



# Asian Ecotourism Network









www.asianecotoursim.org

**APRIL 2017** 

**E-NEWSLETTER** 

#### Message from the chair



AEN is proud to introduce the very first edition of our ecotourism e-newsletter on Asia and beyond. We have come across a series of challenges since our establishment in June, 2015, however, at the same time a lot of opportunities have risen thanks to our active board members who represent the ecotourism industry and pertinent sectors in the region. I would also like to extend my cordial appreciation for DASTA that kindly supports our missions and our physical office space on behalf of AEN. 2017 is the UNWTO Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development, and thus we would like to take this special opportunity to celebrate this important year by introducing our periodic newsletter on ecotourism. AEN promises to bring you the latest updates and trends on ecotourism delivered from the very countries and provinces that we are born and raised. We believe AEN is the authority and an unrivaled source of knowledge on ecotourism in the region. Enjoy reading how Asia and beyond is trying to achieve the triple bottom line in harmony with travel and tourism.

#### Message from AEN office

AEN is a regional ecotourism network based in Bangkok, Thailand and we work closely with GEN, Global Ecotourism Network, the rising star of ecotourism NGO run by the ex-board members of The International Ecotourism Society, TIES. We sincerely hope that other regions like Europe, Latin America, Africa, etc. will follow the similar regionalization and decentralization like AEN that reflect the true voices of ecotourism from the ground up.

## March News from AEN



ITB-Berlin brings together the global players in tourism; ecotourism, responsible tourism, sustainable tourism and community-based tourism that are the core emphases on ITB CSR program. This year we had four board members present, Masaru (Japan), Supaporn (Thailand), Gana (Mongolia), and Gopi (India) as well as the AEN members like Borneo Eco Tours (Malaysia), Active & Adventure Tours Mongolia, Far West Nepal Tourism Development Society (Nepal: photo), and The Blue Yonder (India). It is quite surprising to find out our relationship with the board members and these operators share the same history and in many ways, similar missions and values. These like-minded people and companies may only be sharing a small pie in the whole tourism industry, but the meanings of linking communities, conservation, and tourism is big. AEN is happy to witness these shared goals and develop positive and inclusive partnerships to achieve our mission.

## Malayisa

Highlights From Our Member

#### Sukau Bridge and Highway A Major Concern









There has been heated objection against the Sukau bridge and highway development as tractors were recently seen in the area. Many prominent individuals including conservationist and BBC veteran broadcaster, Sir David Attenborough has raised his concern about the building of the bridge, asking officials to rethink their plans. In his letter to Chief Minister of Sabah Datuk Seri Musa Aman, he had this to say: "I strongly believe that Borneo is one of the most unique and biodiverse places on this planet, and that the world's remaining wild spaces provide more than ecological services and opportunities for economic development; they also provide deep spiritual nourishment for ourselves and future generations of Sabahans and visitors alike."

Belgian geneticist Dr Benoit Goossens, Director of Danau Girang Field Centre had previously voiced out his fear about the development project, even calling it "a bridge to extinction".

Borneo Eco Tours Managing Director, Albert Teo has also voiced his concern over the issue, stating that "elephants and other wildlife are the only resources that are left for local communities to bring tourists and create jobs for the rural poor here. With the stroke of a pen, we destroy their future livelihood. If we think development affecting elephants is acceptable, this will also set a precedent that other wildlife are dispensable in the name of development."

Many are hoping that the government will look into this and rethink their decision about the building of the bridge and highway which will undeniably have an impact not only on the wildlife in Sukau such as the Pygmy Elephants and Orang Utans, but also on the communities living around there. Are they going to turn a blind eye on what may literally be 'the bridge to extinction'? Or will they listen?

#### Bat Caves In Sarawak to be part of Ecotourism efforts in the State

Three hours of trekking in the rainforests and striding through a river in Sarawak will bring you to the natural habitats of bats in Ulu Ayam, Sungai Poi in Kanowit which is a potential ecotourism initiative in the state. This also means that bat-watching would soon be part of a sought-after tourism activity in Sarawak.

