

## Burnaby's Sacred Earth Journeys sets course for Mayan wisdom

By Janaya Fuller-Evans, Burnaby NOW October 19, 2011



Helen Tomei, owner of Sacred Earth Journeys, runs spiritual discovery tours all over the globe, including the sold out Maya Sacred Path tour this fall. Photograph by: Larry Wright, BURNABY NOW

While survivalists anticipating the world's end build bunkers in preparation for December 2012, a Burnaby-based tour company has chosen a different way to mark the well-known time period in the Mayan calendar.

Sacred Earth Journeys has arranged a series of tours around the Mayan culture.

This year's tour - which runs from Nov. 30 to Dec. 9 - has proven quite popular, selling out by September, according to the company's owner, Helen Tomei.

Dec. 21 2012 is perceived by some to be the end of the Mayan calendar, which has led to predictions ranging from doomsday prophecies to a new age of enlightenment. The end of 2012 is the end of a particular time period in the Mayan's long count calendar.

While Sacred Earth Journeys has been conducting its Maya Sacred Path tours in southern Mexico and Guatemala since 2005, this is the first year it sold out, Tomei says.

"I think, because of the Mayan calendar ending in 2012, and because we've been running it now for seven years, we have a lot of repeat clients," she says. "It's built up a reputation and people are interested."

This year will be a little different, with the tour going to Guatemala, Tomei explains, as well as sacred places in Honduras.

"It's focusing around the Mayan knowledge and wisdom and what it can teach us," she says.

"These journeys are for serious students who wish to evolve a deeper awareness of the true Mayan teachings and thus, evolve themselves through a spiritual awakening of cosmic consciousness," the Sacred Earth Journeys website states. "As the Mayan calendar draws to a close, it is important for us to reconnect and return to source, the place where it all began."

Tomei's Burnaby-based travel company has been arranging spiritual tours since 2004, and was featured in the Burnaby NOW after winning the Inspiration 2004 Entrepreneur of the Year Award.

"Sacred Earth Journeys offers opportunities for personal growth, for people to explore different cultures and sacred sites, and benefit from that," she says of the company.

Tomei discovered her passion for travel at the age of 12, when her father took her to Peru.

The company recently organized a retreat in Peru, the Sacred Ayahuasca Retreat, and has other retreats and tours coming up this fall, such as a yoga retreat in Tahiti.

Other destinations include India, Greece and Thailand

The company's sales have pretty much doubled since 2004, she says.

"We have people coming from all over," Tomei says, adding that while most clients are Canadian, she also has clients from all over the world.

She also handles booking tours for private groups, she says, and handles registration for a Vancouver Island yoga retreat company, Milagro Retreats.

Tomei would like to continue to deepen the journeys the company offers, and collaborate with more leaders in the areas where Sacred Journeys travels, she says.

"People are really looking for a deeper meaning to their travel experience," Tomei says. "There's really a trend towards people not just necessarily wanting to go and sit on the beach for a week and sip martinis. They're really looking for an opportunity to connect with the ancient wisdom, the traditions that have been there for thousands of years in a lot of these places."

Burnaby small businesses such as Sacred Earth Journeys are being profiled on the NOW website for Small Business Week in B.C., which takes place between Oct. 16 and 22.

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