



Asian Ecotourism Network

www.asianecotoursim.org

July 2017

Monthly Newsletter

Message from AEN

Welcome back to AEN. This is the third edition of our ecotourism e-newsletter on Asia and beyond. Not every member country has the news to share every month, but we are surprised to find out how much are actually making actions on the ground. We truly believe that as all forms of tourism are aiming to become more sustainable, our experiences and good practices are considered as assets accumulated over years of trial and error. It does make sense that non-nature-based tourism can also learn and adopt what we have gained and achieved over the years.

What we see today in Asia at an alarming rate is the booming number of tourists and more affordable modes of transportation especially with the low cost flights, not to mention the climate change associated with the increase of carbon footprint associated to cope with the rise of the travelers.

Any countries welcoming tourists from overseas see the people as opportunistic to make positive economic impacts but not all the time the negative impacts are taken into consideration. They can at times bring the irreversible results to the sensitive and vulnerable areas like nature and smaller villages that do not get much external influence to date. Asia like many other parts of the world are said to be hugely dependent on their natural assets to promote their tourism destinations. Together with the AEN team, we hope to bring to you the current issues on ecotourism in the region that are making actions for the good causes. Enjoy reading it, but we also encourage you to engage in the projects you see on these issues or simply join the force of AEN to make a collective effort.



A remote beach in Okinawa, Japan



A very crowded beach in China

Member News

Countries And Provinces

Hokkaido Adventure Travel Association

On the 21st of June, the inaugural meeting of the Hokkaido Adventure Travel Association (HATA) was held in Sapporo. HATA aims for regional promotion and development in Hokkaido through the promotion of 'adventure travel' to overseas tourists, in cooperation with its members.

Hokkaido District Transport Bureau, operating under the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport, and Tourism, supports HATA and there are over fifty organizations that have been started by its members. Mr. Kazuhiro Arai, the founder of Daisetsuzan Nature School as well as an AEN board member, was nominated as the chairman. There are also three deputy chairmen with tourism, business, guide quality management, and local government backgrounds. This year's projects are setting up English contacts, participating in international tourism business meet-

Our challenges

The Adventure Travel Trade Association (ATTA) defines adventure tourism as a trip that includes at least two of the following three elements: physical activity, natural environment, and cultural immersion. While the definition of adventure tourism only requires two of these components, trips incorporating all three tend to afford tourists the fullest adventure travel experiences. A trip in Hokkaido that involves trekking (physical activity) in an alpine national park (natural environment) and interaction with local residents or indigenous Ainu people (cultural immersion) is one such example. This could be applied to all sorts of activities such as bird watching, canoeing, skiing, fishing, and so on.

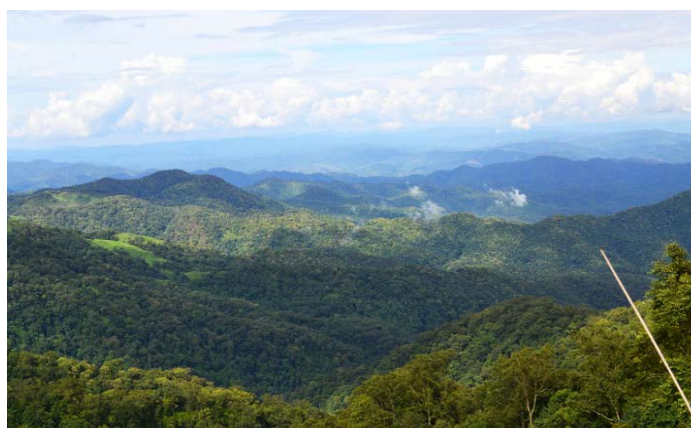
To make this happen, our challenges are: first, getting tour operators and others in the tourism industry to speak English; second, increasing the number of experienced English-speaking guides; third, providing an information platform from which tourists can easily get adequate information; fourth, attempting to increase and diversify activity opportunities; and lastly, making them all sustainable. HATA will corporate with ATTA and AEN to develop Hokkaido into a sustainable destination for adventure tourists, and we are looking forward to seeing you here.



Nam Ha National Protected Area – Luang Namtha, Laos

Nam Ha National Protected Area (NPA) in the northern province of Luang Namtha covers some of the most significant and largest wilderness areas in Laos. Altitudes ranging from river valleys and plains to the northern highland peaks support a broad suite of habitats with a biodiversity of national importance. This is an area of outstanding beauty, breathtaking mountain views, and cultural interest of ASEAN Heritage parks.