A one-day expedition was organised on February 18 by the Kanowit District Office and Sungai Aya- Kejungoh-Ayam Community Development Association to explore the bat habitat. "The main objective is to promote Kanowit as an ecotourism destination as some parts of the district is still very much pristine. The caves, where bats are found in their natural habitat, can be developed as one of the attractions," said Kanowit District Officer Katis Noel Nyabong, who led the expedition. Besides that, another reason for the initiative is so that the destination can be preserved for their people's future generations.

Katis also added that "adventure tourists can spend a night in the jungle to not only do bat-watching but also other activities such as jungle trekking and camping." This way, tourists will have options of activities to choose from during their travels in Kanowit.

Katis and Gerut, who was also part of the expedition had performed a miring ceremony, an Iban ritual to appease the spirits for the safety before setting out for the expedition.

#### Bentong, Pahang a potential Ecotourism Hub





Bentong, a district in the state of Pahang has a bright future in becoming an ecotourism hub which is said to have the potential to boost the tourism sector in Malaysia by Tourism and Culture Minister Datuk Seri Mohamed Nazri Abdul

He added that this is so because the natural resources in Bentong are still well preserved and the district could offer interesting ecotourism products which has the potential to attract not only local tourists, but international tourists as well.

"So if the ministry provides support for ecotourism in Bentong, I am sure it will be a success and the people in Bentong will reap the benefits as it can develop the local economy and improve the local communities' standard of living."

"As such, I intend to turn this district into an ecotourism destination and hub." Mohamed Nazri told reporters.

The new infrastructure development which are currently in the works such as the Bentong Bypass, a project that is part of the Central Spine Road (CSR) as well as the East Coast Rail Line (ECRL) passing through the town of Bentong would further enhance ecotourism there in the future.

He also states that the ministry's intention to make Bentong an ecotourism centre was consistent with the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) sustainable tourism policies, adding that the Malaysian government had always tried to ensure sustainable tourism was being implemented in developing tourism, without having to compromise the nation's natural resources.

"We also have the support of the prime minister (Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak) in our efforts to develop ecotourism in the country as he has announced a RM400 million allocation for the purpose this year," said Mohamed Nazri.

#### Tourism: Dive sites a top draw for Malaysia March 6, 2017, Monday

Diving is a top draw in attracting tourists to Malaysia as the country offers over 40 diving destinations and marine parks, said Tourism Malaysia (TM) deputy director-general (Tourism) Datuk Seri Abdul Khani Daud.

He said these dive sites did not only serve as ecotourism wonders but also as a source of knowledge for future generations. "We must not view these attractions simply in financial terms but conserving the environment and maintaining the biodiversity of these ecosystems," he said in conjunction with the Mega Familiarisation Programme for Foreign Participants of the Professional Association of Diving Instructors (PADI) - Course Director Training Course (CDTC) here Saturday

His speech was delivered by TM deputy senior director (Package Development Division) Khairul Hilmi A. Manap. Nineteen participants (professional certified divers) from China, Germany, Japan, Latvia, Portugal, South Africa, Spain, Taiwan, United Kingdom, and the United States were brought to this duty-free island for a four-day familiarisation programme to promote Labuan dive sites and well-known destinations for wreck diving. — Bernama

(Article by Borneo Post Online http://www.theborneopost.com/2017/03/06/tourism-dive-sites-a-top-draw-for-malaysia/)

## Bangladesh

by Professor Sheikh Md. Monzurul Huq, Jahangirnagar University, Dhaka, Bangladesh March 6, 2017, Monday



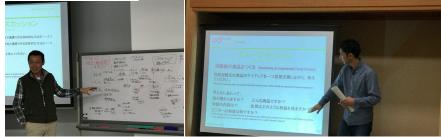
It is understood that community-based ecotourism helps to foster meaningful cross-cultural relationships as well as promotes environmental conservation and a more equitable distribution of tourism earnings. At the community level in Bangladesh, some international organizations (primarily NGO's) such as USAID and Relief International have taken initiatives to help local communities to promote ecotourism. However, the activities that occur sporadically by the private entrepreneurs are often found not to be environmentally friendly at all (both physically and human). The sites are often not properly planned, and many eco-resorts are not adequately designed. People who are involved in this type of tourism activities lack proper training and understanding about ecotourism. Sometimes entrepreneurs living in the major cities are the operators of tourism activities in the hilly areas and forests. Their primary goal is to earn money, leaving the environment and local communities getting less priority.

