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CAN TOURISM SAVE THE PLANET?

*Expedition Travel Pioneer Demonstrates the
Pragmatic Side of Environmentalism*

New York, NY (September 15, 2005) – Sven-Olof Lindblad is a pragmatist when it comes to the environment. Having spent the majority of his life traveling to the world’s most beautiful and remote places, one word comes to Lindblad when asked how to protect these endangered and fast dwindling places – “tourism”. What may seem counter-intuitive to environmentalists, to Sven Lindblad, founder and president of Lindblad Expeditions, tourism is what he knows to be one of the most effective tools for protecting and preserving a region. The privately held company, just passing its 25-year mark, is growing at 22% over last year, and attracting partners such as the National Geographic Society. The joint partnership launched this year integrates the Society’s explorers, experts and photographers on Lindblad expeditions with additional collaboration focused on education and conservation. One could say Lindblad’s model of tourism is working.

Since the company’s inception in 1979, nearly 200,000 travelers have joined Lindblad on his expeditions to Galapagos, Alaska, Baja California, Antarctica, Central America and other off-the-beaten-path spots, actively exploring these places with naturalists, undersea specialists and other experts. More than \$5 million has been raised directly from Lindblad guests with creative matches from the company and conservation groups, and countless more from individual donors who Lindblad has introduced to his initiatives. This kind of travel philanthropy, Lindblad argues, is not simply altruistic, “it’s good business.”

(MORE)

“Tourism and conservation go hand-in-hand,” says Lindblad. “You don’t build a business at the expense of the environment, you build a business by celebrating it.” The kind of celebration he refers to requires the work and investment of building local relationships that support environmental education, conservation and community projects. In the Galapagos, for example, where the company has two ships that operate year-round, Lindblad brings in more visitors than any other country except for the U.S. and U.K. accounting for more than 5,000 visitors annually. “If the other operators did what we do in Galapagos,” Lindblad argues, “then tourism as an industry could fund the challenges that fragile places like this face, which are continually struggling for outside funding. It’s not about what we do, but really about the potential of what we as an industry can do,” he added.

The Lindblad Legacy

When Lindblad’s father, Lars-Eric Lindblad, set out in 1968 to lead one of the first organized tours to the Galapagos islands, he had one thing in mind – to see how best he could combine an in-depth tour of the islands without disturbing the fragile and unique ecosystem of the Galapagos. That effort, in collaboration with the Ecuadorian government, led to a set of rules for tourism that the National Park enforces today. While more than 90,000 visitors explore the Galapagos islands every year, less than 1% of the terrestrial territory is used for these tourists. Lindblad’s father, often referred to as the father of eco-tourism, pioneered tourism to Antarctica, Bhutan, China, and Easter Island. His book, *Passport to Anywhere* (1983), chronicles those early expeditions.

About Lindblad Expeditions

Lindblad Expeditions was founded in 1979 and operates a fleet of six ships in regions such as Galapagos, Antarctica, Arctic Norway, Alaska and Baja California, to name a few, with a focus on responsible tourism. The company has been the recipient of many environmental awards including the United Nations Environmental Programme Global 500 Award.

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