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Top 5 sustainable tourism projects and why you'll want to support them

20th May 2017

The United Nations has declared 2017 the Year of Sustainable Tourism. Celebrate with these tourism projects that are amongst the most eco-friendly and socially responsible in the world.

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1: Gili Lankanfushi and the Coral Line Project, Maldives



Measuring coral on Gili Lankanfushi (Green Pearls)

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Top 10 things to do in Thailand

Coral reefs are both the most threatened and richest biodiverse ecosystems on the planet. Marine biologist Vaidotas Kirsys believes everybody can contribute to the protection the coral reefs. In March 2014, he initiated the **Coral Line project** at Gili Lankanfushi resort in the Maldives.

The **Coral Line project** pursues four goals: to offer guests an unforgettable experience by direct encounter with the corals, to make a contribution to the investigation of the corals, to support social and environmental projects, and, finally, to help regenerate a small coral reef.

The project has helped Gili Lankanfushi became the first resort on the Maldives to use a low technology system to let corals grow. More importantly, with the expertise of marine biologist Deborah Burn, they are sharing this knowledge, providing information to other resorts looking to raise coral reefs.

Coral Lines Project

2: Tongsai Bay, Thailand



Tongsai Bay (Green Pearls)

Regarded as one of the greenest hotels in Thailand, the **Tongsai Bay** started in 1985 when the late Akorn Hoontrakul purchased the land and spent three months sleeping on the beach, dreaming of his ideal resort with low impact on nature. During its construction he made sure no tree was felled. The hotel was built around nature and not vice versa.

On July 8th 2017, the **Tongsai Bay** celebrates its 30th anniversary. Today, the resort is managed by Akorn’s son, Thanakorn, and his daughter-in-law, Saisiri. Both share his passion for the environment.


Over 60 species of birds and butterflies can only be spotted on this piece of land, and guests can participate in various environmental projects as they unwind in largely unspoiled nature.

Tongsai Bay

3: Inkaterra, Peru



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In 1975, José Koechlin von Stein bought land in Puerto Maldonado and created his first eco-friendly **Inkaterra Hotel**: the Reserva Amazónica Lodge. Soon his vision for eco-tourism caught on, and his 'Inkaterra' concept expanded to include seven lodges located at Peru's most popular spots, including the Amazon rainforest, the Machu Picchu cloud forest, the Sacred Valley of the Incas and the city of Cusco.

Today, Inkaterra's non-profit organisation, **Inkaterra Asociación**, aims to conserve Peru's natural environment, as well as cultural and archaeological resources. Their focus is to grow Peru as a sustainable tourist destination and conserve its natural beauty. They believe that environmental responsible travel is the only way to sustain the industry in Peru and generate a positive impact on the environment.

Inkaterra

4: Juist, Germany



The litter-free dunes of Juist (Green Pearls)

If implementing sustainable tourism within a particular project is a big challenge, it is infinitely more difficult across a whole destination. That is the challenge the East Frisian Island of **Juist** in Germany has set itself. Early indications are that it is achieving it admirably.

In 2015, **Juist** was awarded the German Sustainability prize and, more recently, was certified as the 'first sustainable destination' in Lower Saxony. There are no cars on the island, just horse carriages and bicycles, and sustainable garbage prevention and disposal is strongly implemented.

There's even a 'Green University' for children on the island, educating them from a young age about sustainability.

Juist

5: Kasbah du Toubkal, Morocco



Kasbah du Toubkal (Green Pearls)

The **Kasbah du Toubkal** is a small authentic lodge in the midst of a local Berber community in the Atlas Mountains of Morocco. Their mission, since the opening in 1995, has been to protect the Moroccan Imlil valley against negative effects of mass tourism developments.

Guests from all over the world are given the unique opportunity to learn more about the culture and the lifestyle of the Berbers, with the lodge a living embodiment of Berber hospitality. 95 percent of the employees come from villages in the region and 80 percent from the vicinity of two kilometres.

Profits are channelled into the education of employees, particularly women. A foundation, financed by a small overnight surcharge, supports social projects in the local community, many of which guests can take part in.

Kasbah du Toubkal

Main image: Gili Lankanfushi, Maldives (Green Pearls)