Most of the Nam Ha NPA is covered by mixed deciduous forest; with a range of mountains running to the border with China along the top of this are mainly dry evergreen forest and some grassland. Three large rivers, Nam Tha, Nam Fa, and Nam Long, drain southward to the Mekong fed by a dense network of tributary streams.



Countries And Provinces

Member News

Luang Namtha Eco-Tourism, Laos

Single or multi day trekking tours led by trained local guides depart daily, including village visits and home stays. Many other activities such as: boat tours, special tours for wildlife trekking or learning about rural lifestyles have been developed for visitors. The communities have been involved in tourism development and are actively participating and receiving a significant part of the benefits. Working to conserve and protect the natural and culture heritage of Luang Namtha and the Nam Ha NPA's biodiversity is the main objective of ecot-



AEN News Laos

A new 'Great walk' created in New Zealand

A new Great Walk through the spectacular limestone landscapes and luxuriant forests of Paparoa National Park will be a memorial to the 29 men who died as a result of the Pike River Mine disaster on 19 November 2010.

The Paparoa Track is to be New Zealand's 10th Great Walk. It was chosen by the families of the Pike River men that were tragically killed in a mining accident in the area as a memorial that will bring lasting ecotourism benefit to the South Islands, West Coast region.

The Government has approved the new Great Walk and information centre put forward by the families which creates a journey through awe-inspiring landscapes

The new 65 km Great Walk will be amazing journey by foot or mountain bike through diverse awe-inspiring environments.

The Paparoa Track will cross the Paparoa Ranges between Blackball and Punakaiki. The Pike29 Memorial Track will connect the Paparoa Track with the Pike River Mine site.

It will be a 2-3 day walk or an advanced-level 1-2 day mountain bike ride. The track will be open all year for mountain biking. Two new high standard 20-bunk huts will be built – the Moonlight Tops Hut and the Pororari Hut above the junction with Tindale Creek.

The new Great Walk begins at the historic town of Blackball on an old miners' track with remnants of the area's gold mining history. A short way off the main track at Garden Gully, an old quartz crushing battery can be seen and a miners' hut reveals what life was like for the miners. The track route goes through rich beech and podocarp forest and over open tops of alpine scrub and tussock. It will provide breathtaking views to the Southern Alps/Kā Tiritiri o te Moana and over the Tasman Sea and passes towering escarpments alongside the Pike basin before descending to the west off the Paparoa Range.



Nearing Punakaiki, the track passes through the Paparoa National Park. Travelling through a beech forest interspersed with northern rātā, dramatic limestone terrain including the striking Pororari River Gorge, and coastal forest with glades of nikau palms. The track will traverse areas inhabited by remnant populations of threatened species including roroa/great spotted kiwi, kea, kākā, whio/blue duck, mātā/fernbird and koekoeā/long-tailed cuckoo. The park is also home to the Paparoa Range alpine snail (*Powelliphanta gagei*).

Construction of the new Great Walk starts in August and it is aimed for it to open at the end of 2018.

New Zealand's Great Walks are premier tracks that draw thousands of international and New Zealand visitors.

The Paparoa Track provides a new recreation and economic opportunity for the West Coast. The Great Walk will attract international and domestic tourists wanting to experience the stunning and unique landscapes accessed by the track.

As a new mountain bike track it adds to a growing number of outstanding West Coast cycle trails that increasingly make the region a must-do mountain biking destination.

AEN News New Zealand

Member News

AEN News New Zealand



Countries And Provinces

A new West Coast tourism opportunity

Remembering the Pike 29

At the families' wishes, the Pike River Mine site and surrounding area has become part of Paparoa National Park.

The men will be remembered through an information centre to be developed at the Pike River Mine amenities area, where displays and memorabilia will tell the story of the mine and disaster. The mine portal will be a place for quiet reflection of the 29 lives lost in the mine tragedy.

