



Dear Leapers,

Welcome to the Leap Local spring newsletter, with loads of inspiration for off-the-beaten-track adventures to get you excited about your summer travel plans. First, here is what we've been up to over the last few months...

In March, Leap was proud to receive recognition from the international press, reaching No.15 in UK broadsheet The Independent's list of Top 50 Travel Websites -

"A basic but brilliant idea, this stylishly designed but easy-to-use site is designed to put travellers in touch with the best local guides in the destination they're heading to, thereby also helping local communities benefit from tourism".



I also had a visit in Peru from journalist Vicky Baker, who writes for the UK's Guardian and is a bastion of local travel. She met several local guides from the Sacred Valley area, stayed with some local families and wrote up her trip in an article for The Guardian, in addition to Canadian newspaper The Globe & Mail. This publicity has boosted our ratings and web traffic, but above all it has given our local guides and services even more exposure.

We also completed our competition for the best local guides and services that have been recommended or reviewed since November. Read all about the judging process and our superstar winners on page 3. Many thanks to our expert judges, to Go Outdoors for donating some great prizes, and to all those that continue to recommend local guides and services.

We look forward to seeing more recommendations from wherever your travels take you this summer!

From Lou

Co-founder of Leap Local



Photo by: Kirsten Koza

The Judging Conundrum!

"Hmm, what is the fairest way to judge the best local guides and services?" This tricky question soon occupied our minds following the decision to run a competition that rewards local guides and services for travellers in developing countries. After all, what are the qualities of a good local guide or service, and how can they be judged equally when there is so much diversity?

We soon realised we would need the help of judges who were not only experts in ethical travel, but who had recent, first hand knowledge of this kind of travel experience and of 'going local' (see over the page for more information on our brilliant judges).

We drew on our judges' expertise by asking them to identify stand-out qualities and features they would want to see from good local guides and services. All judges agreed that they would look for wider support from the guide or service to the local community, for example by using local produce and accommodation. Judges said they would also expect an insight to local heritage and culture. Other features included the number of reviews received by each guide and service, flexibility in the face of changing circumstances (e.g. discovering a festival) and evidence of self progression through active learning, etc. As a result of their wide reaching networks and experiences, our excellent judges were able to bring unique insights to the judging table. Thank you judges! Thanks also to all of you who made thoughtful recommendations and reviews, your support is essential.

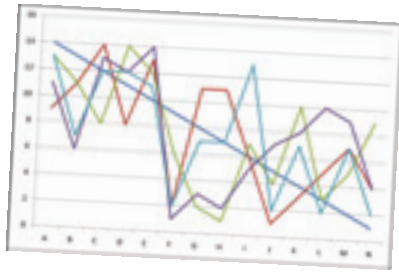
We chose to have six equal winners thereby eliminating the pressure to identify a single frontrunner, something which would have been a struggle given the diversity of our candidates. Prior to our online meeting to discuss and finalise the winners, we prepared a summary of the judges' results (Figure 1). This showed convergence on five winners with room for debate on the sixth. Since our judges were dispersed around the globe, we decided to use an interactive web platform called tinychat which allowed us to bring together Richard Hammond of GreenTraveller (who was ski touring in Europe), Vicky Baker of golocaltravel.com (based in Buenos Aires), and Kirsten Koza (who

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joined us from her home in Canada), with the rest of us logged on from the UK – including Stephen Chapman from Make Travel Fair, and Sally Broom from Your Safe Planet.

The sixth winner soon emerged after unanimous agreement that a candidate was worthy of recognition with judges agreeing the candidate offered - 'Such a personal experience in such a remote, little-known part of the world'. So in the end, our judging conundrum resolved itself fairly effortlessly thanks to a flexible approach and the expertise of our judges.

We have contacted all entrants to the competition including our winners with feedback from the judges. We would like to thank our sponsor Go Outdoors for some great prizes which are



Graph summarising judges' scores (each coloured line represents different judges, and letters on the x-axis represent different local guides and services)

being sent out to our winners imminently. As well as publishing the results on leaplocal.org and various other websites, we are contacting regional newspapers and radio stations in the locality of each winner to ensure they receive the recognition they deserve.

These guides and services are transformative to travelling experiences; they convert tourists from observers in to participants of the local community – read the glowing reviews yourself at leaplocal.org!



The prizes that were kindly donated by Go Outdoors

Watch this space - we will be running this competition again in a few months time...

The Judges

Leap Local chose a dynamic group of individuals to judge the competition. They are all engaged with responsible tourism professionally and continue to actively travel in developing countries, and are part of a new wave of tourism designed to work with local communities in developing countries.



