



Sita Celebrates 80 Years

The tour operator has much to celebrate in its upcoming anniversary year

BY KELLY ROSENFELD

SITA WORLD TOURS WILL BE CELEBRATING A MAJOR milestone next year, as the company turns 80.

The tour operator plans to mark the occasion by increasing its offerings and creating new ways to work with travel agents, including an online booking engine for 24/7 reservations and easy tracking of bookings and availability. In addition, Sita will attempt to expand its customer base with more affordable travel options.

“Since we cater primarily to a high-end clientele, with the changing economic climate it became increasingly important to pinpoint the new type of travel, price points and destinations that travelers are seeking today,” said company vice president, Laudie Hanou. “In addition to this, we recognized that consumers still wanted to travel to far-flung destinations despite the changing economy, and we’re seeking lower priced programs still with great value. From this, Sita’s ‘Affordable’ line was born.”

Sita currently offers Affordable India, Kenya, Turkey, Japan and China, and more destinations will follow in the season to come. These new options were created from the company’s signature tours and destinations to encompass a strong value while providing unique tour activities and three- and four-star hotels. According to Hanou, the Affordable line has received excellent feedback so far.

Next year, the company will also continue its new Sita Destination Specialist Certification program, which educates agents on exotic locations such as Peru, Brazil, Korea, India, Kenya, South Africa, European river cruises and more.

Hanou also strongly recommends that agents take advantage of the special Travel Agent Services area of Sita’s website.

“This area serves to provide updated information on Sita fairs, booking incentives and information on how to reach our designated business development managers, who are based in Los Angeles, Chicago, Dallas, New York, Vancouver and Toronto.”

According to Hanou, such tools are being designed because agents are becoming more proactive and seeking more online tools to support their businesses.

“This includes destination knowledge — agents recognize that they must be highly knowledgeable on clients’ varying travel requests since the competition for that same piece of business is fierce,” Hanou said. “With growing confidence they will discover the higher value of commissions provided by the more inclusive, long-haul destinations that Sita provides.”

In addition, Sita continues to use good-old-fashioned reliability to build relationships with agents.

“We will work with an agent to close a booking without asking for an up-front deposit before proceeding further, if the sale has yet to close,” noted Hanou. “We know that this method of working together builds both business and long-term relationships.”

In celebration of Sita’s 80th anniversary, the tour operator will offer travelers an early booking discount of 5 percent on any brochure tours and departures. Agents will also enjoy a booking incentive that will increase their commission/cash bonus based on volume of tours booked within a calendar year. And, for brochure-related bookings, Sita’s Travel Agent Appreciation bonus is provided to agents for any scheduled dated departures booked. ■

THE DETAILS: *Sita World Tours* (www.sitatours.com)

Above: Sita offers a popular Affordable Kenya program.