



รัก (pronounced "rock") means "loves" in Thai



## Flight Of Friendship Thailand

In the aftermath of the tsunami in South Asia on December 26, 2004, there were urgent pleas to raise public awareness and help correct widespread misperceptions that were keeping tourists from traveling to the stricken areas. Peter deJong, President and CEO of Pacific Asia Travel Association, noted, "Now more than ever, Indian Ocean countries want you to come visit. Not only will tourism maintain jobs and boost local economies, it will also be a sign of support and solidarity, giving new hope and confidence to those who have begun to rebuild their lives and livelihoods."

Among the first to answer the call was Sho Dozono of Azumano Travel in Portland, Oregon, who organized **Flight Of Friendship—A Journey To Save Jobs**. Flight Of Friendship was a people-to-people effort to help jump start the return of tourists by exposing travel industry professionals and media representatives to an unembellished view of the situation, giving them a proper perspective and accurate information based on first-hand experiences.

The project accomplished its goals of educating the travel industry and raising public awareness, garnering media attention both at home and abroad, including exposure on Japanese Public Television. Among those to take the trip and share his experiences was Arnie Weissmann, *Travel Weekly* Editor in Chief.

Flight Of Friendship had the full support of travel industry organizations and the endorsement of prominent officials including the U.S. Ambassador to Thailand. The American Express Consumer Travel Network, USA, applauded the initiative as "a way to unite the global travel community in support of the recovery of the tourism industry in Thailand."

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