Studienkreis
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Entwicklung e.V.

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TO DO Award 2021 Despite the Pandemic

Community-based tourism project »Rutas Ancestrales Araucarias« from Chile wins TO DO Award 2021 Socially Responsible Tourism; the international contest gives hope for the advancement of outstanding tourism projects after the Covid-19 crisis

Seefeld, 18/02/2021 – "The project »Rutas Ancestrales Araucarias« enables members of the indigenous Mapuche nation to tell their own story and to decide for themselves at any time how to present themselves, their ways of life, their traditions, and values to their visitors", according to the evaluation of the recent TO DO Award winner by the Institute for Tourism and Development (Studienkreis für Tourismus und Entwicklung). The Chilean project meets all the criteria for the internationally renowned award which has been organised annually by Studienkreis since 1995.

The Mapuche nation, who mainly live in the central and southern part of Chile, had to fight for centuries for the recognition of their rights and are still severely repressed by the state. Their ancestral land, for instance, has over the past centuries been reduced by military intervention from ten million hectares to a mere 500,000 hectares.

With the project »Rutas Ancestrales Araucarias«, the Mapuche (english: „people of the earth") are now consistently working on having their culture and ways of life recognised. In as early as 2012, several local communities came together to discuss the economic perspectives of their people. At this meeting they developed the idea of community-based tourism in the community of Curarrehue, at the outskirts of the Villarrica National Park. By 2014, tours along three routes across the region were offered, organised by local guides.

By now, the project has found around 30 local partners who share the Mapuche's culture and ways of living with visitors. Various activities are offered along the routes, from story-telling about the Mapuche's world view or local medicinal plants to visits to farms and vegetable gardens. The guest may also get actively involved. On different occasions, guests and host get opportunities to talk to each other, whether during joint meals, traditional Mapuche games or over the production of handicraft – from weaving or dyeing of wool to the processing of plant fibres. Guests staying over night are put up with families and have dinner with them.

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TO DO 2021: Perspectives for sustainable tourism – despite Covid-19

Projects such as »Rutas Ancestrales Araucarias« contribute significantly to helping the local population tap an additional source of income – but above all to find a possibility to protect their own cultural identity. This is facilitated by the fact that as many community members as possible are being involved in the project. The TO DO Award winner 2021 has helped as many as 38 families to generate a respective income. In 2020, this successful project, too, was hit by the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic. Visits on location are not possible at the moment. The Studienkreis expert who assessed the project says: ”Of course, the loss of income due to Covid-19 is clearly felt. However, the Mapuche working with RAA are able to feed their families without depending on tourism. […] The members of RAA and their communities have overcome various crises in the past and have proven their resilience. This testifies to a particularly sustainable form of tourism“.

TO DO Award Winner 2020 honoured belatedly

As last year’s ITB was cancelled at short notice due to Covid-19, the two TO DO Award winners of 2020 could not be honoured during a live event at the trade fair. So during this year’s online TO DO Award ceremony the projects Esfahk Historic Village, Iran and Banteay Chhmar Community Based Tourism, Cambodia will also be presented and honoured. We will also show videos of the two award winners of 2020.

Claudia Mitteneder, executive director of the Institute for Tourism and Development (Studienkreis für Tourismus und Entwicklung): “The projects honoured with the TO DO Awards 2020 and 2021 significantly contribute to the creation of economic, ecological, and social perspectives for local communities, to improved living conditions, also reducing, for instance, migration to the large cities. Both in the planning and implementation phase, the interests of the local people take centre stage. Furthermore, the projects can serve to promote equal opportunities, diversity, and social advancement. All of this is achieved by all Award winners. The Institute for Tourism and Development has for more than 25 years supported and promoted such concepts. With the online presentation of the TO DO and this year’s award winners at ITB NOW we also provide these projects with a platform for communication and networking that is meant to support their future development“.

The virtual award ceremony will take place on 9 March 2021 at 2:00 pm and may be viewed on the streaming portal of ITB NOW (stream no. 2).

Studienkreis für Tourismus und Entwicklung (Institute for Tourism and

Development) focuses on development related information and education in tourism. In this context it brings out publications, organises international contests, offers training and seminars for people employed in the tourism sector, carries out tourism research and consultancy, and is involved in dialogue on issues related to tourism development.

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