Source: New Zealand Department of Conservation

News Form Korea

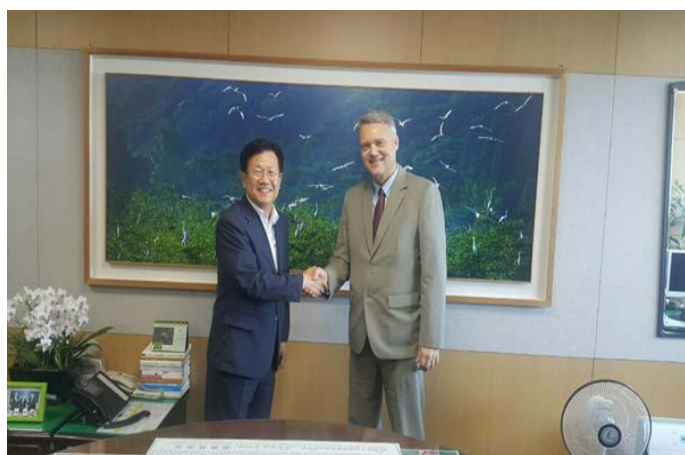
There are a total of 20 ecotourism destinations designated by the Korean Ministry of Environment and 4 of them are under the assessment of their sustainability management. All destinations should be assessed on the 3rd year of the designation so as to keep their status of Korean ecotourism destinations 3 years longer. AEN board member, Dr. Mihee Kang has led the assessment since last year.

Avian Influenza(AI) has impacted negatively on Korean ecotourism destinations. "Asia Bird Fair", that Ulsan City has prepared from last year has postponed from February to November this year due to AI. Some attractions such as "Upo Sacred Ibis Restoration Center" in Upo Wetland are closed to visitors to prevent any potential impacts. The Korean Ecotourism Network has held a meeting with the Korean Ministry of Environment and agreed on its official formation and future cooperation. Mr Guibong Jeong will take a role of secretary general of the network. It will have its legal status under the Korea Ecotourism Society to have better cooperation with existing organizations and members.

The Korean Ministry of Environment recently selected three Ramsar sites (Yong Wetlands in Inje, Gangwon Province; Upo Wetlands in Changnyeong, South Gyeongsang Province, and Dongbaekdongsan Wetland in Jeju Province) as Korean candidates for "Wetland City Accreditation of the Ramsar Convention". The three sites are also the Korean ecotourism destinations. If they get the status of "Wetland City", they will get more international recognition.

Ulsan City invited GSTC CEO (Mr Randy Durband) in May to learn about global standards and to develop cooperative relationships between GSTC and the city. The city explained its efforts for Sustainable Tourism development and agreed on future cooperation. Ulsan City has a successful story of the restoration of Taehwa River and has worked hard to create community-based ecotourism developments along the river. The river and the surrounding areas are designated as one of primary Korean ecotourism destinations.

AEN board member, Mihee Kang has led the development of "International Standard for Rural Tourism Destinations" on behalf of Huzhou City, China and announced it in the UNWTO conference held in Huzhou city during July 17-19. Rural tourism destinations include ecotourism destinations too.



AEN News Korea

A new West Coast tourism opportunity



Ex-mining town in Malaysia embraces ecotourism Sungai Lembing, Pahang used to be a thriving town back in the old days, but it immediately became a ghost town after the mining industry there came to a halt in the 1980's. Many villagers lost their jobs and fled Sungai Lembing to find work overseas.

Alan Cheong, a senior tour guide recalled, "This place resembled a war zone overnight, with the elderly and small children left behind."

However, what was once a sad empty ex-mining town, now has found a new lease of life once it started embracing ecotourism. Today, locals estimate that between 2,000 to 3,000 tourists throng the place over weekends. The number peaks during school holidays both in Malaysia and Singapore, as Sungai Lembing is very popular among Singaporeans.

Cheong, who is Sungai Lembing Rainbow Waterfall Tourism Association chairman, said there were about 100 tour guides with 60 vehicles for the waterfall tours alone.

The five-hour tour that starts at 5.30am comprises jungle trekking and rock climbing to a very scenic waterfall, about 12km from the village. Cheong is grateful to tourists who post their holiday photos on Facebook, as this helps promote the waterfall to the world.

Over at the Sungai Lembing Hillview Cottage, its 54-year-old owner, Leong Yuen Kong, is seen busy chatting and tending to the needs of his guests at the huge front porch of the guesthouse. While many high-end hotels in cities only serve their guests a welcome drink free of charge, Leong's guests get a free "hop and ride" around Sungai Lembing.