It is necessary to devise a strategy to provide communities living in the tourist sites of Bangladesh with the tools and knowledge required for transparent decision making. It is essential that people with experience and knowledge of ecotourism and conservation are involved in tourism development activities. It is felt that a higher level of community involvement in ecotourism is necessary for a country like Bangladesh.

Concentrated efforts such as this may foster trust, leadership and expand social capital. Efforts should be made by the government, NGO's and private organizations to provide local communities with the capabilities to translate ecotourism into broader sustainable goals of environmental, social and economic development.



## **Taiwan**





The Taiwan Tourism Bureau announced that 2017 is Ecotourism Year. TTB will integrate resources of all respects to promote various activities such as firefly watching, whale watching, bird watching, raptor watching and butterfly watching throughout Taiwan to develop sustainable tourism practises to assist in growing the local economy.

The International Firefly Symposium 2017 (IFS 2017) will be held in Taipei, Taiwan from April 24-28, 2017 please visit the website for more details: http://www.ifs2017taipei.org/

Victor Yu, the AEN board member from Ecotourism Taiwan traveled to Akita, Japan on Feb. 3-6 joining the GSTC training and sustainable tourism conference organized by Ecotourism Japan. Victor was privileged to have two teachers, Masaru Takayama and Kazu Arai.

A Raptor Festival (Ing Yang Ba Gua) organized by the Taiwan Tourism Bureau, Taiwan Forest Bureau, Changhua County Government and Wild Bird Society of Changhua was held on Mar. 18-19, 2017 at Baguasan, Changhua, Taiwan. More than 5,000 visitors observed over 15,000 Grey-faced Buzzard and other raptors flying Northward by Changhua. This is the 24th Raptor Festival in Changhua.

Thank you. 余維道 Victor YU Asian Bird Fair ExecComm

### **New Zealand**

Natural Disaster and the Ecotourism Economy of Kaikoura, New Zealand Zane Smith 20/03/2017





The town of Kaikoura on New Zealand's South Island has since 1997 been one of the most outstanding examples of the New Zealand Ecotourism economy. In the late 1990's the local indigenous Maori tribe of Ngati Kuri were being affected by serious economic decline in the area. They responded innovatively, and with strong values based on the environment and their people set to create what today has become one of the most successful whale watching operations in the world, Whale Watch Kaikoura. The region is now one of New Zealand's leading eco-tourism destinations offering a diverse range of exciting activities and experiences, the tourism economy created by whale-watching has stimulated investment in new accommodation, restaurants, and other tourism infrastructure.



On November 14th 2016 Kaikoura was struck by a devastating 7.8 magnitude earthquake, destroying homes, businesses and causing death. The principal arterial highways and train lines were destroyed leaving the region cut off from the rest of New Zealand. Tourists and locals alike were evacuated by the New Zealand military by sea and air leaving the town empty and broken. The entire tourism sector was crippled when entering the busy summer period. Given the region's economy survived on the ecotourism industry, there was a major fear that the whales and other creatures would not return. Fear was allayed when a team from Whale Watch used undersea listening devices and discovered the whales were still present. Whale Watch and Kaikoura locals were overjoyed, and the company began taking locals and tourists on free tours to visit the whales for what be-

