



Myanmar tourism products and need for more sustainability

- positive impact trips and export coaching program -

The Hague (Netherlands), With Europe's strong move towards sustainability, positive impact travel and fly less and fly responsibly movements getting stronger, a fast growing number of European outbound tour operators is looking into different ways to make their product offerings more sustainable. More than ever, the issue of transportation to but also within the tourism destinations has become top priority on the tourism agenda. Is it really necessary to fly? European tourism businesses increasingly expect their local incoming partners to become more creative and to switch to more sustainable product development. It is the result of European consumers' desire for more sustainable and positive impact travel products and services. Reducing the number of domestic flights and replacing these by other and more sustainable types of transportation available in the destinations is rapidly gaining popularity as well as genuine community based tourism (CBT) that benefits local livelihoods. The Centre for Promotion of Imports from developing countries (CBI), funded by the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, has been active in Myanmar since 2014 to support Myanmar inbound agents with incorporating sustainability and including CBT and positive impact tours into their portfolios.

Better Places adjusting their Myanmar product portfolio

Better Places (The Netherlands), an outbound tour operator active in Myanmar and highly committed to sustainability, has carefully screened all of its existing [Myanmar tour programs](#). The company found out that quite a number of domestic flights can be easily taken out of the itinerary and replaced by other types of transportation that are not only more sustainable but that are also more fun and add great value to the traveler's Myanmar experience.



Better Places –
Mrs. Saskia Griep

Better Places Managing Director, Mrs. Saskia Griep comments: *...up there in the clouds there is not much to experience....it's often clouds everywhere, no? When our guests travel overland they will travel more sustainably and in a much more fun and inspiring way. Our clients will have the opportunity to enjoy and watch Myanmar's beautiful landscapes passing by, see and interact with local people, stop at interesting places. That's what a perfect trip is all about!*



Better Places – bus transport in Myanmar

But what about time and comfort? Mrs. Saskia Griep continues: *.....well, we found out that 'time-wise' taking the plane is not always much faster than overland travel given the fact that one needs to take into account the time spent at the airport, transfer times from airport to accommodation and vice versa, waiting at the luggage-belt etc. We do not worry about less comfort during travel....there are great options in Myanmar. We expect our inbound partners all over the globe to check, develop and adjust their tour proposals by following the Better Places 'sustainability checklist'. It is a checklist that we developed especially for our partners and that will guide them to come up with more sustainable product alternatives focused on the three main goals that we formulated: 1. support and promote local initiatives, 2. reduce CO2-emissions and 3. protect and show respect and travel plastic-free.*

PRESS RELEASE

October 24th, 2019



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Positive impact trips

Mrs. Saskia Griep:....our aim is to maximize the positive impact of our trips....what better way to explore a new place than with a trip that positively impacts both traveller and local? Better Places has put together the ultimate travel itineraries focusing on small-scale, local and responsible travel. During our 25 days positive impact trip to Myanmar our clients will stay in small scale accommodations, travel by bus and train and also visit Kayah State.



CBI Programme Manager Thijs Wubbels: “since 2015, the CBI and our partner the UN International Trade Centre (ITC) have been working in Kayah State alongside local community members and guides, committed responsible tour operators, accommodation and food providers, government and NGOs to develop welcoming, fun, safe, exciting and responsible tours, including hands-on experiences of local life and culture, which are a positive experience for visitors and the people in Kayah. These tours have received excellent

feedback and created significant economic and skills benefits for local community members. In 2018 we moved to Southern Myanmar (Tanintharyi) which has fantastic potential for positive impact tours including eco-adventure, culture, active family experiences and educational travel. The Tanintharyi tours will be market ready November this year. European outbound tour operators are increasingly looking for authentic experiences which benefit local people and that leave a positive impact. Myanmar inbound agents need to be aware of these trends in the European travel market and adjust and further develop their product portfolio accordingly”.



