

Aquila, Sustainable Travel team to foster responsible tourism

Feb. 3, 2011

Aquila's Center for Cruise Excellence and **Sustainable Travel International** have signed a memorandum of agreement to share the goals of promoting environmentally and socially responsible tourism practices.

The parties aim to work jointly to pursue cooperative marketing and outreach initiatives related to educating consumers and travel providers about environmentally and socially responsible best practices in sustainable tourism, ecotourism and adventure travel.

Sustainable Travel International has been partnering with the cruise industry for a few years now, and the Aquila memorandum of agreement is another aspect of the Colorado-based nonprofit groups cruise-related efforts, according to STI CEO Brian Mullis.

Aquila has what we feel is the leading tour guide education program specifically targeting operators in the cruise industry, Mullis told Seatrade Insider. He noted that STI has its own training programs but Aquila brings cruise-focused expertise.

STI's cruise-related efforts include working to establish a third-party sustainability verification for excursion suppliers. Royal Caribbean Cruises Ltd., for example, aims that by 2015, 50% of the excursions offered on its ships will be provided by tour operators who are third-party verified to a recognized international sustainability standard.

Aquila's **Center for Cruise Excellence** is a branch of Saint John, New Brunswick-based Aquila Tours, a prominent shore excursion provider in Atlantic Canada. The center recently established an online **Tour Guide Excellence Program** to provide international certification for guides in the cruise industry anywhere in the world

Aquila principal Beth Kelly Hatt said her participation in Cruise Lines International Associations Leadership Forum in late 2010 led to discussions with STI that resulted in the memorandum of agreement last week.

"Aquila's **Tour Guide Excellence** program aims to give both aspiring and current tour guides the opportunity to achieve international certification in recognition of their qualifications and level of excellence," Hatt said.

Look for a full report about the training program in Seatrade Cruise Reviews March issue. Aquila will be at Cruise Shipping Miami as part of the Atlantic Canada Cruise Association booth.