came some emotional times for folk who had experienced so much over recent weeks. Seeing these creatures unharmed by the devastation of the earthquakes and understanding that the town could be re-built gave rise to the strength of the people to go back home and re-create what they had done 30 years before. Two of the roads have since opened, allowing visitors in, the town has re-opened operations where they can, and Whale watch is operating 2 - 3 tours per day of 48 people each. Ordinarily, this would be 16 trips per day at 750 passengers per day. However, the company has not let any staff go. By keeping true to the values and principles of the company they have found alternative work and allowed staff to go into the community to offer themselves up as volunteers for the much-needed recovery and rebuild. The team has been working in a range of places from assisting on roading, relocating people from damaged homes, cleaning up houses, cooking and cleaning for people who need it and even emptying portable toilets.

Lisa Bond, Whale Watch's Marketing Manager, says 'It's been quite an incredible experience to be a part of, my town continues to inspire me, we are stronger than we realised."

Whale Watch values are showcased in their 5 c's:

- 1. Customer (Manaakitanga)
- 2. Company (Tino Rangatiratanga)
- 3.Community (Iwi Whanui)
- 4. Conservation (Kaitiakitanga)
- 5. Culture (Whakapapa)

This incredible passion and strong community spirit ensures that Kaikoura will continue to fill a place as one of New Zealand's most important ecotourism locations in the future of the New Zealand tourism economy.

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NEWS 🔊

Korea



#### **Update from Korea**

Key Korean ecotourism development proponents recently attended the GSTC Sustainable Tourism Training Programme led by Dr. Mihee Kang (Dr Kang, is also a board member of AEN). Attendees of the programme have now begun applying the new knowledge and criteria to their respective destinations and organisations. There are many ecotourism training programmes on offer nationwide in Korea that are often organized by the Korea Ecotourism Society or local ecotourism-related associations.

Jeollabuk-do Province Ecotourism development The Province of Jeollabuk-do has been developing their ecotourism destination under a 10-year project named "One Ecotourism Destination Per One City/County", they began the process in 2015 and are motivated in moving forward. With Dr Kangs involvement the province has now assessed all 14 destinations' plans and activities to clarify each sustainable ecotourism development project. The Jeollabuk-do Ecotourism Center has been put in charge of managing the projects and training the stakeholders Involved. They have also shown interest in joining AEN and working with other likeminded Asian associations.



#### **Korea Tourism Association (KTO)**

KTO has been working on an ecotourism certification system and is in the process of getting recognition from GSTC. KTO have submitted two sets of ecotourism standards for 'destination' and 'industry' (tours and accommodation) to GSTC for their appraisal.

#### **Sustainable Tourism Forum**

KTO, with support from the Korean Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism will hold a forum on 'Sustainable Tourism' from April 6-8. This forum is to celebrate the UNWTO International Year of Sustainable Tourism and to encourage stakeholders to be involved in sustainable tourism best practice. Ecotourism development and community-based tourism will be under discussion during the event. Attendees are expected from UNWTO, UNEP, GSTC, along with many domestic and international tourism experts.



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## Sri Lanka



News Round up by Sri Lanka Ecotourism Foundation (SLEF)

Book Launch; "Story of Ecotourism Sri Lanka- 1998-2017

The Sri Lanka Ecotourism Foundation is very busy these days in making arrangements to launch the book -"Story of Ecotourism Sri Lanka 1998-2017" authored by the Palitha Gurusinghe, the founder President of Sri Lanka Ecotourism Foundation. This 425 page book on Ecotourism in Sri Lanka may be the first publication published on the topic. "Story of Ecotourism Sri Lanka" is a recollection of important land marks of Ecotourism development in Sri Lanka and the Asia-Pacific Region and at global level. SLEF has invited Hon. Ranil Wickramasinghe, Prime Minister of Sri Lanka, as the Chief Guest and the Key Note Speaker of the launching ceremony. Hon. Wickramasinghe was a contemporary of Palitha in the University of Colombo during 1965-1969.