CBI and ITC – product development workshops in Tanintharyi

CBI’s Myanmar tourism export coaching programs

Within the framework of the Myanmar tourism export coaching program 2018-2021 managed by the CBI, more than twenty inbound tour operators based in Yangon and Mandalay benefit from an intensive training and coaching program to incorporate sustainability and integrate tourism Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) into their supply chain. It is CBI’s second program for Myanmar after the first one (2013-2017) in which 15 Yangon tour operators participated. CBI helps the Myanmar businesses to become more sustainable. To that end, CBI cooperates with Travelife, the world’s leading training, management and certification initiative for tourism companies committed to reaching sustainability (www.travelife.info). Since start of the Myanmar program mid 2018, companies have participated in several Travelife sustainability training seminars and have received one-on-one coaching from the local Travelife consultant.

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Last May two workshops were organized in Yangon that were completely tailored to 'sustainability and product development'. More recently, on September 27th, a workshop took place in Yangon about marketing and sales of sustainable tourism programs. As a post workshop exercise, the 20+ participating companies in the CBI program have been asked to further develop and improve their 'sustainable' Myanmar tour products.



Yangon, Sept. 27, 2019: sales and marketing workshop

CBI Programme Manager Thijs Wubbels explains:....since May this year, the CBI has been working with a sustainability/tourism product development and content-writing expert with a long track record in Myanmar's tour operating industry. This expert is checking the sustainable tours submitted by the Myanmar travel agents to provide them with quality feedbacks concerning EU-market suitability and sustainability.....looking critically at transportation being used during a tour and offering genuine CBT-experiences, are also part of this process. Just some further steps the CBI is taking in working towards a more sustainable Myanmar tourism industry. As the CBI we are also very happy to see that through hard work more and more Myanmar inbound companies manage to achieve Travelife Partner status/award. These awarded Myanmar businesses will have improved access to the European travel market. It is my great pleasure that on November 9th in Yangon I can hand over the Travelife Partner award to another seven Myanmar incoming agents part of the CBI program.

Improved access to the European travel market – Travelife award ceremony Yangon, November 9th, 2019

By the end of this year and through additional intensive local coaching, CBI expects more Myanmar inbound agents to achieve the Travelife Partner sustainability award. This award not only means doing things better and more sustainable, but it will also provide improved access to the European market



CBI's first tourism support program (2013-2017) - Myanmar companies with Travelife award at ITB Berlin 2017 - in the middle Myanmar Hotel and Tourism Minister, HE U Ohn Maung

increasingly asking for more sustainability in tourism. On November 9th, 2019 following seven Myanmar incoming agents will receive their Travelife award during a ceremony that will take place in Yangon: The Mighty Myanmar Travel, Pro Niti, Myanmar Upper Land | culture & travel, Interconnection Travels, Lucky Treasure Travels Ltd, Beyond Boundaries, Take me to Myanmar.

For a full list of the 25+ Myanmar companies awarded by Travelife, click [here](#). The CBI and the ITC will also provide additional support to Myanmar companies for further inclusion of the Kayah and Tanintharyi CBT tours into their product offerings. Support will be focused on successful marketing-promotion of the programs in the European travel market.

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Notes for press

INVITATION!

Interested to attend the November 9th, 2019 Travelife Award Ceremony in Yangon?

On November 9th, 2019 following seven Myanmar incoming agents will receive their Travelife award during a ceremony that will take place in Yangon (between 20:00 and 21:00 hours): The Mighty Myanmar Travel, Pro Niti, Myanmar Upper Land | culture & travel, Interconnection Travels, Lucky Treasure Travels Ltd, Beyond Boundaries, Take me to Myanmar. **You are invited to join us?** Please contact Myanmar Tourism export coach, Mr. Marlon van Hee at m.vanhee@eceat-projects.org.

Information about the CBI and the Myanmar tourism export coaching program

The Centre for Promotion of Imports from developing countries (CBI), www.cbi.eu, funded by the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, is running its second Myanmar tourism export coaching programme (ECP) 2018-2021. This new programme, building further on the previous and successful 2014-2017 program, supports 20+ selected Myanmar incoming tour operators during a 4 year period to upgrade their tourism marketing skills and increase their business with European markets. The ECP offers coaching to incoming agents, in order to build their capacities and further penetrate into the European tourism market. The overall objective will be to create employment in the tourism sector in Myanmar and to attract more European tourists to visit the country. The ECP includes one-on-one and distant guidance coaching from an international tourism expert (Mr. Marlon van Hee, see contact details below under item 'For more information'), trainings and webinars on website and human resources development, improving online performance, participating in different market access activities, developing new products, and training and coaching for sustainable tourism certification through the internationally recognized Travelife initiative, www.travelife.info.