He sees this as a great start to a pleasant stay and a way to introduce guests to the tourist spots. The attractions include a museum, former mining tunnel, Panorama Hill and authentic Hakka and Hainan food restaurants. Leong said three-day-two-night tours were popular for tourists to see the place at a relaxed pace. Tourism certainly can do more than just revive the economy of a place. The story of Sungai Lembing Hainan Association is a good example.

The association now enjoys rental income after it leased its building to the Pu brothers – Siang Chan and Siang Yen, who turned it into a guesthouse and restaurant called HillVille Inn.

"With the monthly rental, the association can continue to do charity such as granting scholarships to children from the village," said Siang Yen, 35.

According to him, the association had financial constraints prior to this because of its ageing and dwindling membership. As for his family, Siang Yen said the guesthouse and restaurant provided employment for his extended family members who were also happy to keep each other company.

"My mother, in particular, is very happy when our guests like her jia xiang cai (authentic homecooking)," he said of his mother, Soon Ah Buoi.

Siang Yen said his mother, in her 50s, was widowed when he was a child. He now runs the guesthouse with his 38-year-old brother, Siang Chan.

But this is just the beginning for the little village that managed to fight the odds and make a comeback. Kampung Baru Sungai Lembing chief Mac Tang Siew Fong pointed out the need to bring in more tourists, especially during weekdays. For a start, he proposes a collaboration among new villages in the country to promote each other's tourism attractions. Well, a good start is half the battle won and Kampung Baru Sungai Lembing is certainly on the right track.

Tourists crowding a section of the Rainbow Waterfall in Sungai Lembing to capture the waterfall's famous 'rainbow'. Tour operators say the rainbow is the effect of sun rays shining on the cascading water.



Member News

As the main activity, Cambodia Bird Guide Association (CBGA) operate and organize bird watching tours for visitors to various sites in Cambodia, from a half day trip to 3-week+ itinerary to more than 10 birding sites; Prek Toal, Ang Trapaeng Thmor, Changkran Roy, Bengal Florican Conservation Areas, Tmatboey, Vulture Restaurant, Seima, Bokor, Aural. All tours are lead by experienced bird guides. CBGA was founded in 2016 by a group of passionate conservationists committed to helping educate people about the wildlife and working to ensure that our planet is protected for future generations. This association's creation was driven by the high demand in the ecotourism industry requiring expertise and resources.

Beside the birdwatching tour project, CBGA also works with communities by supporting them to develop sustainably, reducing poverty, and raising the awareness of the importance of wildlife conservation.



Countries And Provinces

Ecotourism in Cambodia with Cambodia Bird Guide Association



For instance; the Changkran Roy community in Varin district (about 70km north of Siem Reap) attracts both local and international visitors which benefit the local villagers for the extra income on top of their agricultural income. This money also helps protect the forest and wildlife around the areas in a way that is better than before CBGA introduced ecotourism perspectives to this community. CBGA trained locals to establish eco-tours to their community forest with setting up the camp site, making trails, training local guides, setting birdfeed, managing community funds and monitoring the process regularly together with the district governor.

Thanks to the government support and cooperation from local communities, and wildlife heritage, the Cambodian Bird Guide Association is able to promote birdwatching for wildlife conservation purpose to Cambodian people as well as attracting more tourists to Cambodia.

News from China



3 August 2017

**Garze Adventure Travel Festival
Gaocheng, Yading, Sichuan, China**

policy makers in China. In recent years, people in China are more aware now than ever of the environmental and ethical impact of human behaviours. Lots of companies started using environmental practices as a marketing tool and governments are putting more emphasis on implementing sustainable policies and guidelines. However, until there is a genuine interest in ecotourism and responsible tourism from both the general public and the governments, ecotourism will continue to remain a very small percentage comparing to the dramatic increase of Chinese domestic and outbound travelling.

There is probably a difference in the definition of "ecotourism" between China & the rest of the world. The definition articulated by IUCN (World Conservation Union): "Environmentally responsible travel to natural areas, in order to enjoy and appreciate nature (and accompanying cultural features, both past and present) that promote conservation, have a low visitor impact and provide for beneficially active socio-economic involvement of local peoples." In Chinese, ecotourism is translated as Ecology + Tourism.

