



Ras Al Khaimah Tourism Development Authority Partners with AITO on Sustainable Tourism

Ras Al Khaimah Tourism Development Authority has become AITO's Sustainable Tourism sponsor for 2018-19. In particular, the two parties will work on AITO's Project PROTECT, an initiative which is carried out in partnership with the University of Surrey.

All 117 AITO members are committed to making travel more sustainable; their ethos is that those who live in the places their customers visit should benefit directly from tourism.

AITO members recognise that they need to care for these places if they are going to remain attractive and sustainable for future generations. In many destinations, whether it's a European city or more isolated locations globally, leisure travel is an important contributor to the local community.

Project PROTECT (**P**eople, **R**esources **O**utreach, **T**ourism, **E**nvironment, **C**onservation, **T**omorrow) was created by AITO and the University of Surrey to help encourage and guide members to adopt better practices in sustainable tourism and to focus on environmental protection in the areas their customers visit.

The Association provides its members with several guidelines which state that travel must benefit host communities, respect local cultures, protect the environment and conserve natural resources.

Haitham Mattar, CEO of Ras Al Khaimah Tourism Development Authority commented: "Ras Al Khaimah boasts an abundance of natural assets and a rich cultural heritage which offers a compelling destination for visitors seeking authentic culture and nature based Arabian experiences. Our Destination Strategy for the Emirate incorporates Sustainable Tourism as a core pillar that is crucial for a thriving tourism industry, and involves multiple facets from protection of the environment, promotion of eco-tourism, to preservation of local heritage and job creation. This partnership with AITO is an effective way of further engaging tour operator partners and travellers in an initiative that will deliver meaningful and measurable impact."

AITO will stage its annual overseas conference in Ras Al Khaimah from 22-25 November 2018. Members will be able to see and hear first-hand about the sustainability work being carried out in the Emirate.

Kate Kenward, AITO Executive Director says: "Project PROTECT is part of a joint programme with the University of Surrey, headed up by Professor Xavier Font and his colleague Morwenna Severin. So far, the initiative has helped over half of AITO's members formulate annual, measurable pledges to help PROTECT our fragile earth and its people. We are grateful for the support provided by the

Ras Al Khaimah Tourism Development Authority for our sustainable tourism work. They reflect a similar ethos as AITO in their own work and we are pleased to be able to align our knowledge and expertise with their own.

AITO Chairman, Derek Moore added: “It’s time destinations led the travel industry in assessing and monitoring the impact of travel from a sustainability perspective. Special interest travellers help considerably in this area as they do disperse beyond the main tourist areas to lesser known regions in pursuit of their experiences.”

About Project PROTECT

Project PROTECT is AITO’s pledge to protecting the destinations of the world. The PROTECT stands for People, Resources, Outreach, Tourism, Environment, Conservation and Tomorrow. Together with the University of Surrey, and under the leadership of Sustainable Tourism Thought Leader Xavier Font, AITO has devised a 5-year programme to encourage and measure its operators’ dedication to Sustainable Tourism.

AITO has invited all of its members to make an annual pledge to Sustainable Tourism; the Association will support tour operators in finding a pledge that is both worthwhile and meaningful. At the end of the year, participants are required to produce a 250 word testimonial detailing how well they achieved their goal and assessing any measurable factors stated at the time of the pledge. Evidence will also be provided to AITO and the University of Surrey in support of the report. There are now 119 specialist tour operator members in AITO – see www.aito.com for more information.

For more information on Project PROTECT and how AITO members are practising sustainable tourism please visit www.aito.com/projectprotect

About Ras Al Khaimah

One of the world’s fastest growing tourism destinations, Ras Al Khaimah boasts a rich culture and long-standing history dating back 7,000 years. The Emirate boasts an array of archaeological sites and breath-taking natural vistas, from golden sand beaches, awe-inspiring terracotta dunes and a green belt of date palms to Jebel Jais, the highest mountain in the UAE.

To learn more about Ras Al Khaimah, visit us at:

- www.rasalkhaimahtourism.com
- www.facebook.com/visitrasalkhaimah
- www.youtube.com/visitrasalkhaimah
- <https://twitter.com/raktourism>

About Ras Al Khaimah Tourism Development Authority (TDA)

The Ras Al Khaimah Tourism Development Authority (TDA) was established in May 2011 under the government of Ras Al Khaimah. In order to achieve target growth of one million visitors by the end of 2018, the authority aims to develop the emirate’s tourism infrastructure and establish Ras Al Khaimah as a world-class destination for leisure and business travel, creating sustainable investment opportunities and enhancing the quality of life for its residents. In order to achieve its goals, the Ras Al Khaimah TDA has a government mandate to license, regulate and monitor the emirate’s tourism and hospitality industry.

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Press: For more information on AITO, please call Sue Ockwell or Jackie Franklin on 020 8891 4440 or email s.ockwell@travelpr.co.uk or j.franklin@travelpr.co.uk.