

## Small Adventure Travel Company Looking for Success? Here's Some Advice from BikeHike

### *Director Trish Sare Offers Insight as BikeHike Adventures Celebrates 15 Years of Operation*

Large tour companies usually enjoy advantages over their smaller peers in areas such as marketing budgets, personnel assets, customer networks, and brand recognition. However, small companies, such as Vancouver-based BikeHike Adventures ([www.bikehike.com](http://www.bikehike.com)), have proven that size is not a requirement for success. Named as one of National Geographic Adventure's "Best Adventure Travel Companies on Earth" for two years running, BikeHike is celebrating its 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year and the small operation is still going strong. In this article, BikeHike Founder and Director Trish Sare offers up some suggestions to other small tour companies that are looking to establish themselves in the adventure travel industry.

BikeHike's biggest asset is the personal attention it provides its clients throughout the entire experience— from initial inquiry to booking to the trip itself. For that reason, Sare is committed to remaining a small operation. "What's most rewarding to me is that BikeHike has provided thousands of adventure travelers from around the world with experiences they will never forget," says Sare. "These travelers --many of them long-standing clients-- have become my lifelong friends, part of my BikeHike Adventures extended global family."

So, how does a small tour company like BikeHike bring in industry accolades on a regular basis and maintain longevity in a very competitive business? Sare offers up some key focus areas that have led to her success:

**Know Your Market** – You should be able to clearly articulate who your core customer is. Knowing things like their demographics, interests, lifestyle, social status, and travel expertise will help you not only shape your trip catalog, but identify the best marketing vehicles for reaching potential clients.

**Listen to the Client** - Superior customer service is essential to the success of any tour company, but this attention must also be sincere and heart-felt to be effective. Sare talks to her past and future clients every day, not only to develop and maintain her business, but to build lasting personal relationships. She often joins her most dedicated clients on their trips and is hosting a party for them this summer to celebrate the company's anniversary. Sare's genuine concern for her clients' travel experiences and welfare has contributed to a high rate of referrals and repeat guests. Satisfied clients will serve as your most effective sales force.

**Attention to Detail** – Your clients are relying on you to create memorable travel experiences for them. It is your responsibility to deliver on this trust. Visit the destinations in your catalog on a regular basis, travel with the local outfitter who will be leading the trip before your clients do, check out the accommodations and the gear yourself. You won't be able to control every element of a trip, but taking care of the things you can manage in advance is important.

**Be Flexible** - Stay attuned to changing trends in the market and be prepared to respond swiftly. BikeHike originally only offered fixed departures, but quickly adapted to the rising demand for custom trips, and today, a significant portion of their business comes from customizing trips for people. When adapting to customer desires, remember to stay true to your identity. BikeHike developed a luxury version of their Vietnam trip that retained the elements of the original itinerary but replaced the homestay with hotel accommodations for people who wanted comfort at the end of the day.

**Respect Destinations Served** – Protecting the environment and the culture of any travel destination is imperative to both the livelihoods of the local people and the sustainability of adventure travel. BikeHike employs local guides, limits the size of tour groups to 12 people, and contributes to the conservation of the natural, welfare and cultural heritage of the areas they visit. For example, BikeHike financially supported typhoon victims in Vietnam, financed a project to educate street kids in Nicaragua, and donated school supplies to a remote village in Patachanca, Peru. Sare is proud of the fact that BikeHike provides sustainable income to her local partners, and is educating clients about how the rest of the world authentically lives.

**Love What You Do** – A big part of why BikeHike has enjoyed lasting success is simply because Trish is doing what she loves for a living. Seeing the world, meeting other cultures, and engaging in active pursuits are her passions. She gets a rush from introducing her clients to new physical challenges and enriching their lives through meaningful travel. This energy and enthusiasm is what sustains her during long hours and hard work, and are the ingredients that you need to be successful too.