

Press release

Simien Lodge, the highest hotel in Africa at 3260 meters altitude in the Simien Mountain National Park, has just been awarded the Silver prize in the African Responsible Tourism Awards.

These awards are presented annually at World Travel Market in Cape Town, South Africa to the tourism enterprises that show good practices in their various fields. The competition was tough and there were originally 60 companies long-listed. This was reduced to 24 on a short-list just before the opening of the event on the 6th April.

Lodge Manager Seifu Dessalegn and European Sales Manager Greta Iori travelled to Cape Town to pick up the coveted prize of the world-wide tourism industry.

“We were up against a lot of strong competition, “ says Greta. “It is the first time that an Ethiopian company has been recognised in the African Tourism Awards. This really puts our country on the map.”

Simien Lodge received the award for their work supporting the community in the Simien Mountains. Over the years this has varied from the donation of a brand new bus to the local woreda for transport in the mountains to the manufacture of hundreds of desks for local schools. The lodge has encouraged the donation medical equipment supplied by generous tourists including an ophthalmic microscope for cataract surgery to Gonder hospital.

Prior to the opening of the lodge, there were just 5000 tourists annually to Simiens. But this has now increased to over 20000 since the lodge opened nearly ten years ago. Guiding incomes have multiplied five fold and the number of mountain guides has also now increased.

Nick Crane, the lodge director was quoted as saying, “It was always our objective to support the local community as much as possible whilst making the clear distinction that we are not an NGO or philanthropic agency. We are a private business with a human heart.”

This is not the first time that the lodge has been recognised by the tourism industry for having done outstanding work. Last October Simien Lodge was second in the Skai International awards, a tourism association that is now active in 83 countries. A Skai club is now planned for Addis Ababa.

Certainly the staff seem happy. Forty jobs have been created plus many additional incomes from the suppliers of the lodge. Nobody ever leaves the company and they all appreciate working in a dynamic environment with a management that strives to work ethically and environmentally.