

GO, GIVE BACK

Enjoy your holiday knowing you're
supporting something more meaningful.

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Above Guests can unwind at The Sarojin's luxurious pool. **Above right** Cooking for kids event at the Camillian Social Centre, supported by The Sarojin. **Opposite page, from top** Elephants roaming at Anantara Golden Triangle Elephant Camp and Resort; Regal wedding at the Anantara.

Whatever your reason for travelling, whether exploring a new culture or relaxing by the beach, it shouldn't, and needn't, be to the detriment of the people, places and environment that inhabit the destinations you venture to. The pillars of sustainability — economic, social, environmental and cultural — are in the spotlight this year thanks to 2017 being declared by the United Nations as the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development. Here are just a handful of inspiring hotels that put in the effort to give back in some way.

DISASTER SUPPORT

The course of luxury boutique resort The Sarojin at Khao Lak, Thailand, changed track when, just prior to its scheduled opening, the region was struck by the devastating Boxing Day tsunami in 2004. The beach community, located north of Phuket, was one of the hardest hit by the disaster, and instead of walking away from the destroyed site, the owners of The Sarojin were among some of the biggest champions in getting the locals back on their feet. Through international outreach, The Sarojin Khao Lak Community Fund was established in response to the natural disaster, and with the input from the resort and its guests, continues its contributions today. The fund has led to



the likes of children being supported with care and orphanage support; medical provision for prosthetic limbs; classrooms being built and receiving educational supplies; roads being built; animals treated; a boatyard and longtail boat-building construction; help in restoring the local fishing fleet; and landscape regeneration.

Locals are further supported with employment, and some of the children can look forward to a bright future in hospitality, with a partnership between the Baan Than Namchai Orphanage and The Sarojin offering employment traineeships. Work placements are held during school holidays to give older students from the orphanage a taste of work skills and help improve their confidence.

Located 15 minutes from the resort, the Camillian Social Centre Takuapa is a day-care and rehabilitation centre for children with disabilities that is supported by The Sarojin Khao Lak Community Fund. Guests are welcomed to the centre to assist staff or take part in arts and crafts sessions with the children, and The Sarojin is involved in a number of initiatives and fundraisers for the centre.

Sustainable tourism ideals mean The Sarojin also works with local rural and coastal communities to ensure that not only are they supported but that guests have memorable experiences within the stunning natural beauty of the area.

sarojin.com



ANIMAL ATTRACTION

Anantara Golden Triangle Elephant Camp and Resort is set on 65 hectares of forest, rice paddies, countryside and native gardens, among the lush, mountainous jungle of northern Thailand overlooking the hills of neighbouring Myanmar and Laos. Offering once-in-a-lifetime, all-inclusive luxury experiences for guests, the resort is also renowned for its ethical elephant camp.

The Golden Triangle Asian Elephant Foundation was set up in 2006 as a not-for-profit in cooperation with the elephant camp and resort. While the foundation wishes all elephants could be wild, this is currently not the case and therefore it aims to improve the lives and welfare of these gentle giants by assisting captive elephants and taking part in conservation and wild elephant programs. The camp supports 25 elephants and 60 people and is fully funded by guest donations and Anantara — with a portion of room rates donated to the foundation. The foundation performs street rescues and reaches out to work with wild elephant herds in Thailand as well as other areas where there is human–elephant conflict.

As part of the Golden Triangle experience, guests have the option to immerse

themselves in a number of activities, such as joining in on the elephants' daily walk to the river or participating in a hands-on lesson in elephant training and bathing. The work of the foundation means the elephants in the camp are provided with food, shelter and veterinary checks, and the mahouts (elephant trainers or keepers) and their families are given food, housing, medical care, schooling for their children, and all profits from a traditional silk-weaving business. These benefits flow on to the wider community too, with student groups of disadvantaged children given memorable experiences and local farmers receiving a monthly income from the sale of their crops for elephant fodder.

As part of the foundation, the Asian Captive Elephant Working Group has recently been formed to set guidelines on a broader scale for the industry. The group, including Director of Elephants John Roberts, is made up of a combination of scientists, animal behaviourists, veterinarians and hospitality experts who have identified 11 core needs in order to move forward and create guidelines for the welfare of captive elephants in tourism in South East Asia. >>

helpingelephants.org
goldentriangle.anantara.com



Fast fact
 The majority of Thailand's captive elephants and mahouts worked in the logging industry until it was banned in 1989, forcing mahouts and elephants into the city to seek alternative employment.