(see attached photos of cover pages of the book)

Development of Community Based Ecotourism Projects in the Eastern Province of Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka Ecotourism Foundation has initiated five new Community Based Ecotourism Projects in the war ravaged Eastern Province of Sri Lanka. These projects are supported by International Labour Organization and Australian Aid. Palitha and his team from Sri Lanka Ecotourism Foundation are more or less stationed in the Eastern Part of Sri Lanka working within the multi-ethnic and multi-religious community at a grass roots level in developing ecotourism products to support their livelihoods.

Launch of 2nd phase of the National Sustainable Tourism Certification (NSTC), Programme

The Sri Lanka Ecotourism Foundation launched the 2nd phase of NSTC Programme for 2017-18 at the end of February,

The main objectives of the Certificate Programme is to offer Certification for Small and Medium Tourism Entrepreneurs and Community Based Ecotourism Enterprises (CBEs) in Sri Lanka. Enabling them to offer high quality tourism products and services to the national and international tourism markets in

a more sustainable manner. Securing of the 'Certification' will help the SME Tourism sector to attract high-end, up-market tourists to Sri Lanka and maintain the quality of their businesses.

This is the first ever Pilot Model Certification Project initiated in Sri Lanka, specially designed to benefit Community Based Tourism Projects (CBEs) and Small and Medium Tourism Entrepreneurs (SMEs) in Sri Lanka. In this Certification Programme SLEF is closely following the guidelines of GSTC.

This Certificate Programme will provide guidelines on 'maintaining and improving' the quality hospitality skills standards (Certification) for the SMEs and CBEs who wish to offer their tourism products and services to the responsible high end tourists. The programme also provides a solid knowledge

base to SMEs and CBEs on environmental and biodiversity conservation, development of hospitality skills and leader-ship, marketing, Public Relations and related activities Programme (NSTC) by Sri Lanka Ecotourism Foundation (SLEF), April, 2015.

This Certification Programme is offered free of charge for all CBTs and SMEs in Sri Lanka and fully funded through the resources of Sri Lanka Ecotourism Foundation

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# **NEWS**

## Nepal



The District Development Committee (DDC) of Tanahuan organized a week long workshop & training from 1st Chaitra to 7th Chaitra 2073 (14th to 20th March 2017) at Damauli, Tanahuan. The theme of the workshop and training was "Development of Rural Tourism – Economic Development & Social Empowerment of Local Community through Home Stay Promotion & Management Training".

From 4th to 6th Chaitra 2073 (17th to 19th March 2017), a two night, three day observation tour of Chitlang and its surroundings was organised by the DDC of Tanhuan. Stakeholders from Chitlang Community Home Stay highlighted and briefed the participants of the development of rural tourism and home stay in the area.

Mr. Ashok Singh Thakuri briefed everyone on the process of making Goat Cheese & wine made from Apricots. The participants of the training also made the trip to Chandragiri hills to see the newly introduced Cable Car and Bhaleswor Mahadev – the temple of Lord Shiva.

Geographically the country of Nepal is divided into three main geographical regions The Himalayas, the Hills and the Terai (plain land). The Himalayan region is the northernmost region of the country. Its altitude ranges between 4,877 m. to 8,848 m. It extends from East to West and accounts for 15% of the total land of Nepal.

#### Where is Chitlang?

Chitlang is located to the south west of Kathmandu valley in mid-hills called Mahabharat range.

The ancient name of Chitlang is known as Chitrapur. According to this ancient name this village has been divided into 5 purs which are as follows:

a) Chitrapur, b) Shudhapur, c) Kolapur, d) Hastinapur and e) Champapur.

The village route was the only international link to India in the Rana regime. Most incredible is that the first car was brought through the village carried by human portage for the Royal family. The village itself will be a unique destination for visitors to experience.



Swachhanda Bhairav Temple at Chitlang

#### **Ethnic Groups**

Nepal has more than 36 different ethnic groups, among them Tamang, Magar, Chhetri, Bramin, Newar & Gurung who live in the area and they all have their own culture, tradition according to their own religion.

