



Voluntourists Without Borders

An initiative aimed at using voluntourist labour and donor funding to alleviate rural poverty, protect the forests, and promote sustainable eco-tourism.

Overview

The solutions Voluntourists Without Borders (VWB) offers are in direct support of the World Tourism Organisation (WTO) millennium goals which call for tourism to be used in the fight against world poverty. The VWB initiative distinguishes itself from other projects in that it implements 'hands on', direct funded, integrated and sustainable solutions



to the problems that bring about rural poverty in the first place. In the north of Thailand it proposes:

- To provide rural Thai and ethnic minority (hill tribe) villagers with viable employment by helping them to establish a world class eco-tourism industry in which they are the major stake holders. The product range will include eco-camps and lodges, nature trails, agroforestry trails and a village industry that uses bamboo as a base material.
- To introduce the eco-tourism development component in tandem with an agroforestry project that allows for the planting of bamboo, rattan, edible palm, wild peppers and medicinal plants etc., within, yet without disturbing the existing

forest. The medium term benefits include less labour for more revenue, and little or no clear cutting of forest areas which are instead used as an ecotourism asset. The rewards to Thailand come in the form of an improved 'sustainable tourism destination' image, additional tourism revenues, an increase in the level of environmental protection, alleviation of rural poverty, and in defusing the tensions between the groups currently in conflict over the use of natural resources. The world will share in those benefits, and through supporting this pre-emptive action, will help head off what has the potential to become a human rights and environmental catastrophe.

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Track of the Tiger

www.track-of-the-tiger.com

Track of the Tiger has an enviable reputation as a pioneer in the development of northern Thailand's soft adventure tour and educational tourism industry, see www.maekok-river-village-resort.com. Established in 1986, the company has interests in several areas of tourism: resorts, tour operations, special event management, restaurants and tourism publications, and has authored several white papers on sustainable tourism development that have been well received by the industry and the authorities.

Track of the Tiger also operates one and two day ecotours and corporate team building programmes in support of the VWB initiative.

VWB in action

Nature Trail Development

With help from the Chiang Mai University we have been able to put together an excellent 'nature trail guide' for the Pang Soong Nature Trail (see: www.pang-soong-lodge.com). The document, although a work in progress, is of world class standard and is the cornerstone on which the ecotourism product for that particular area will be developed. Voluntourists will assist in

the continued development of the guide research and data gathering, mapping, trail component construction (walkways, Burma bridges, canopy walks etc.)

Check dam installation

Small 80cm high dams constructed from loose rock contained in wire cages and installed on dry or low volume river courses in order to trap the wet season rain runoff. The water retained will help jump start the sometimes failed ecosystem.

Voluntourists will work alongside villagers building the dams, and will establish baseline and follow up ecological surveys



Check dam in operation

For more detail see: www.voluntourists-without-borders.com

VWB in action

continued

in the area surrounding the dams in order to determine their effect on the local environment.

Eco-camp development

Voluntourists will work with the villagers to establish bamboo constructed ecocamps to a pre-established design. They will help design and implement training pro-

grammes and materials, and run training programmes for all areas of the eco-camp operation, design marketing and promotional materials, and help position the ecocamp and related products in the market so as to ensure a viable income for the community that operates each unit. They will also be the customers during the training period.



Paulong woman and child

Benefits of the programme

Voluntourist

- Groups and individuals get to interact with the rural Thai villagers and exotic ethnic minority groups of northern Thailand in an environment of mutual respect, on development projects that will amongst other things, ensure their continued



The programme requires local people to choose and be involved in all the projects.

existence of the culture and customs of the hill tribes, and earn them a much deserved shareholding in Thailand's tourism industry.

- Each individual will benefit from the experiences shared and gained on a development and conservation project that tests their leadership, teamwork, and planning skills, as well as their ability to work outside of their own comfort zone. The rewards are huge - for both donor and recipient.

Corporate Sponsor

- Under your corporate social responsibility

programme – MNC's can provide sponsorship to a group from your company or area, in order that they may in turn represent both your company and themselves on a VWB programme.

- Alleviating world poverty, combating climate change, addressing deforestation, empowering the world's disadvantaged ethnic minority groups and encouraging fair trade practices are initiatives that have universal appeal to both your client and employee base, present and future. The VWB initiative option allows you to make a significant impact both locally - and globally.

Programme funding

At a time when the world is facing one catastrophe after another, draining the coffers of the established aid agencies, we offer a 'focused funding' solution that avoids the heavy drain on monies donated on what are often perceived as being exceptionally high administration costs. Each VWB programme is directly funded by the donations of the voluntourists attending it, and that of their corporate or institutional sponsors. Their full contribution, physical and financial, reaches the front line.

Programmes range from 2 to 60 days in duration and cost between US\$42-48 per day, per person (all inclusive and detailed on the website)



Addendum

VWB has no religious or political agenda, and is strictly focused on addressing its stated aims and objectives. Wherever it works it cooperates fully with the relevant authorities.

How you can help

Individual tourists	Consider joining one of our voluntourist programmes or when in northern Thailand, take a tour that supports the VWB Initiative.
Schools	Review our 'field trips & outdoor education programmes', and consider taking a programme that includes a 'voluntourism' component. Explore the sponsorship options (see our website) available to you.
Universities	Contact us for cooperation on post graduate studies work, environmental related field trips etc.
Tour operators	Support our initiative by selling the programmes we advertise in support of the VWB Initiative.
Multinational corporations	Use your CSR programme to support the VWB Initiative directly by sending your staff, or sponsoring a school to attend one of our programmes. Also consider our team building options – see website. (dealing with ecotourism / poverty alleviation issues).
Organisations	Organisations dealing with ecotourism and poverty alleviation issues can contact us to explore potential synergies.
Media outlets	Contact us for articles, photo-articles etc. We value your support.