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PRESS RELEASE

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New Study Shows Strength of Responsible Tourism Market, Despite Global Economic Recession

A ground-breaking new study, “The Market for Responsible Tourism Products”, finds that while international tourism markets continue to waver in the wake of the global financial crisis, one market segment is weathering the storm with relative impunity – Responsible Tourism.

The study, commissioned by SNV Netherlands Development Organization and produced by the Center for Responsible Travel, concludes that “Responsible tourism appears to be doing slightly better – or less badly – than the tourism industry as a whole.” The study is now available as a free download at CREST’s website: <http://www.responsibletravel.org/resources/index.html>

The study examines global trends in responsible tourism, profiling products, markets and consumers; it also makes a series of in-depth marketing recommendations for service providers in developing countries who are already in or who wish to enter the Responsible Tourism market.

“At least two thirds of the people walking into a travel agency are looking for authenticity, they are looking for something being put back into the local destination, and that we are actually enhancing livelihoods,” said Chris Thompson, Responsible Tourism Coordinator for the UK’s Federation of Tour Operators.

The study profiles consumers of Responsible Tourism products from six key outbound countries: United States, Canada, UK, Germany, Holland and Spain. It also examines six product segments – Nature-based, Cultural and Community-based, Volunteer and Educational, Backpackers and Youth, Adventure, and High-end -- and assesses the Responsible Tourism components within each of these sectors.

Key findings include:

- Responsible tourism appears to be doing slightly better – or less badly – than the tourism industry as a whole.
- Responsible travel consumers actively plan their holidays, seek interactive learning experiences, and travel “with a purpose” that can include travelers’ philanthropy or volunteering.
- Responsible travelers from Europe and North America are similar in a number of ways: they tend to be well educated, include all age groups (with greater concentrations among

youths and retirees), are equally divided between men and women, have higher than average amounts of disposable income, come mostly from urban areas, and travel beyond major cities.

- Significant global trends that are supporting responsible travel are the growth of long-haul travel; rapid expansion of Internet travel planning and bookings, “Travel 2.0” online travel communities and forums; and increasing consumer demand for travel that offers authenticity, connections with nature, environmental stewardship, and personal growth.
- However, other trends - desire for escapism and fantasy, time constraints, and recently the “Don't fly” movement, work against the growth of responsible tourism.

“Our findings demonstrate that consumers around the world are increasingly aware of the potential impact of their tourism dollar, with socially responsible and environmentally sustainable tourism becoming a leading market segment globally,” says David Krantz who headed the team of CREST staff and consultants who carried out the six month study.

Partly because of consumer demand, Responsible Tourism has become a key focus of organizations such as the UNWTO and is a priority sector for SNV, which now employs teams of Pro-Poor Responsible Tourism advisers in 20 countries throughout Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Balkans. They work both to develop destinations and to help tourism businesses integrate environmentally, economically, and socially responsible practices into their operations.

SNV has found, however, that the local businesses and destinations they work with frequently lack access to accurate market data and analysis. SNV commissioned this study to address that gap and to provide needed information for SNV and other development agencies as they create commercially viable Responsible Tourism programs.

“We are sure that the data and analysis in the report will prove a valuable resource for tourism entrepreneurs worldwide, and will also serve as a useful tool for development organizations and their national partners who are working so hard to promote socially responsible and environmentally sustainable tourism practices across the globe” said SNV Asia Regional Director Andy Wehkampf.

A Spanish version of the study will be available on the CREST website in the coming weeks and printed versions are available from SNV Pro-Poor Sustainable Tourism corporate network leader Paul Stevens on pstevens@snvworld.org.

Center for Responsible Travel (CREST) is a policy-oriented research institute affiliated with Stanford University. It is committed to using tourism as a tool for poverty reduction and biodiversity conservation. CREST's network of experts provides interdisciplinary analysis and innovative solutions through consultancies, research and field projects, publications, conferences and courses. Core programs center on innovation, and include Coastal and Marine Tourism, Market Research, Travelers' Philanthropy, Ecotourism and Certification.

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