



**For Immediate Release**

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## **Sea TREK De Palm Tours named 2013 Sea TREK Operator of the year**

Sub Sea Systems, the manufacturer and developer of the Sea TREK<sup>®</sup> helmet diving program and equipment, distinguishes Sea TREK De Palm—Aruba as the 2013 Sea TREK operator of the year. Sea TREK operators from locations around the world were considered for this esteemed award. Sea TREK operators were evaluated based on their individual tour quality, innovation, staff professionalism, community outreach, guest comments, and overall commitment to the Sea TREK program.

Sea TREK is a helmet diving program that allows people ages 8 to 80+ to experience the underwater world without needing to know how to dive or even swim. If you can walk and breathe, you can Sea TREK! Sea TREK guided tours are offered at travel destinations worldwide.

Sea TREK De Palm—Aruba has been in operation since 2000, making them one of the very first Sea TREK operations in the world. Although their initial dive site was nothing more than a sandy bottom, De Palm Tours' has made incredible enhancements to their touring area, including sinking an airplane, a bus, and a café table. Not only do these enrichments add to the novelty of the location, but also their presence has taken pressure off of the natural coral reef, and provided a new habitat to an abundance of sea life. During the Sea TREK experience, guests are sure to spot octopi, eagle rays, sea turtles, and squid among the many reef fish, corals, and anemones.

The past year Sea TREK De Palm has faced many challenges, including one ongoing challenge that has threatened to shutdown business. The water visibility at the Sea TREK dive site has been severely affected by local construction, and continual mud runoff into the sea. Tours have had to be delayed or cancelled for weeks on end due to the poor visibility. Facing this difficulty Sea TREK De Palm sought an alternate dive site on the other side of the island. Miriam vd Plassche, manager of De Palm Island, describes the new location as a flat, sandy area with exquisite coral 'trees'. Because the coral reef at this location is protected, Sea TREK De Palm will not be able to add their own enhancements, however their divers have been approved to create another underwater café and build various surprises along the path. Sea TREK De Palm hopes to continue to utilize their original location when water visibility is suitable.

Despite the challenges, Sea TREK De Palm had an astounding month in July. 674 TREKKERS experienced the underwater beauty of De Palm Island. The staff was busy, and certainly had a good workout that month... On land each helmet weighs 70 lbs (32 kgs) (the weight is less than

15 lbs (7kgs) once under water). 70 lbs lifted twice, on and off each of the 674 guests, equals 94,360 lbs. (42,800 kgs) lifted in one month!

Aside from being in great shape, the Sea TREK staff's work ethic and awesome attitude makes them one of the more memorable aspects of the tour. The trained, certified and highly skilled Guides and safety divers are known for their engaging and entertaining manner. An overwhelming amount of guest comments commend the staff for their professionalism, encouraging techniques, and knowledge; "The divers who accompanied us were great, making sure plenty of fish were close by, and pointing out other sea creatures," says one guest. Another shares, "the staff was very helpful and really made the experience a good one." One Carnival cruise guest rated the tour 5 out of 5 and said, "the staff is great, professional and makes you feel at ease...you will not regret doing this excursion. The only regret is that it had to end!" Many other TREKKERS acknowledge the Guides' skills, impressed by their hands-on, interactive, and patient approach to the Sea TREK tour.

De Palm is also very involved in the local community. They have committed to giving Afl. 100,000 annually to a non-profit called the *Family First Foundation*. Ricky Malmberg, CEO of De Palm Tours says, "We are a family company, so our support of Family First ties in well with our core values." Additionally, the Sea TREK staff participates in fundraising and costal cleanups. Recently, the entire team went to the south coast of Aruba and removed plastic bags that had blown into and become tangled in the mangrove trees.

Sea TREK De Palm is an exemplary operation, and its praises are best affirmed by its guests' comments. Ranked #2 on TripAdvisor, with over 2,600 5-star ratings, participants share:

"Sea TREK is phenomenal!"

"We decided to do the Sea TREK underwater walk...Walking along the ocean, interacting with the animals and seeing the sights was one in a million."

"...Experience of a lifetime and would do it again and again."

"By far one of the most amazing things I have ever done!"

"Simply fantastic! Thank you so much... or should I say 'masha danki!!!!'"

Jim Mayfield, president of Sub Sea Systems, says, "Sea TREK De Palm truly exemplifies the best of SeaTREK. Their dedication to the program's standards and procedures, reef conservation, tour innovation, and their determination to overcome the past year's challenges is extremely commendable."

De Palm Tours offers Sea TREK excursions daily, and will be opening the tour at the new location soon. For more information visit: [www.depalmtours.com](http://www.depalmtours.com)

Sea TREK is offered all over the world including destinations in the USA, Caribbean, Mexico, Asia and Europe. For a complete list of Sea TREK locations visit: [www.sea-trek.com](http://www.sea-trek.com)