While we consider Ecotourism in China is still at the development stages, the government has devoted billions of dollars to spending on a range of infrastructure projects to boost the tourism development but "ecotourism" is still relatively non-existence in China, partially should be attributed to the lack of eco-friendly education to the general public and lack of awareness of practicing true ecotourism from the

Countries And Provinces

Member News

Ecotourism organizations in China

Ecological civilization of China

www.中国生态文明网.com

- A semi-governmental organization promoting “ecological civilization” in china
 - Most of the members are government officials, head of the state-owned enterprises
 - They host annual forums in different cities in China
- Ecotourism China www.ecotourism.org.cn
- The tourism forum of the Ecological civilization of China
 - The organization is operated by a commercial enterprise in Beijing
 - Published the first “China Ecotourism” Magazine in 2011

Dragon Yunhe Tourism Planning & Development Co. has been working with the Garze Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in 2015 and we have been actively persuade the local government to get involved in regulating responsible tourism & ecotourism and implementing the sustainable tourism development. Meantime, given the increasing volume of tourists within China, whether the concept of ecotourism should be applied for all of the destinations in China. How to best balance the economic growth and the protection of the natures in China worth further exploration.



4 September 2017 - 9 September 2017

UNWTO General Assembly - Twenty-second session - Chengdu, China

News from Australia

Ecotourism Australia (EA) and Savannah Guides (SG) have deepened their partnership, with SG taking on the management role for the EcoGuide Certification program. The aim of this arrangement is to bring greater benefit to our existing EcoGuide and Savannah Guide members through access to training and by creating a larger grouping of Australia's premier nature guides.

A survey of EcoGuides conducted in late 2016 showed 90% of respondents in support of this Agreement with the key benefits they saw as 'Access to extensive guiding resources', 'Professional guide training' and 'Industry professional development'. Some anonymous comments from the survey include:

"I think this is an excellent initiative, especially as I hope it will bring us closer to a national accreditation scheme for guides and provide much-needed access to professional development for EcoGuides".

"Any initiatives that avoid duplication and focus on consistent guiding quality in Australia is a good thing". Guiding in Australia remains challenging with little professional development opportunities, career path and clear recognition of experience. This has been the case for many years and a primary reason why programs such as EcoGuides and Savannah Guides were created. Bringing the programs together allows nature guides to have a stronger voice and influence.

Ecotourism Australia will continue to promote the EcoGuide program but refer inquiries to Savannah Guides. Existing EcoGuides will receive further detailed information on the management changes in coming days.



Dasyueshan National Forest Recreation Area, Hotspot of Ecotourism in Taiwan

Member news

AEN News Taiwan

The Dasyueshan National Forest Recreation Area encompasses quite a large territory, including diverse and intact vegetative communities that support innumerable wildlife species with excellent habitats and environments. Within the scope of the park area among all types of wildlife, birds are the most accessible to observe, and have the most species and largest populations. About 250 species of birds and 26 out of 27 Taiwan endemic birds have been recorded within the park, including the endemic Mikado Pheasant (*Syrnaticus mikado*), Swinhoe's Pheasant (*Lophura swinhoii*), White-eared Sibia (*Heterophasia auricularis*), and Taiwan Yuhina (*Yuhina brunneiceps*), and the endemic subspecies of Island Thrush (*Turdus poliocephalus*), Vivid Niltava (*Niltava vivida*), and Eurasian Jay (*Garrulus glandarius*). It's one of the "Ten International Birdwatching Spots of Taiwan". Flying squirrel, Taiwan Serow and Barking Deer are also often seen on the road side.



Eco Fair

The 3rd 2017 Eco Fair was held in Da An Forest Park on 10-11, June. About 100 booths set up by NGOs to show the people the importance of the environment.

Moutan Gaoshi, an aboriginal community of Ping Tong County has certified 13 interpreters on June which starts a new page of local ecotourism service. Moutan Gaoshi Community is famous its Peony Blossom (*Paeonia suffruticosa*). It attracts tens of thousands tourists during Peony Bloom Festival. Tourists can also experience tribal life from the early days, pick wild vegetables, fish in the wild creek and learn the history of the community.

(photos from <http://ecotourism.i-pingtung.com>)

4 old tunnels in Shibalouhansan Nature Protected Area re-open to the public from June, 2017. These tunnels were built along Road 27, a mountain trail with rich natural beauty. Now it's a scenic trail good for hiking.



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