Chandra Giri

The little-known Chandra Giri (Maharabat Hills) lies on the South West of Kathmandu Valley. The area itself hosts many natural resources, notwithstanding incredible flora and fauna. Thus allowing development of tourism activities, however the area has been left behind in being a popular tourist destination because of the lack of effective promotion. Vast Himalayan views are available from Mt. Annapurna to Mt. Kanchenjanga and Mt. Everest.



Bhaleswor Mahadev Temple at Chandragiri Hills

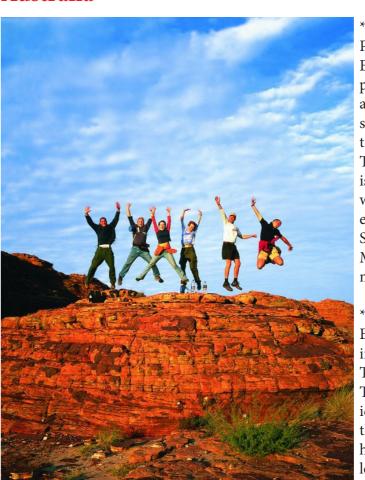


Group Photo Session of the Participants from Tanahuan.

Interaction Program (Class),
Goat Cheese Factory Hall, Chitlang.

Group Photo in front of Kaji Home Stay, Chitlang.

## **Australia**



urism Certification (Nationa

\* Destination Ecotourism Certification (National Parks)

EA launched a world's first destination certification program for National Parks (and other protected areas) to demonstrate to their visitors, stakeholders and staff that they understand their clear role as a Destination's key attraction.

The program is based on the Global Sustainable Tourism Council's (GSTC) criteria and has been very well received by the nation's Protected Area Managers (PAMs) with NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service already certifying Kosciusko NP with Blue Mountains NP soon to follow and other PAMs planning underway.

\* Launching EcoGuide in China

EA's successful EcoGuide program has been launched in China in a partnership arrangement with Infinity Travel who operate an ecotourism training school. Their students will be encouraged to apply for EcoGuide membership with EA assessing, and if they meet the standard, granting EcoGuide status. The program has been adapted to suit the Chinese context without lowering the standard.



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Towards Recognized Ecotourism in Teshikaga, Japan, all ecotourism needs to be sustainable and sustainable ecotourism is an oxymoron

Receiving Recognition of Overall Concept under Ecotourism Promotion Act(2008)

The Ministry of the Environment of Japan issued a certification of overall concept under Ecotourism Promotion Act

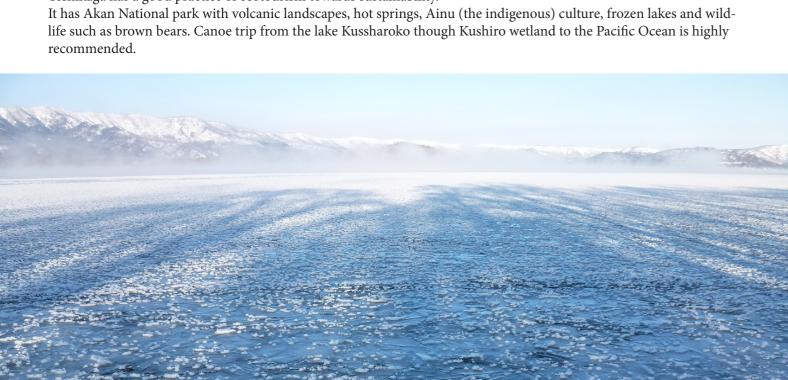
Teshikaga town in Hokkaido in the last November. This is the 8th area recognized in Japan.