Within the ECP there is a special focus on the development and market-promotion of Community Based Tourism (CBT) programs. The CBT is directly related to the Netherlands Trust Fund III and IV programs (NTF III and NTF IV). These programs are based on a partnership agreement between the CBI and the United Nations - International Trade Centre (ITC), www.intracen.org. NTF III (2014-2017) had a focus on CBT development in Kayah State. The current NTF IV program (2018 – 2021) includes an extension for Kayah State and Tanintharyi being newly selected for CBT development (see below for more information about Taninthayi).

- [Updated Kayah Manual for Tour Operators](#)
- [Kayah Pamphlet](#)
- This [beautiful 2 minute video](#) by celebrity blogger Daisy Scholte also shows the charm of these insightful Kayah State programs, in Pan Pet, Hta Nee La Leh and Loikaw town.
- There is also a lot of interesting information about 'behind the scenes' of our project on [our Facebook page](#)

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CBT development in Tanintharyi

In Tanintharyi, the CBI and the United National International Trade Centre (www.intracen.org) - in cooperation with several local communities and NGO/CSOs - have started developing hands-on experiences in the Dawei area, which has fantastic potential for eco-adventure, culture and active family holidays, educational travel, voluntourism. These tours will be market ready by November 1st, 2019. We are now working in 2 communities: Community 1 (Tizit): a classic, fishers village, which can complement and add a local experience to the existing image of Dawei as a coastal / marine destination. Activities which are under development include a half day program, which combines a hands-on insightful introduction to fishers' life, a sun set local picnic and various hands-on fishing activities (which depend on the tides and time of day) all lead by trained local community guides. Community 2 (Kalontha): an inland community, nestled in verdant forest and rivers. Here, a full day program is under development, which includes a short nature trek, picnic by the river, and simple, 'barefoot forest spa' hands on activities at the local hot spring, also lead by local community members. **NB: tours will be market ready November 1, 2019. For more information, see below 'for more information'.**

Travelife sustainability management and certification scheme

Travelife, which has been established with the support of the European Commission, is the leading international sustainability certification for the travel sector. More than 35 national travel associations are promoting the scheme to their members including ABTA, The British Travel Association and PATA, the Pacific Asian Travel Association. Since 2012, more than 600 Asian companies have been trained in CSR with the support of the Dutch government CBI program. They are now working step-by-step towards more sustainable operations.

About Travelife (www.travelife.org)

Travelife is a certification system, dedicated to achieving sustainable practices within the tourism industry. It provides companies with realistic sustainability goals, tools and solutions to implement positive change within their businesses and supply chains. Travelife is managed by ABTA – The Travel Association in the UK - and by ECEAT Projects - a not-for-profit organisation based in The Netherlands.

Travelife for Tour operators and Travel agents: the system provides online training and practical tools for sustainability management and certification. The training and online tools are suitable for tour operators and travel agencies of any size and cover all management aspects of the travel company business including office operations, the supply chain, destinations and consumers. Upon submitting a report in compliance with the Travelife standard (based on an independent onsite audit), the company can obtain the "Travelife Certified" status. The Travelife standard for Tour operators and Travel agencies is based upon the full Corporate Social Responsibility themes, including labour conditions, human rights, environment, biodiversity and fair business practices. The management requirements are compatible with EMAS and ISO 14001. The system is supported by more than 35 national travel associations to further its implementation among members.

For more information:

Please contact CBI's Myanmar Tourism export coach, **Mr. Marlon van Hee**

Email: m.vanhee@eceat-projects.org

Mr. Marlon van Hee is also available for interviews in Yangon 1st half of November 2019.