Name: Vicky Baker

Occupation: Freelance journalist based in Buenos Aires and spokesperson for local travel (Guardian, Observer, Daily Telegraph, Sunday Times Travel Magazine, TNT, Overseas, Time Out, Travel Mail, The Linguist, Matchbox, International Travel & Tourism News, travel guidebook and website contributor)

Find out more: goinglocaltravel.com



Name: Sally Broom

Occupation: Founder of ethical travel website that connects travellers with trusted local travel experts worldwide, and energetic pioneer of various sustainable travel initiatives

Find out more: yoursafeplanet.co.uk



Name: Stephen Chapman

Occupation: Extensive traveller and recently selected as 'One-to-Watch' in Travel & Leisure; founded Make Travel Fair and now works with whl.travel

Find out more: maketravelfair.co.uk



Name: Kirsten Koza

Occupation: A humorous adventure travel writer, author of "Lost in Moscow", playwright and widespread traveller, she has finished her 3rd misadventure travel book and writes for travel magazines and newspapers

Find out more: kirstenkoza.com



Name: Richard Hammond

Occupation: Freelance travel writer (e.g. Guardian, BBC Wildlife, The Ecologist etc.), ethical tourism analyst and editor of a worldwide guide to Green Places to Stay, founder of Green Traveller

Find out more: greentraveller.co.uk

So now we move swiftly on to the hotly awaited announcement of the winners...



**Mario Tapia Mezo
(Chino)**

Location:
Ollantaytambo, Peru
(Sacred Valley)

Chino, a local from the beautiful town of Ollantaytambo, offers tours by foot, bike, or horse. He'll tell you love stories of the battling Ollantaytambo Incas in the Sacred Valley, and show you weavings from the small indigenous community of Willoc. He even knows the archaeological theories behind the mysterious circle terrace ruins of Moray. At the end of the day, join Chino for a delicious corn beer at a 'chicheria' and meet the locals.

'It felt like hanging out with a friend rather than a guide' Dejan Duzevik



Saul Geron

Location:
Arequipa, Peru

Saul (pronounced Sa-ool) and his team at Peru Adventure Tours offer a wide variety of tours from half a day up to 24 days, including mountain biking, trekking, sand boarding, climbing, camping, horseback riding, motor biking, boating, jungle tours, Inca Trail, off-the-beaten-path trips into the Colca Canyon, flying over the Nasca Lines and much more. Tours are customized to create truly unique experiences.

'Saul took care of us above and beyond the norm...he cares deeply about his own country and the well-being of Peruvians, especially those who do not have easy access to education or other opportunities that many of us travellers take for granted.' Kelsey Miller



Arnel Astillero

Location: Bicol Peninsula, Philippines

Arnel runs the fair trade tour, People to People, that brings consumers of fair trade to Philippine fair trade producers. The tour fosters an understanding of the tangible benefits fair trade delivers to grassroots communities – a 14 day overland adventure from Manila to Bicol on the Luzon Island, run on sustainable and responsible tourism principles.

'Arnel is very respected in all the circles he operates and has a good rapport with locals. Also, Arnel is sensitive to local issues and helps the participants navigate around these issues while walking away informed and empowered.' Cheri McCosker



**Thani Illam /
Santhosh**

Location: Kerala, India

Thani offers local cultural tours and experiences, including wildlife, dance, Ayurvedic/natural medicine and wonderful home-cooked meals. Guests are welcomed in to a peaceful, rural homestay and treated like one of the family. A great opportunity to learn about Hinduism, Ayurveda, and Kerala history.

'We spent a week at Thani Illam and it was probably the most memorable week of a full years travelling...the most rewarding aspect was the conversations we had with all three generations of the family...we are sure we saw and experienced more of Kerala due to our stay than we could have on our own.' W Jackson



**Tevita
(Community
Manager)**

Location: Republic of the Fiji Islands

Vorovoro is a beautiful, remote desert island where a global community have built an eco village and the visitor and worker are one family. Tribe members learn traditional dance ('meke'), weave mats, husk coconuts, attend jewellery workshops, go spear-fishing, watch turtles hatch on the beach and learn about sustainable living. The waterfall shower is a place where dreams are made...

'Tevita feels like an older brother and mentor... his energy is infectious and his eye for detail is incredible...he is proud to be Fijian and proud to share his culture and knowledge. He has enhanced many lives and touched many hearts.' Jim Kerridge



**Residencial
Petero Atamu**

Location: Easter Island, Chile

This family run "residencial" is a short walk from Ahu Tahai, the moai (giant stone heads), that boast the best sunset view on the island. Guests explore this mystical island on mountain bike, horse back or by SUV. Petero Atamu, close to the best surfing on the island, is also popular with surfers. Whether guests mingle with the family or keep to themselves, they are sure to have an unforgettable experience on this fascinating island.

