



**Andaman Discoveries**  
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**PRESS RELEASE**

**November 7, 2014**

**Bridging the Gap Between Cultures- Community Tours and Volunteer Programs Gain International Recognition**

*Kuraburi, Thailand*

***Andaman Discoveries, a grassroots responsible travel organization in Thailand is winner of the 2014 Thailand Green Excellence Award and Finalist for the Wild Asia Award***

The Tourism Authority of Thailand's Green UK Travel Awards highlight and promote Thailand's dedication to the conservation of its country's natural and cultural resources. Andaman Discoveries has excelled at meeting these goals by creating effective and sustainable volunteer programs. "Voluntourism" is a growing niche in the tourism industry and if not done in collaboration with interested local partners, it can be problematic for all parties involved. Andaman Discoveries has shown exceptional awareness of this problem and therefore has been able to bridge the gap between local schools and learning centers that are in need of assistance and volunteers who are truly interested in committing their time to a positive cause. Andaman Discoveries works with carefully selected local partners that provide essential care to disadvantaged children in Southern Thailand. Their partners include a school for disabled children, an orphanage, Thai government schools and a learning center for Burmese children that helps to educate the marginalized Burmese migrant population in hopes that the children will have a chance at a brighter future!

**Judge's comment:** It is rare to come across a volunteering organization that is as well thought-through, transparent and honest as Andaman Discoveries. They really are trying to use volunteers in a productive way to improve lives.

The Green Excellence Award also named Andaman Discoveries as the finalist in the Community Based Tourism Category. A growing concern is plaguing the tourism industry: How will it address the complexities of building sustainable destinations and wake up to the challenges of global warming and climate change? Andaman Discoveries has given a perfect example of how to combat these concerns by creating sustainable destinations within their community based programs. Their homestay programs allow visitors to directly support community education, village-led conservation, and cultural empowerment. They offer a unique and meaningful experience that allows for positive cultural exchange between villagers and interested guests. This instills responsible tourism values within all participants and creates a shared goal of conserving culture and natural recourse for future generations.

Andaman Discoveries was a Finalist for the Wild Asia Award under the category of Cultural Preservation. This award recognizes engagement and efforts by tourism businesses in preserving, enhancing and promoting local cultures and heritage. Andaman Discoveries engages local communities to be the facilitators of tourism. Since 2012 they have been developing a community based tour with the indigenous Moken sea nomads within the Surin Islands National Park. The popularity of this tourist destination is adversely affecting the Moken community. A six person Moken tourism guide group was trained to develop a unique private tour that highlights their culture and traditional lifestyle. This project enables the Moken to strengthen their capacity and co-create sustainable tourism. The program generates benefits including job development, educational culture exchange, allows the Moken to remain within their community and strengthens their cultural heritage.

***Andaman Discoveries has proven to be a reliable and sustainable responsible Tourism Operator and will continue to serve as a bridge between local communities and interested guests!***

