Takhiantia: Protecting Nature and Culture through Community Based Tourism

Takhian Tia Village, Thailand
Designated Areas for Sustainable Tourism Adminisstration
Local Destinations (including villages, cities, municipalities, islands)
Culture & Heritage

Summary of Good Practice Story
Takhiantia, Thailand's largest remaining coconut plantation near Pattaya (about 5,000 rai / 800 hectares), lost land steadily to housing and condominium development as the city expanded, bringing pollution and pushing young people to leave for city work. Residents partnered with DASTA Pattaya and the local municipality to form the "Takhiantia Subdistrict Community-Based Tourism Promotion Club," following Thailand's CBT development guidelines through four stages: community planning around sustainable management and fair benefit distribution, opening the House of 100 Pillars museum as a coconut-culture learning centre, developing tour routes (bicycle tours, cooking classes, coconut-craft workshops, traditional Lam Tat performances) alongside biological pest control using parasitic wasps instead of pesticides, and finally meeting CBT Thailand's international sustainability standards. The club has since become the "Takhiantia Tourism Community Enterprise," keeping 100% of profits circulating locally with a welfare fund for lean years, drawing 3,000-5,000 quality tourists annually. The lesson: community-based tourism can be a genuine safeguard against land loss to urban development, transforming how residents see their own agricultural land — no longer just a farm to sell, but a valuable, income-generating heritage worth protecting.

Setting the Scene: Destination & context
The Takhiantia community is located on the eastern coast of Thailand in Chonburi province, just ten minutes from Pattaya City, and is home to approximately 20,000 people. Takhiantia is the largest coconut plantation in the province, covering approximately 5,000 rai (about 800 hectares), and is the only one that retains its natural beauty and lushness. This is due to the villagers living a simple life, close to nature, and collectively preserving their traditions and cultural heritage. Numerous tourism activities are organized inside the plantation, all of which aim to connect our visitors with the lifestyle and culture of the Takhiantia people. These programmes also add value to the stages of coconut cultivation, reflecting its cultural foundations, and the wise utilization of local natural resources.Set amidst the regrettable but inevitable expansion of urbanization and industry, the Takhiantia community stands strong and forms a balanced partnership with nature. It is beautifully suited for anyone interested in how tranquil nature and enchanted culture can coexist with the turmoil of modernity.Visitors learn about environmental conservation, and experience the traditional wisdom and determined commitment of the Takhiantia people to pass on their heritage to future generations.

The Turning Point: Why change was needed
Pattaya's rapid expansion triggered the replacement of nearly 5,000 rai of Takhiantia's historic coconut plantation with housing and condominiums. Urbanization has brought pollution, degraded agricultural land, and encouraged young people to leave the region for work. Collectively, these socio-economic changes deeply threaten the integrity of our prized local culture, and the community have not left their fate to chance. Community-based tourism has been employed to protect our land, our environment, and our traditional way of life.

The Vision: What you set out to do
"Securing Takhiantia's environment and heritage through community-led tourism."

Recognizing these urgent challenges, local residents partnered with the Designated Areas for Sustainable Tourism Administration (DASTA Pattaya) and the Takhiantia Subdistrict Municipality to establish the "Takhiantia Subdistrict Community-Based Tourism Promotion Club." Energized by local participation, the club has used Community-Based Tourism (CBT) to transform Takhiantia into a balanced eco-cultural destination. The people of Takhiantia share a single vision: to maintain their community as a vibrant green oasis amidst Pattaya's rapid urbanization; to become a place where natural, traditional, and cultural heritage is sustainably preserved and creatively shared with the rest of the world.

The Journey: How change happened
The "Takhiantia Subdistrict Community-Based Tourism Promotion Club," in collaboration with the Designated Areas for Sustainable Tourism Administration (DASTA) and the Takhiantia Subdistrict Municipality, held a community meeting to gather opinions, establish regulations, and identify local potential and unique characteristics.

Our goal is to redefine the meaning of "coconut plantation", transforming it into a "conservation-based tourism destination," by utilizing the Community Based Tourism Development Guidelines of Thailand (CBT Thailand). The transformation can be divided into four broad stages:
Step I Preparing to become a community based tourism destination.
The community meeting organized by the Takian Tia Subdistrict Community-Based Tourism Promotion Club (the club) chose to focus on five core topics:
1) The destination's sustainable management;
2) The fair local distribution of benefits;
3) The conservation and promotion of cultural heritage in all its forms;
4) The systematic and sustainable management of natural resources and the environment;
5) Offering a high quality of service and safety.

