Operations, GVI, GVI Charitable Trust.



Photo by IES Global

IES Global (Beijing, China) – iesglobal.com

IES (Integrated Education Services) Global provides cross cultural education, exchange and internship programs in China, offering travelers and professionals the opportunity to gain valuable cultural experiences, as well as language skills, in China. The winner of the 2012 JCI Socially Responsible Company Award, IES Global is a strong advocate for corporate social responsibility (CSR) in China. In 2011, IES Global started working with a local non-profit organization that supports orphans who are blind or visually impaired, by providing care, education, life skills and livelihood opportunities, and by helping the children live independently as dignified members of society. With the goal of "actively giving back to the less fortunate in the local community," IES Global's volunteer program engages travelers to assist with the school's fully self-sustainable farm (photo: IES Global volunteer team harvesting corn) as

well as to help plan and market the school's events. IES Global and its participants also support a local chain of community centers called Hui Lin that are helping handicapped adults throughout China. Contact: Kirsty Armstrong (k.armstrong@iesglobal.com), Volunteer Program and CSR Manager, IES Global.

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