



Introducing the EU SWITCH ASIA Thai Tourlink Project



Funded by EU SWITCH-ASIA, **TourLink** is a tourism supply chain initiative, linking EU buyers with Thai tourism businesses. TourLink aims to **raise sustainability performance along Thai tourism supply chains and boost market demand for sustainable Thai product choices**. The project unites the expertise of sustainable tourism pioneers: European Centre for Ecological and Agricultural Tourism (ECEAT), Designated Areas for Sustainable Tourism Administration (DASTA), Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA), Thai Hotel Association (THA) and Thai Eco and Adventure Travel Association (TEATA). As the Tourlink project as progressed, many other Thai organisations have become actively involved.

The Tourlink project is delivering a suite of activities, across **sector-based work** and **issue-based work**.

At sector level, the core of Tourlink’s approach is mobilizing and mentoring Thai tour operators, accommodations and other tourism suppliers to achieve sustainability standards. **At issue level**, Tourlink is also working to extend Green Finance opportunities, reduce plastic and food waste; reduce carbon emissions; and ensure that tourism benefits destinations, local Thai communities and SMEs.

Results so far:

Sector based work has focused on raising sustainable tourism standards in the European-Thai tourism supply chain, through a global-local consultation process; training, coaching and auditing Thai tourism businesses. The project has worked with several different sectors and scales of suppliers, striving to help businesses 'where they are now' in their sustainability journey, through a suite of 'step by step' tools.

Key results are a new partnership with Thailand's largest Tour Operator association, [ATTA](#), training ATTA members to achieve Travelife Partner awards; successfully supporting Thailand's Department of Climate Change and Environment ([DCCE](#)) to develop Thailand's first GSTC Recognised Thai hotel standard; and facilitating cooperation among a Working Group of 14 leading Thai DMCs and tourism associations.

A core target group are SME tourism businesses, supplying Thai DMCs selling to Europe, towards a more systematic approach to sustainability. Since 2021, a team of Thai and European organisations (TEATA, DASTA, CBT-I, TRTA, Travelife and Fair Tourism) have worked with the 'Tourlink DMC Working Group' to develop simple, 'Step In' level sustainability checklists and English-Thai training handbooks. These have practical cases and examples for land transport, marine excursions, tour guides, and local community visits. Suppliers can access and report on these checklists online, hosted on the [Travelife](#) platform.

The team delivered onsite (Sep 22) and online (Aug 23) [training](#) to over 500 Thai tour operators and tourism suppliers. Tourlink partners, TEATA, DASTA, CBT-I and TRTA teams have also run face to face coaching in Phuket and Chiang Mai to help SME suppliers get familiar with the tools and start reporting. We are ready to scale up, and plan a training at the end of March 2024 in Chiang Mai and Phuket.

Issue based work has delivered practical tools to reduce [food and plastic waste](#); to support the development and marketing of [carbon neutral tours](#) (including work to align [European](#) and [Thai](#) carbon footprint calculation methodologies); a detailed study on opportunities and constraints for Thai tourism businesses to access Green Finance credit (Thai language); and innovative research on DMCs needs for Community Based Tourism, and Human Rights issues and practical solutions in Thai village tourism.

Tourlink's policy component aims to make practical recommendations, which can lead to policies which make it easier for Thai tourism businesses to scale up their sustainability efforts. A workshop focusing on waste management is planned in Phuket on February 23rd 2024. Any European tour operators interested in contributing your thoughts to our policy white paper are welcome: please don't hesitate to reach out.