



Peregrine
The Spirit of Adventure

Patricia Barnett
Tourism Concern
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07 April 2008

Dear Patricia

I'm writing in response to your views regarding Gecko's Adventures running tours to Burma.

Thank you for taking the time to write to us about an issue that will always be contentious. I understand the issues at stake here, and have every sympathy with the plight of the Burmese people and some of the views you convey.

Peregrine is not a huge multi-national organisation that is exploiting the people of Burma. Rather, we run tours that are designed to foster interaction between those from 'the privileged west' with people from other countries, irrespective of the regime under which they exist. In Burma, Peregrine works with a small, non-government run local operator employing local people and using local restaurants, transport and accommodation. Of course some money will inevitably find its way into the hands of the greedy and corrupt leaders, but some money – most of it – ends up in the hands of the people, as does the knowledge that people in the west are aware of their plight and do actually care.

Although I respect Aung San Suu Kyi's views, I believe that by sending small groups into Burma, consisting of people who are intelligent, concerned and right-minded, we are creating a two-way interaction that is very positive. Many of the people who have travelled with us to Burma are now amongst the leading advocates for a change of government and are getting heard because they can speak from a position of knowledge, having visited the country.

I'm sure you've heard all the counter-arguments *ad nauseam*, but the question of who has the right to dictate where a free person should travel is a very contentious one. It is questionable whether you or I are in any position to be 'moral arbiters' and dictate where people should or shouldn't go on their travels.

If one works on the premise that all countries run by governments with questionable ethics and human rights records should be boycotted, where does one draw the line? Should people stop visiting China because of their appalling treatment of Tibet and its people? The USA, because of their aggressive foreign policy or death penalty? Australia, because of its treatment of its indigenous people? The list is endless and if we start drawing lines in the sand, everyone will stay where they are and the ignorance of other people, their customs and their way of life will be worse than ever.

Peregrine Tours Ltd

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By running trips to Burma in a responsible and sensitive manner, I believe Geckos Adventures is helping to affect positive change in this troubled country. With this as our objective we will continue to run trips to Burma in the hope that one day we can do so with the expressed approval of Aung San Suu Kyi, in her rightful position as Burma's leader.

Yours sincerely



Jarrod Kyte
Gecko's Adventures UK Manager



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