



*Innovative Solutions for Global Conservation*

Rainforest Alliance

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**The Rainforest Alliance Gets On Board Sustainable Tourism Initiative with  
Expedia and the United Nations Foundation to Conserve and Promote World  
Heritage Sites**

The Rainforest Alliance has become a new partner in a collaboration initiated by Expedia, Inc. and the United Nations Foundation to support sustainable tourism, conservation and economic development for communities in and around UNESCO's 830 World Heritage sites.

The collaboration, called the World Heritage Alliance (WHA), brings together members in the tourism industry and partners including organizations and governments. All parties have committed to promoting sustainable tourism that contributes to the conservation of local biodiversity and cultures and creates opportunities for local community enrichment in and around some of the world's most universally valuable locations.

On its one-year anniversary, the WHA has added nine new members from the tourism industry and four new associate partners, including the Rainforest Alliance.

"We are thrilled to join this innovative partnership," praised Tensie Whelan, executive director of the Rainforest Alliance. "Members of our sustainable tourism program staff look forward to training and providing technical assistance to World Heritage Alliance members. We hope to help them lead the way in conserving some of the world's most valuable places for years to come."

The Rainforest Alliance will focus on consumer education, community development and technical training. Workshops sponsored by the conservation nonprofit will focus on the application of best management practices, including efficient energy use, wildlife conservation, recycling, and waste and water management.

World Heritage sites have been selected by UNESCO because they belong to the world's cultural and natural heritage. These sites include, for example, the pyramids of Egypt, the Great Barrier Reef in Australia, Machu Picchu in Peru and the Grand Canyon in the United States. These treasured sites must be carefully managed and protected from potential damage due to overuse by tourists or health-related and natural disasters.

The members, which include hotels and tour operators, have committed to improving their social, cultural and environmental sustainability. They will participate in training programs, teach visitors about World Heritage, support community development around World Heritage sites and support the United Nations in its efforts to encourage sustainable tourism.

“The members and partners in the World Heritage Alliance are a far-reaching group, from leading hotel chains to well-respected non-profit organizations,” said Kathy Bushkin, executive vice president and chief operating officer of the UN Foundation. “We’re excited to work with them to support World Heritage sites and surrounding communities.”

Over the past year, the WHA has implemented training programs and an online course for travel industry suppliers and partners in the Yucatán Peninsula in Mexico. Expedia has also been offering package trips online to World Heritage sites, with profits going to the Friends of World Heritage Fund. The WHA hopes to expand its efforts to the Caribbean and Central America in 2007.

“This is an outstanding collaboration to support sustainable travel and promote World Heritage sites,” noted Paul Brown, president of Expedia North America and Expedia, Inc. Partner Services Group. “We want to improve travel experiences for years to come and encourage travelers to preserve the world’s treasures.”

For details about the collaboration, visit [www.worldheritagealliance.org](http://www.worldheritagealliance.org)

For information on World Heritage trips, visit [www.expedia.com/worldheritage](http://www.expedia.com/worldheritage)

*The mission of the **Rainforest Alliance** is to protect ecosystems and the people and wildlife that depend on them by transforming land-use practices, business practices and consumer behavior. Companies, cooperatives and landowners that participate in our programs meet rigorous standards that conserve biodiversity and provide sustainable livelihoods. Headquartered in New York City and with offices around the world, the Rainforest Alliance works hand-in-hand with land owners and businesses in the forestry, agricultural and tourism sectors to make their practices environmentally and socially responsible.*

To learn more, visit [www.rainforest-alliance.org](http://www.rainforest-alliance.org)