

USTOA MEMBERS OFFER VACATION PACKAGES THAT “GIVE BACK”

NEW YORK – April 12, 2012 – For travelers seeking greater fulfillment, combining traditional travel with volunteer work often provides opportunities to journey off the tourist-beaten path and add a more meaningful component to a vacation. In honor of National Volunteer Month in April, the [United States Tour Operator Association](#) (USTOA) is spotlighting a variety of its members’ tours and packages that offer a chance to “give back.”

“Today’s travelers want more than just to see a destination, they desire a deeper cultural connection to the people, history, wildlife and customs...and what better way to create these unforgettable experiences than by volunteering,” said Terry Dale, president of USTOA. “As a founding member of the non-profit Tourism Cares, USTOA recognizes the impact volunteers have on communities around the globe and how voluntourism can help preserve travel experiences for future generations.”

In late March, USTOA and several of its members joined a preservation project in Pensacola, FL hosted by [Tourism Cares](#), a volunteer program to help preserve, conserve, and protect tourism related sites that need care and rejuvenation. During the one-day project, more than 200 travel industry volunteers (including many members of USTOA) donated an estimated \$25,000 in labor costs to revitalize the historic Pensacola Lighthouse and conserve the shoreline of the Gulf Coast at Bayou Texar in Pensacola Bay. This year, Tourism Cares extends its programs globally with its first international outreach initiative Go Peru taking place May 3–7, 2012 in Lima and Cusco.

From the United States to Asia, below is a sampling of USTOA member “voluntourism” offerings around the globe:

United States:

- “Yellowstone & Grand Teton National Park,” a 10-day itinerary from **Tauck** featuring “inside-the-park” accommodations at Yellowstone and Grand Teton offers the opportunity to volunteer a few hours of labor to benefit park preservation and beautification projects. Since the program’s inception in 2003, Tauck guest-volunteers have donated more than 27,000 hours of labor at Yellowstone and Grand Teton valued at more than \$525,000. Available various dates May through September, additional package highlights include Mount Rushmore, a western ranch experience and rafting on Snake River. Prices from \$3,190 a person, based on double occupancy, plus air. www.tauck.com

Africa:

- For volunteers looking to explore a corner of South Africa, **SITA World Tours'** 11-day "Cape & Wildlife Volunteer Package" gives travelers the opportunity to assist behind the scenes of the Amakhala Game Reserve. The various conservation and community projects range from nocturnal predator monitoring to supporting the nearby Isipho Centre for children affected by HIV/AIDS. Additional travel highlights include a city tour of Cape Town and Cape Peninsula as well as two nights at Woodbury Tented Camp or similar with game viewing activities. Prices start at \$2,295 per person, based on double occupancy for travel May–September, 2012, dates in October also available starting at \$2,395 per person, double occupancy. www.sitatours.com

Latin America/Caribbean:

- **International Expeditions'** "Custom Peru Volunteer Vacation" lets travelers do more than just visit the destination but help contribute to the communities in the Amazon rainforest. With programs available year round, volunteers can customize their vacation with a service project based on their areas of interest, including serving as a teacher's assistant in a kindergarten, building an urban garden or caring for wildlife. At the end, guests will enjoy a relaxing rainforest retreat. Nine-day voluntourism itineraries start at \$2,000 per person. www.ietravel.com
- **Caradonna Worldwide Dive Adventures** has teamed up with Reef Environmental Education Foundation (REEF) to offer dive enthusiasts the chance to be a part of a Lionfish control study in Dominica. Departing July 14, 2012, divers will conduct surveys and dissect lionfish for research being conducted by REEF. Package includes 7-night hotel accommodations, five days of boat dives, breakfast each day and airport transfers with prices starting at \$979 per person plus \$300 REEF program fee. www.caradonna.com

Youth Programs – Asia:

- During the 14-day "Spirit of Japan: Service & Friendship" from **People to People Ambassador Programs**, student ambassadors will contribute to the ongoing recovery efforts post-tsunami with visits to Tokyo, Akita, Sendai, Hiraizumi and Aomori. Available July 1, 2012 for students in grades 7–12; comprehensive tuition starts at \$6,499. www.peopletopeople.com

For questions and more information on USTOA, visit www.ustoa.com, call 212-599-6599, or email information@ustoa.com

About USTOA:

The member companies of U.S. Tour Operators Association provide tours, packages and custom arrangements that allow travelers unparalleled access, insider knowledge, peace-of-mind, value and freedom to enjoy destinations and experiences across the entire globe. Each member company has met the travel industry's highest standards, including participation in the USTOA's Travelers Assistance Program, which protects consumer payments up to \$1 million if the company goes out of business.

As a voice for the tour operator industry for 40 years, USTOA also provides education and assistance for consumers and travel agents.

Editor Note: Information was provided by individual companies and was correct at time of writing. All tours/packages subject to availability.

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