



**For Immediate Release**

## **Victoria's Maple Leaf Adventures "highly commended" at 2011 Responsible Tourism Awards**

**Nov. 9, 2011, Victoria, BC** – The winners for the 2011 Responsible Tourism Awards have been named and Maple Leaf Adventures, a Victoria-based sailing expedition cruise operator specializing in taking explorers on cruises of the Pacific Northwest has taken one of the top three spots in the category of tourism in a marine environment.

The international awards, held last night at the World Travel Market in London, UK, are designed to celebrate and honour tour operators that preserve, respect and benefit their destinations' cultures, communities and biodiversity and, in the process, inspire positive change in the tourism industry. With 13 categories to enter, ranging from best accommodation for the environment to best for poverty reduction, it was up to an expert panel of judges to determine this year's 31 finalists and 13 winners from thousands of nominations.

"It's an incredible honour for all of us here at Maple Leaf Adventures to be recognized for responsible tourism," said Kevin Smith, president of Maple Leaf Adventures. "Ever since Maple Leaf first set sail it's been important to set an example of tourism with a complete commitment to social and environmental sustainability. For example, we approached Coastal First Nations years ago to create economic protocol agreements that respect their culture, history, rights and traditional title to territories we visit."

Other mindful actions of the Maple Leaf Adventures' team include hosting naturalists and environmental researchers aboard voyages to teach guests about coastal and ocean ecosystems; donating one per cent of all cruise revenues to conservation projects through the organization 1% for the Planet; and co-founding the Commercial Bear Viewing Association of BC to establish, promote and teach responsible bear viewing practices.

In recent years, Maple Leaf Adventures has ranked as one of the Best Adventure Travel Companies on Earth by editors of National Geographic Adventure, had a trip named one of the one of the "50 Tours of a Lifetime" by National Geographic Traveler, and was listed as a Best Travel Experience and a Trip of a Lifetime by Frommer's.

Since its foundation in 2004, the Responsible Tourism Awards have attracted more than 10,000 nominations by members of the public, leading to 201 unique organizations from 51 countries around the world being recognized. For more information about Maple Leaf Adventures and its trips, visit [www.mapleleafadventures.com](http://www.mapleleafadventures.com). To learn more about the annual Responsible Tourism Awards, visit [www.responsibletravel.com](http://www.responsibletravel.com).

### **About Maple Leaf Adventures**

Maple Leaf Adventures has offered natural and cultural history cruises aboard a classic tall ship since 1986. With a reputation as one of Canada's finest tour operators, the multi-day excursions gives guests one-of-a-kind experiences in some of the most beautiful places in the world. As a longtime practitioner of ecotourism, Maple Leaf Adventures pioneered travel in BC's Great Bear Rainforest and northwestern Vancouver Island and has made significant contributions to conservation. For more information, visit [www.mapleleafadventures.com](http://www.mapleleafadventures.com).

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### **Media Contacts:**

Maureen Gordon, Maple Leaf Adventures: 250 386-7245, [maureen@mapleleafadventures.com](mailto:maureen@mapleleafadventures.com)  
Deirdre Campbell, Tartan Group: 250-592-3838, 250-882-9199 (cell) or [deirdre@tartangroup.ca](mailto:deirdre@tartangroup.ca)