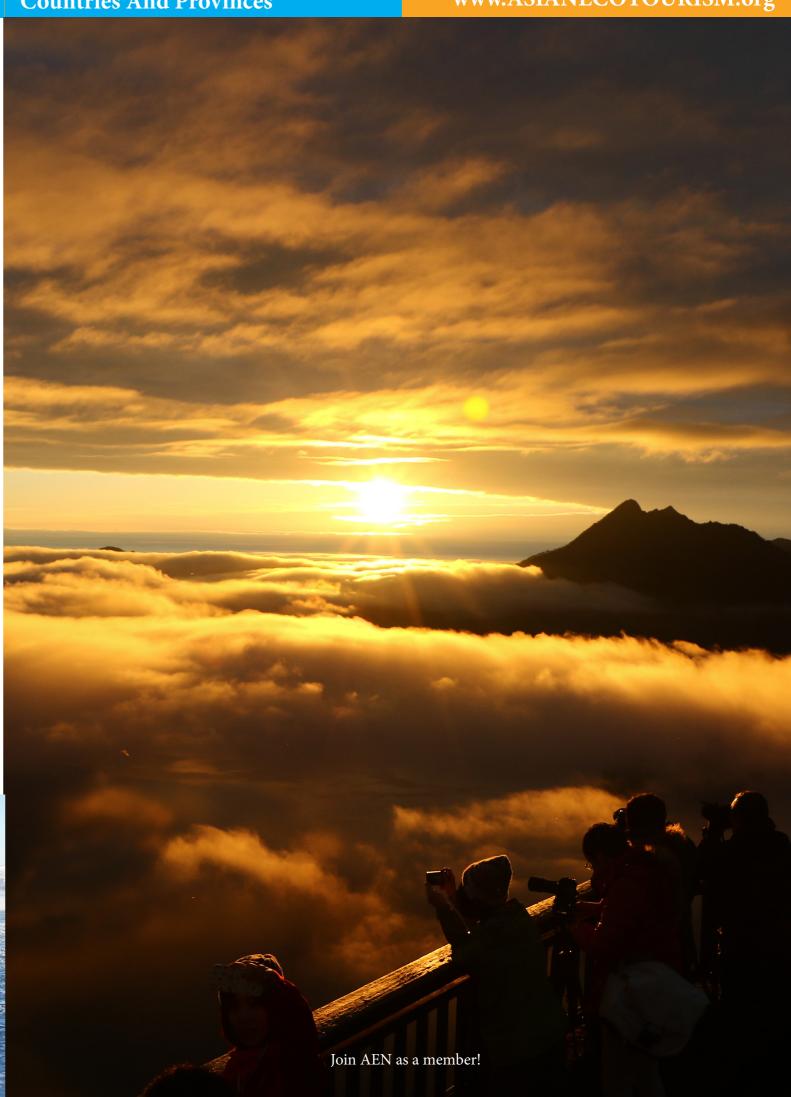
The purpose of this Act is to promote measures for ecotourism comprehensively and effectively by establishing the basic principles concerning ecotourism, basic policies of the government, and other matters for promoting Ecotourism.

This Act approaches to promote ecotourism by

- 1) establishing ecotourism promotion council with divers stakeholders,
- 2) conducting resource and using surveys to review appealing points,
- 3) setting conservation measures and rules for use to polish the resources,
- 4) creating programmes and guided tours for PR,
- 5)monitoring and evaluating for the future changes,
- 6) encouraging tourism industry and sustainable regional development.

Teshikaga has a good practice of ecotourism towards sustainability.





### **OUR PAID MEMBERS**



Spirit of Japan Travel ::: Japan



Borneo Eco Tours ::: Malaysia

NIKOI ISLAND

Nikoi Island ::: Indonesia

Eco Action ::: China



Active & Adventure Tours Mongolia ::: Mongolia

ADVENTURE TRAVEL



Adventure Travel Trade Association

Lanith



Lao National Institute of Tourism and Hospitality





Silver Mountain Group ::: Nepal



Dream Nepal Travel & Tours (Pvt.) Ltd. ::: Nepal

Tourism Development Society



Society for Sustainable Tourism & Development Inc ::: PHILIPPINES



Bali Eco Tour ::: Indonesia



The Blue Yonder :: India

Taiwan Ecotourism Association:: Taiwan

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KARMA TSHERING









Member from June, 2017







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