

For Immediate Release



Contact: Jennifer Hawkins
Hawkins International Public Relations
1-212-255-6541
jennifer@hawkpr.com

Or: Nadia Le Bon
Director of Special Programs
Mountain Travel Sobek
1-800-282-8747, ext. 6024

MAKE A VACATION COUNT TOWARD CONSERVATION

Mountain Travel Sobek's Eleventh Save the Tiger! Trip

EMERYVILLE, CALIF.—November 7, 2005—There are many problems threatening the tiger with extinction: economic development, habitat loss, and lack of prey species. But the most immediate threat facing the tiger is poaching for bones and other body parts to satisfy the market for traditional Chinese medicinal products, as well as a renewed and insidious demand for tiger skins in the Middle and Far East.

To raise funds and make the international community aware of these issues, **Mountain Travel Sobek** has, since 1994, offered its non-profit ***Save the Tiger!*** trip, an educational adventure that takes people into the heart of tiger habitat, gives them a chance to see this beautiful animal in its natural setting, and raises funds to support work being done to prevent the tiger's extinction. The trip will be led by veteran Mountain Travel Sobek guide Brian Weirum, who developed the *Save the Tiger!* trip series for Mountain Travel Sobek in 1994.

Mountain Travel Sobek donates the profits from this trip to California-based **The Fund for the Tiger**, a non-profit public charity established by Mr. Weirum that funds anti-poaching patrols, tiger counts, and monitoring work in Nepal and India. To date, the trip series has raised more than **\$81,000**. (*And nearly 40% of trip participants continue to send contributions to The Fund for the Tiger after the trip!*) Efforts are in support of the following ongoing projects:

In Nepal:

- An increased commitment to assist anti-poaching efforts and rewards as needed in the area around **Royal Chitwan National Park**, Nepal's prime tiger habitat.
- Commencing December 1, 2004, The Fund for the Tiger is supporting a new project aimed at wildlife trade in Kathmandu. Kathmandu is the main smuggling route to extinction in what the N.Y. Times has called "the poaching corridor" for Asia's endangered species. There is no market for wildlife products in Nepal but Nepal has become the transit route whereby products, mostly from India, go via Tibet and on to the Far East.
- Anti-poaching patrols have been established in the previously unprotected area of **Royal Sukla Phanta National Park**.
- Camera trapping units supervised by tiger expert Dr. Charles McDougal. This is the current method for tiger census and monitoring in Nepal and is garnering excellent records.

In India:

- Purchase of an elephant to patrol and protect **Corbett Tiger Reserve** and **Sonanadi Sanctuary** in northern India. Funding continues to sustain the elephant, Sonakali, as well as support for information gathering and anti-poaching patrols.

- Funding of Belinda Wright's Tiger Poaching and Trade Investigative Project throughout India, wherein every wildlife crime is investigated and vigorously pursued in the courts. Belinda's Wildlife Protection Society is now working hand in hand with India's Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) on wildlife crimes.
- A representative has been hired to live and work full time at **Bandhavgarh National Park** in Central India to gather information on poaching, monitor local wildlife cases in the courts, and help village education programs on the value of wildlife protection.

Participants on the *Save the Tiger!* trip will visit Bandhavgarh National Park in India and Royal Chitwan National Park in Nepal. Bandhavgarh is a 450-sq.-km. park that was created in 1968 in the vast central Indian state of Madhya Pradesh; Royal Chitwan National Park is the oldest jewel of Nepal's wildlife parks and sits at the very heart of tiger habitat and of Mountain Travel Sobek's efforts to save the tiger in Nepal. Traveling by elephant, Land Rover, and on foot, and in the company of tiger experts, participants have the rare opportunity to see tigers in their native habitat, learn about the threats to their survival, and explore what can be done to save these animals from extinction. Other wildlife watching opportunities include rhino, wild elephants, leopards, sambar, spotted deer, sloth bear, gaur, and a vast array of birdlife.

While in India, the group will have a dinner meeting with Belinda Wright to learn firsthand about her bold efforts to keep India's national heritage alive. Before becoming a full time tiger conservationist, Belinda filmed and produced the highly acclaimed 1985 National Geographic Special "The Land of The Tiger," and more recently co-wrote and photographed the powerful book *Through The Tiger's Eyes*. While at Chitwan, the group will be hosted by Dr. Charles McDougal, a world-renowned tiger expert. An associate of the Tiger Tops Lodge, Dr. McDougal is author of the book *The Face of the Tiger* and Smithsonian Research Associate for the Nepal Tiger Monitoring Project.

There have been some modest successes in tiger conservation work in the past few years, and Mountain Travel Sobek is pleased to be part of the international effort to prevent the extinction of this magnificent animal. (The trip garnered an honorable mention in *Condé Nast Traveler's* 2000 Ecotourism Awards.) The 15-day trip departs March 18, 2006. Land cost is from \$3890 (10-15 members). For more information or to request a detailed itinerary, call toll free: **1-888-MTSOBEK (687-6235)**. More information about this trip can also be found on the Mountain Travel Sobek website (www.mtsobek.com).

Known as the pioneer in adventure travel, Mountain Travel Sobek has been in operation since 1969 and has a well-deserved reputation for its high quality, innovative adventures to destinations the world over. Throughout the years, they have delighted in sharing with thousands of travelers their love of the outdoors and their passion for natural places and unique cultures.

Note to Editor: Slides and interviews are available upon request. For further press information, please call Jennifer Hawkins at Hawkins International Public Relations at 1-212-255-6541.