Locally employed staff are trained and well looked after first, after which profits go to Gaia-Oasis Foundation.

INDONESIAN OASIS

The concept for Gaia-Oasis was founded on the idea of giving back to Bali and its people in some way under the guiding vision of founder Sabine Willard. Established as a non-profit and founded and supported by a group of like-minded members from around the world, this unique and special place acts as a spiritual retreat, resort holiday destination, and non-profit foundation, or *yayasan*. Located in Tejakula in northern Bali, Gaia-Oasis is split between two locations: Abasan, on a verdant hillside looking out to the ocean, and the Pantai Beach Resort on the peaceful beachfront.

Guests are welcome to take part in complimentary daily yoga sessions, held at both the beach and mountain locations. Fresh, local food with a strong health focus is served both beachside and overlooking the jungle, and other activities and facilities include meditation and healing, volunteering, a saltwater swimming pool and rainforest spa. In the spa, healing ingredients are plucked from the abundant gardens of the property and mixed to create treatments. There are swimming pools, bales, and extensive tropical gardens and paths throughout the properties.

Gaia-Oasis's locally employed staff are trained and well looked after first, after which profits go to the Gaia-Oasis Foundation (*yayasan*). The *yayasan* works on a number of impressive social, cultural



and environmental programs for the people of Tejakula and the surrounding villages. Among the variety of initiatives, a reef-restoration project is underway, local fishermen are supported, and the foundation assists forest conservation.

The foundation also provides financial support to a local primary school and advocates for early childhood education, as well as offering scholarship programs. Local disadvantaged elderly women living in poverty are provided with essential items such as clothing, food and electricity, and, in addition, the foundation supports a nearby children's orphanage. Gaia-Oasis's mountainside Abasan property is also in the process of being re-cultivated, using organic farming and permaculture principles and with native Balinese trees and plants as well as a diverse range of fruits, trees, herbs and vegetables.

gaia-oasis.com

GOOD SENSE

The Six Senses group of resorts, hotels and spas is another that shows dedication to sustainability and creates fantastic initiatives to support locals in the idyllic locations the resorts reside in. These range from monthly allowances for families in the local community to providing local schoolchildren with education supplies such as pens and books.

Located on a private island, among huge granite boulders and inviting white-sand beaches, Six Senses Zil Pasyon is one such resort with a commitment to giving back. If there was anywhere that should be described as paradise, this place, located on Felicite Island in the Seychelles, is it.

The resort focuses on restoring the local habitat and supporting threatened ecosystems by propagating rare plant life and ridding the island of invasive species. It manages to produce its own high-quality drinking water, eliminating the need for plastic bottles, while steps are made towards self-sustainability through the resort's own chicken farm and organic garden. Its environmental footprint is reduced further with its commitment to waste reduction and use of renewable energy, such as solar power. Many of the staff are Seychellois nationals, and the resort gives back to locals by providing support to those studying or interested in studying tourism by offering internships and work experience to university students and schoolchildren. It also supports



neighbouring island La Digue, west of Felicite Island, by using the revenue of its water sales to provide water systems and solar water heaters to schools and hospitals there. ■

sixsenses.com

Other inspiring initiatives

Pack for a Purpose asks travellers when packing to make a little room for items needed by community projects in your travel destination. Including supplies like stethoscopes, story books, toothbrushes, stickers and deflated soccer balls in your luggage could make a world of difference to another community. To check what's needed where you're going, visit: packforapurpose.org

Designed in cooperation with Pollinator Partnership, Fairmont Hotels & Resorts in the US has developed nesting and reproduction hives for wild mason bees in response to the decline of bee populations due to habitat loss. pollinator.org

In 2007, walking tour company Walk Japan established its Community Project in Kunisaki, a region faced with an ageing population. Walk Japan is funding local labour to work in this area and maintain it for a more vibrant and prosperous future. So far an abandoned old farmhouse has been restored, and a number of locals have been provided with employment for the ongoing series of projects and improvements. walkjapan.com