Step II The Opening of the House of 100 Pillars museum.

The House of 100 Pillars was turned into a local museum and a learning center exploring the tradition, culture, and the environment of Takhiantia's coconut and its plantation. For example, it utilized community resources to develop tourism activities focused on "Coconut Culture," and designed activities emphasizing participation between community members and tourists.

Step III Tour routes and activities.
Some villagers were initially skeptical about whether tourism could generate enough income compared to selling their land to investors. At the time, coconut farmers were facing a crisis of pest infestations (black-headed caterpillars and black spiny beetles) that severely damaged their trees. The club sought out natural biological controls instead of pesticides, which led to the breeding and release of parasitic wasps to control and eliminate the pests.
The club subsequently leveraged this problem to encourage the development of activities that prioritized environmentally friendly tourism and reduced greenhouse gas emissions. The club also adopted "Tourism for All" and "Responsible Tourism" to create several tour routes and activities that fairly distribute income across the community. Some examples:

- Courses on traditional and local culture held at the House of 100-Pillar museum.
- Bicycle tour routes through the coconut plantation.
- Disc golf competitions held in the coconut plantation
- Cookery courses focused on local dishes such as chicken curry with young coconut shells.
- Tasting tours involving coconut coffee and coconut jelly.
- Courses on the making of tie-dye fabrics using coconut husks, coconut oil soap, and cold-pressed coconut oil, the production of fabric bags from natural materials, producing art from coconut shells, designing floral garlands, and weaving coconut leaves.
- Traditional folk performances (using Lam Tat).

Step IV Meeting international standards for sustainable tourism management.

Tourism management standards are handled by two groups.
The Designated Areas for Sustainable Tourism Administration (DASTA), and related agencies, enhance knowledge of community-based tourism management, upgrade standards according to the CBT Thailand criteria, promote marketing, handle public relations, and connect with the private sector.
The Takhiantia Subdistrict Municipality maintains public utilities conducive to tourism by managing community waste, improving the landscape's attractiveness and safety, and promoting a community-based circular funding system.

The Breakthrough: What you achieved
Community-Based Tourism (CBT) has revitalized and enhanced the economic resilience of Takhiantia. What was once a community that relied solely on income from agricultural produce (coconuts) is now home to vibrant tourism. More than 3,000–5,000 quality tourists visit Takhiantia annually, generating income from plantation visits, activities, food and beverages, and the sale of souvenirs. This economic boost not only improves the quality of life for local people but also serves as a safeguard of the land, its history, and heritage.The "Takhiantia Subdistrict Community-Based Tourism Promotion Club" was recently upgraded to become the "Takhiantia Tourism Community Enterprise" to better shield the organization from domination by outside investors. It also guarantees a fair distribution of benefits, specifying that 100% of profits circulate within the area. In addition, a portion of revenues is set aside for a "Community Welfare Fund" to provide relief during crises or when agricultural yields are low.This framework fosters community self-reliance, mitigating economic vulnerabilities, and reduces the financial pressure on landowners to sell their plantations to developers.These changes mean that the community now earns a generous supplementary income from tourism, generating a fair return on investment within the local economy. Locals no longer view plantations just as agricultural sites, but as a valuable natural resource worth preserving. They take pride in being the last remaining coconut growing area in Chonburi province, providing unique experiences for tourists, and being a source of well-being to the community.

Reflections: What you learned and what others can learn
Takhiantia proudly survives in the midst of rapid urbanization. It faced the same onerous challenges as other suburban areas who eventually lost their cultural identity. Fortunately, Takhiantia people have the strength and determination to safeguard their land and culture. They fought back, turning an agricultural region into a community based tourism community that follows international-best practices, and benefits all of its members fairly. CBT Thailand guidelines have been adopted to ensure quality standards for tourism, and the community enterprise framework guides the social and economic aspects of the community.
It's perhaps in the nature of young people to want to leave their hometown in search of opportunities elsewhere. Sadly, many of Takhiantia's younger generations do not want to carry on their parents' legacy as coconut farmers. Our response is to encourage the participation of young people in the myriad local tourist activities as soon as possible. The growing international

flavor of these activities (not least the presence of international visitors) will hopefully drive the youth cohort to stay with us and prosper.

