

5.5 TUI Nederland: Promoting Responsible Travel in Curaçao and Bonaire



Description of Good Practice

In an effort to improve the sustainability of tourism in Bonaire and Curaçao, two islands of the Netherlands Antilles in the Caribbean, TUI Nederland, the market leader in the Dutch travel industry and part of World of TUI (TUI AG), began an 'Environmentally Aware Tourism' project in 1999. The project, which was created in the framework of the United Nations Year of the Oceans, aims to provide customers with information on responsible travel and sustainable products at various stages of their holidays, to promote well-informed choices for more sustainable island holidays. The project also seeks to improve the performance of local tour operators and guides; accommodations; and excursion and diving operators. For these three groups, ad hoc guidelines have been developed within the framework of the project.

Information on responsible travel and sustainable products and services available in Bonaire and Curaçao is disseminated from the start of travel. Even before the visitor has selected Bonaire and Curaçao as a destination, information is provided in the brochures of TUI Nederland's brands Arke and Holland International.

Box 1: Diving Guidelines for Bonaire and Curaçao

1. Guests must receive an orientation and explanation of eco-diving standards, including:
 - Maintain good buoyancy control;
 - Practice good finning technique and body control;
 - Ensure all equipment is adequately secured;
 - Avoid all contact with the bottom and/or marine life;
 - Handling, manipulation and feeding of marine life to be conducted under expert guidance only;
 - Take nothing except recent garbage out of the water; and
 - Restrict use of gloves and kneepads whilst reef diving.
2. Dive operation staff must practice eco-diving standards;
3. Corals and other marine life may not be offered for sale;
4. Environmental materials (e.g. marine life ID) must be available to guests and staff;
5. The dive operation must promote a strict 'no contact' policy for reef diving;
6. Pre-dive briefings must be given, reminding guests of eco-diving standards;
7. Dive boats must use moorings, drift dive or hand place anchors in reef environments;
8. Dive boats must have adequate garbage facilities aboard;
9. Dive boats must have a 'minimal discharge' policy in force;
10. Dive Operators on Curaçao must be members of the Curaçao Dive Operator Association (CDOA) and actively support the CDOA voluntary dive-tag programme benefiting marine life management and conservation projects. Operators on Bonaire must actively support the Bonaire National Marine Park, in addition to abiding by all local environmental laws, regulations and customs.

Once a client has chosen a holiday to Bonaire or Curaçao:

- TUI Nederland provides tips for environmentally sound practices in the voucher booklet that also includes their air tickets;
- During the nine-hour flight, KLM, a project partner, shows a video about the sustainable excursions and activities that are promoted in the framework of the project;
- Upon arrival, trained TUI Nederland hostesses introduce guests to the sustainable excursions and activities that are available; and
- The TUI Nederland resource book, available in hotel lobbies, further directs the guests towards sustainable excursions, activities and attractions.

To complement these communication activities, attractions, excursions and operators (particularly diving operators) complying with the programme's ecological criteria for tour guides are actively promoted among guests.

The Dutch touring club ANWB and the Antillean Department for the Environment

(VOMIL/MINA), co-ordinate the project activities. As the largest provider of organised holidaymakers to Bonaire and Curaçao, TUI Nederland plays an active role in the project. Apart from the active involvement of the private sector, the main financial sponsors of the project are the Netherlands Ministry of Agriculture, Nature Management and Fisheries, the Antillean Department of Environment, and the Netherlands Centre for Sustainable Development (NCDO), which have contributed a total of 52,000 Euro (US\$61,457).



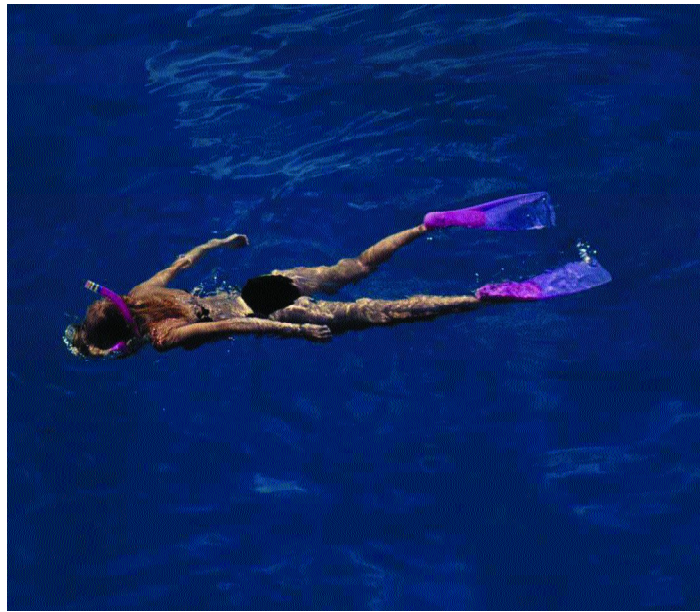
BROCHURE WITH ENVIRONMENTAL TIPS FOR VISITING THE ANTILLES

The responsible travel tips for visitors and guidelines for selection of the 'sustainable tourism products' were developed in co-operation with relevant local stakeholders. This process was the starting point for engagement of local tour operators, accommodations and attractions providers. In total, more than 100 different parties are actively involved in the project, mostly on a voluntary basis.

Implementation

The project now has 20 partners, including tour operators, local and national government agencies, excursion operators, hotels and NGOs, which have signed a memorandum of collaboration. With the source market and the destination more than 6,000 km (3,728 miles) apart, good communication between the partners in the project is crucial. All 20 partners are informed of the various steps to be taken through the VOMIL/MINA newsletter. The Dutch co-ordinator, ANWB, is in charge of monitoring the effects of the project on customer behaviour.

A key tool for disseminating responsible travel tips to customers is a flyer, in Dutch, that encourages guests to 'Enjoy our lovely islands but help us to keep them intact for future generations'. The flyer provides not only best practice tips for the tourist but also information on attractions and dive operators participating in the project on both islands. The flyers are also available at other distribution points, including dive shops and 'green' hotels.



ENJOYING THE UNDERWATER SPLENDOR OF THE ANTILLES

'Green' operators participating in the project and fulfilling the criteria are recognised with a certificate picturing the project logo, a blue cactus with an iguana. The certificate also lists the standards that the operator or attraction provider has committed to. Project partners can use the logo on their own communication and marketing material. The various sustainable products are promoted through the flyer, via website (www.natuurlijkantillen.info) and at the destination by the hostesses.

Benefits

The project has had many benefits for the islands, including:

- Hotels participating in the project have collectively adopted an environmental improvement programme, supported by TUI Nederland;
- Almost all dive operators on the islands have agreed to work according to diving guidelines that were formulated for the project (see Box 1); and
- Specific guidelines have been developed and implemented for local tour operators and attractions.

In addition, the project has contributed to:

- Increased awareness of all participating partners on sustainable tourism;
- Decreased environmental damage on the islands;
- Improved image of participating parties; and
- Incentives to improve tour operators' practices in the destination.

Comments

This two-way approach of information and improvement appears to be successful in convincing tourists of the need to make sustainable choices while enjoying their holidays and convincing local hotels and attractions to improve their performance.

In the next phase of the project, the flyer will be produced in English for non-Dutch tourists, and the other Netherlands Antilles islands (Saba, St. Eustatius and St. Marteen) and the island of Aruba will participate. Each island will have its own separate flyer.