'I danced...and socialized with the island's residents – I loved the unique culture and history on Rapu Nui. The locals' friendliness and generosity...was a highlight.' Kirsten Koza

But is it... Is it Loco to go Truly Madly Remotely Local?

Easter Island Without Reservations

By Kirsten Koza

AHHHH! It's midnight and rapids of thumb-sized cockroaches burst from the base of the mysterious monolithic statues that make Easter Island famous. I'm at Ahu Tongariki, the largest stand of statues – called moai in native Rapa Nui. It can't be my camera flash that startled the plague, because I'm taking long exposure night-shots. The South Pacific Ocean thunders against the lava rock and covers my camera lens with salt-spray, ruining yet another image. If I was suspicious - I'd think I'd angered the Rapa Nui ancestors.

Guidebook, brochure and article introductions to Easter Island usually begin by boasting that it is the most remote, inhabited island in the world – 3700 km's from mainland Chile. Those ominous words cause tourists to feel pressured into booking lodging in advance at the larger, publicized hotels.

There's a new giant on Easter Island and it's the all inclusive hotel outside Hanga Roa, the island's only town. Rapa Nui restaurant owners, shop keepers, artists and guides are right to be worried about this new monolith that by-steps their services. The livelihood of the 3800 locals is based upon tourism. The Easter Island Foundation expresses with dread that this new (\$10,000 for 7 nights) all inclusive, could also be a case of "the camel's nose under the tent."

I almost fell into a tourist trap the day before my departure. A momentary panic – what if I can't find somewhere to stay? I pictured myself sleeping underneath a 182-metric-ton moai. I ignored my reservations.

"The plane, the plane!" Easter Island's residencial-owners hear the jets land at Mataveru and rush to the airport with photos of their lodgings. This was how I discovered Petero Atamu, a Rapa Nui family-run residencial which charges just \$15 per night.

Terai, the eldest teen at Petero Atamu proudly teaches the story-telling dance of Hoto Matu'a at his cousin's 7th birthday. Better to dance than to lose more pesos gambling. The dance tells the story of his people's arrival on Easter Island around 400 CE. I've become chummy with Terai's mom who has given-up trying to show me the delicate moves of the lady's dance and instead saves me further humiliation with another slice of moist poi-cake and a tumbler of pisco.

This is what going local is all about. I glance at my new Rapa Nui tattoos that Mokomae gave me. He's also the Michael Flatley of Kari Kari, the island's dance troupe. Mokomae taught me about their ancient history while Terai's mom taught me about recent history.

In getting to know the local people during my 18-day stay – I'm not mystified as to how their great great grandparents moved gigantic moai across the volcanic terrain – or that in angry passion they destroyed the statues they'd spent their lives making. I'm more mystified that tourists would travel all that way only to miss getting to know a unique people who thrive culturally in isolation.

Kirsten Koza is an author and travel writer living in Canada. More photos from her trip to Easter Island can be seen on her website: www.kirstenkoza.com

If you'd like to write something for the newsletter we'd love to hear from you. There are several locals around the world who we want budding travel journalists-writers to visit, so let us know if you are about to go travelling and interested in writing an article. Current opportunities include scallop-diving off the coast of Peru and visiting weaving communities in the Sacred Valley.



Taking long exposure full-moon night shots on Easter Island is challenging due to wind and sea spray and a tad spooky too.

Ahu Tongariki, the largest stand of moai on Easter Island. Horses outnumber the 3800 locals on the island.



Moai painted with flash light. A five minute walk from the residencial at Petero Atamu, a five hour flight from Santiago Chile.

The Rapa Nui children who live at Petero Atamu bring out their chess board to challenge Rigel, a 7-year-old Canadian tourist.



Mokomae is the Michael Flatley of Easter Island's Kari Kari, a tattoo artist and jewellery maker.



Petero Atamu is a short walk from the most spectacular sunset on Easter Island.



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We are always interested in your views on Leap, our newsletter and our website so welcome all your ideas and feedback. If you want to get in touch please go to the 'contact us' section of our website. And for the more experienced travellers amongst you, we are always looking for people to help expand Leap Local to other developing countries. If you come across a local guide or service why not recommend them to another traveller through our website? And if the travel writer in you is waiting to get out, feel free to submit some 'How to go Local' guides.

Get involved - remember, your holiday is their livelihood!



www.leaplocal.org