

Sustainability Guidelines: Thailand

You are about to embark on a trip to the exotic country of Thailand, a country that is steeped in rich cultural tradition and sacred locations. Thailand also boasts incredible natural beauty, from the forests in the mountainous northern region to the colorful seas of the Gulf of Thailand and the Indian Ocean.

Environmental Issues:

There are several environmental issues, however, that threaten the natural beauty of Thailand:

- Air pollution from vehicle emissions due to an expanding population and urbanization
- Water pollution from organic and factory wastes; rice paddies require large amounts of water in order to function and often times large rivers run through these farming villages: human pressures coupled with agricultural demands pollute and deplete these rivers
- Deforestation due to the conversion of forest lands into agriculture lands and slash and burn agricultural practices
- Soil erosion as the result of deforestation
- Wildlife populations threatened from illegal hunting of land animals as well as over fishing in the seas.

Environmental Initiatives:

The government of Thailand has acknowledged that as the country continues to develop, the effects of urbanization and sprawl are depleting the natural resources. The Thai government has partnered with the World Bank to create a ***Country Development Partnership for the Environment (CDP-E)***, which focuses on improving environmental quality and sustaining natural resources through knowledge-sharing and demonstration. *CDP-E* focuses on three main platforms: air pollution, water quality, and wastes (toxics and chemicals). The government is imposing regulations on emissions, waste disposal and developing projects for watersheds to decrease water pollution.

World Wildlife Fund (WWF) is taking steps to preserve the wildlife of Thailand. One of their projects is in the mountains of Eastern Thailand in ***Pang Sida National Park***, home to various species of elephant, tiger, deer, freshwater crocodiles and various types of birds. *WWF* is working with park authorities to strengthen park management and conservation. The objectives of this project are to increase conservation awareness and involvement of local communities, strengthen forest protected area management, and build a model for the park in terms of conservation and community awareness that can be applied to other parks throughout Thailand. Another *WWF* project is the conservation of the wetlands of Thailand that are areas of great biodiversity and also provide protection from flooding and water purification.

The objectives of *Participatory Wetland Management* project are to establish community empowerment of sustainable use of the wetlands and strengthen interest in and policies on community participation in wetland management among government agencies, NGOs, and stakeholders in various regions such as Cambodia and Laos. *WWF* has also placed an importance on education in order to evoke change in Thailand. *Bang Pu and Rangsit Nature and Agriculture Centres for Education* are learning centres for schools that have lessons coinciding with curriculum standards and the use of the natural environment to motivate interest in conservation. The educational matter draws on overlaps between urban development, natural resources, and the environment.

As a visitor to this exotic country, full of biodiversity, stunning mountains, forests and oceans, you can take steps to assist in the conservation of Thailand. Take the time to educate yourself about the conservation projects at the various national parks that you visit. While you are at such parks, please respect nature and stay in the designated areas, dispose of trash in the proper manner, and respect the wildlife's habitat. Also, be mindful that Thailand is working on reducing air pollution, so whenever possible, try alternative methods of transportation. As a traveler with Elevate Destinations, you are fortunate enough to be staying in resorts that are dedicated to conservation and the preservation of Thailand's wildlife and environment.

Guide to Eco-lodges in Thailand

Anantara Resort and Spa Golden Triangle is part of the Thai Elephant Conservation Centre set up by The Royal Thai Government. The TECC is the central body for the conservation of elephants, both domestic and wild, as well as the communities that depend on the elephants for their livelihood. Anantara Resort Golden Triangle is the northern extension of TECC's activities. The resort has also developed The Golden Triangle Asian Elephant Foundation, which provides a safe place for elephants who are unable to work. The foundation also rescues elephants, injured and abandoned by their owners. There are several projects currently in place at Anantara Resort Golden Triangle that visitors can see firsthand. Anantara is committed to the conservation and rehabilitation of the elephants of Thailand.

Luang Say Lodge is located on the Mekong River and committed to conserving the traditions of the communities located along the river. The lodge has ethnic and cultural dance programs that provide employment to dancers from the region to instruct guests and contributes to preserving these ancient traditions. Luang Say also provides river cruises that stop in local villages along the way, supporting local economies by allowing guests to purchase local handicrafts. Another way the lodge supports the local communities' economies is by encouraging these villages to grow fruits, vegetables, and raise livestock that will be purchased by the lodge. The lodge also makes donations to local schools and temples and helps local villagers clear litter from their paths and homes. Projects have been installed to provide books to schoolchildren as well as build a small school in a local village. There is no comprehensive sewage system along the Mekong River, which leads to local villages polluting the river. Luang Say Lodge has built its own sewage system that does not end in the Mekong River.



The Lodge has constructed a water pipe system that obtains water from mountain streams and allows villagers to tap into this system. Luang Say recycles all bottles, cans, and plastics that are used at the lodge. In addition, all the vegetables used in the lodge are grown in an organic garden that uses composted wastes instead of fertilizers.