The Ripple Effect: Lasting impact

We believe that Takhiantia is a model for sustainable tourism, proving that a small agricultural community can survive in the heart of a corrosive industrial and commercial tourism zone like Pattaya. By using Community-Based Tourism (CBT), locals have generated sufficient income to protect their plantation, allowing them to remain in their homeland instead of migrating to faceless big cities for work.

Over 12 years, the Takhian Tia community has employed its Community Based Tourism (CBT) potential to focus on long-term cultural and environmental preservation. One result has been numerous prestigious tourism awards. Following on from the CBT model have been the “tours to learn about our community” and "from waste to value" initiatives for systematic environmental management. These thrive under a new collaboration model where the government, private sector, and locals engage with large organizations in eco-friendly CSR activities, such as planting coconut trees and releasing parasitoid wasps.

Community Based tourism in Takhiantia is the lifeblood of our plantation. Its mission is to promote a sustainable way of life, generate warm smiles, and encourage a deep pride in Takhiantia culture from generation to generation. It will always welcome visitors with green hearts.

Awards or Certifications

1. Sustainable Tourism Acceleration Rating (STGs STAR 5 star)
2. ASEAN Community Based Tourism Standard 2021 – 2023
3. COMMUNITY BASED TOURISM STANDARD EXCELLENT LEVEL 2020 - 2023
4. COMMUNITY BASED TOURISM STANDARD EXCELLENT LEVEL 2024 – 2026
5. Friendly Design Awards 2019
6. Winner of the Rural Tourism Award 2020 in the "Best for Company Outing" category for the Corporate Market, recognizing its outstanding Cultural Tourism Program.
7. Thailand Tourism Awards 2021
8. Certificate of Participation as a Thai Traditional Wisdom and Herbal Wellness Tourism Site (Ban Roi Sao, Takhian Tia Community - 2024), presented by the Chonburi Provincial Public Health Office.
9. Certificate of Recognition: Thailand's Model Community for Sustainable Community-Based Tourism Development by the Designated Areas for Sustainable Tourism Administration (Public Organization)

Web Articles

1. Website DASTA : https://cbtthailand.dasta.or.th/webapp/community/content/14/
2. Website TATStar : https://www.tatstar.org/company/STAR-C00213
3. Website SD Thailand : https://www.sdthailand.com/2020/03/tcep-promote-mice-campaing/

4. Website Gourmet&Cuisine : https://www.gourmetandcuisine.com/stories/detail/2885

Other Relevant Links

1. YouTube EEC Focus : https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UltuTuqJpc4
2. YouTube DASTA CBT : https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mKID4YC53zY&t=136s
3. YouTube Thai PBS : https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jAU5Up8HiYc
4. YouTube Nation Online : https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6FYSBP2aN4M
5. YouTube: Wonderland Amazing Travel Story EP4 : https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zyeWMYjelaI

Quotes or Testimonials

Amidst the expansion of urbanization and the industrial sector in the eastern region, the Takhiantia community in Chonburi province has successfully preserved its coconut plantation, local identity, and cultural heritage, allowing it to thrive in balance with modern development. This success stems from the vision and solidarity of local people, who utilize Community-Based Tourism (CBT) as a strategic tool to transform traditional wisdom into creative economic activities. These initiatives have secured a stable income for grassroots farmers while meeting global standards for low-carbon tourism and authenticity.

The key drivers of this sustainability are a governance mechanism and a transparent management system. By establishing community forums and elevating their operations into a community enterprise, we have ensured the equitable distribution of benefits to all of the member groups. Additionally, a portion of the revenue is assigned back into a community welfare fund to provide a financial safety net during crises. These programmes foster a deep sense of local ownership, encouraging residents to actively protect the local natural resources and environment.

Thailand Tourism Awards (the Kinnaree Awards) and various standards certifications that the region has received over the past decade serve as empirical proof that Takhian Tia is a model destination and a vital national case study. Our success demonstrates that citizens' economic security and environmental conservation can be promoted along with the goal of sustainability.

As a final aside, the authors of this document would like to commend the dedication of the Takhiantia working committee, community leaders, network partners, and local residents. They have come together to preserve a way of life, cultural heritage, and natural resources, ensuring that Takhiantia will remain a model of sustainability long into the future.