



Asian Ecotourism Network

www.asianecotoursim.org

MAY 2017

E-NEWSLETTER

Message from the chair



Arigato for your continuing support with AEN. To strengthen our network in the region, we would like to seek in-kind donors who can help establish the national AEN satellite offices within existing institutions or organizations pertinent to ecotourism that becomes the window for the local communities to contact and facilitate cross-learning in the local language. It can be a government entity, academic institution, or a NGO. If you are interested in becoming one, please kindly inform us from our website contact form. Currently our Satellite Offices are established in India, Indonesia, Japan, and Malaysia

Message from AEN office



AEN will be a part of the forthcoming 2017 Subic Ecotourism Festival to be held from May 29 to June 1 at Subic Bay Exhibition and Convention Center in the Philippines where the board meeting will also be held. We highly encourage people to join this festival as they say 'It's more fun in the Philippines!' The participants will learn what authentic ecotourism is and how it can be applied to your community or hospitality-related business.

The 4-day event will include:

- Conference and workshop featuring 20 international experts in ecotourism, including the board members of AEN and GEN
- Ecotourism exposure visits in Subic and its environs
- Philippine Ecotourism Destination fair and exhibit
- Networking opportunity with speakers, special guests, and co-attendees: from AEN, we will have the board members from Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia, Japan, Australia, and New Zealand

REGISTER NOW AT: <http://bit.ly/2017SubicEcoFest> (USD100 registration fee applied for AEN paid members)

For more details, please contact the event secretariat at events.issphilippines@gmail.com



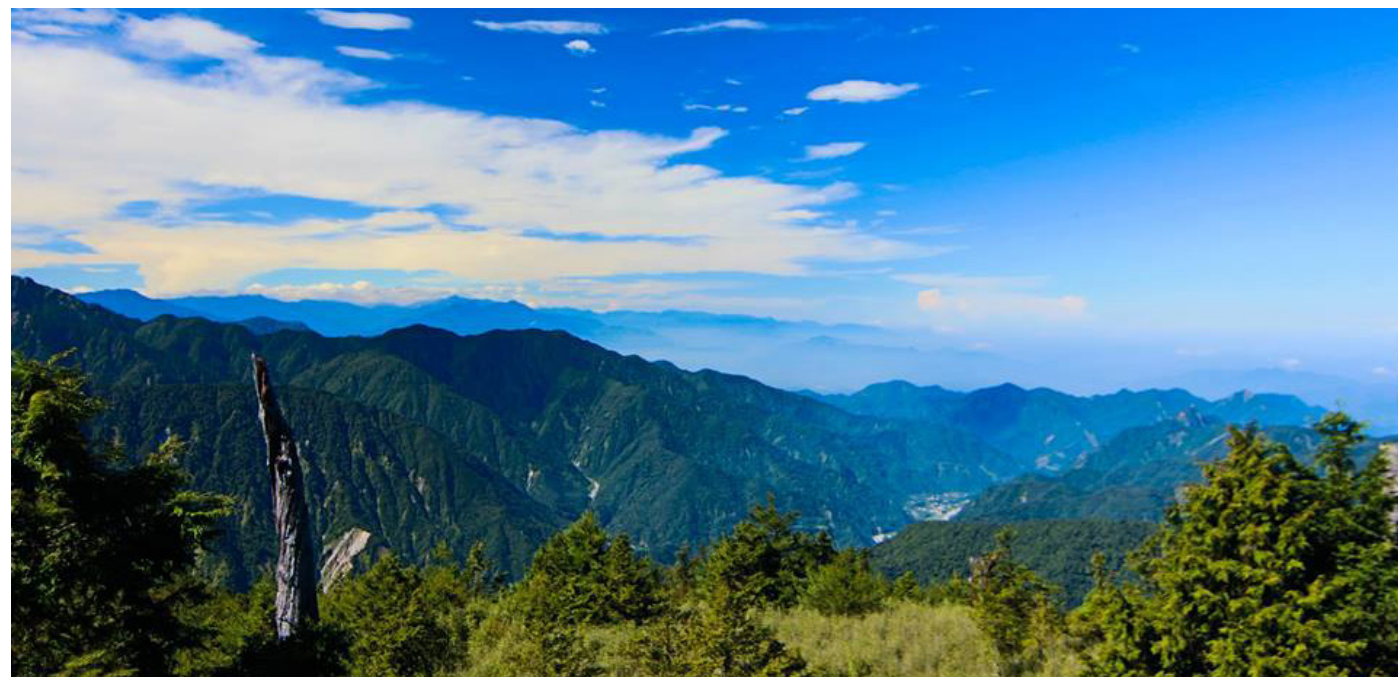
Taiwan Yeliu Geo Park

Yehliu Geopark, located at northern coast of Taiwan is famous for its sea-erosion landscape. The coastline is stretching in a direction vertical to the layer and the structure line; besides, the influences caused by wave attack, rock weathering, earth movement and crustal movement all contribute to the formation of a rare and stunning geological landscape. Yehliu welcomes over a million visitors every year. The most photographic attraction is 'Queen's Head'.

Visitors can now install an app for a self-guiding system that is both for Android and iOS.



Dasheyshan International Bird Race organized by Dongshih Forest District Office, Taiwan Forestry Bureau and Wild Bird Association Taiwan was held on Apr. 28-30, 2017 at Dasheyshan Forest Recreational Area. Enthusiastic birders from Japan, USA, Malaysia, Hong Kong and China as well as local birders are registered for the annual 24-hour race. Serial activities such as bird photo exhibition, mountain trail cleaning, conservation workshops, and several education programmes for local elementary schools are organized to take place before and after the race.



An International Ecotourism Conference was held on Apr. 30, 2017 in Taipei. 9 distinguished Ecotourism specialists of AEN board are invited. They are Tony Charters, Kazuhiro Arai, Palitha Gurusinghe, Supaporn Prach-umpai, Gantumur Damba, Alan Wong, Soulinnara Ratanavong, Quang Hao Nguyen and Karma Tshering.

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Taiwan

New Zealand



The Clean Water package – Making New Zealand waters more 'swimmable'



New Zealanders want to be able to swim in our rivers and lakes; it's an important part of our 'Kiwi' way of life and a very important opportunity for travellers to our country to enjoy. With the aspirational goal of the Tourism 2025 strategy, that envisages the country receiving double its tourism numbers there will be an increased pressure on the environment. The Clean Water package from the New Zealand governments Ministry for the Environment aims to provide recreational swimming opportunities for all. The target is to make an additional 10,000km of waterways swimmable – that's roughly equivalent to a river that stretches from here to South America.

What we mean by 'swimmable'

There is a series of tests to determine whether a river is safe for swimming. These tests measure E. coli levels in the water. E. coli is just one indicator of how healthy a river is, but it is an important one. A swimmable river is one categorised as excellent, good or fair.

There isn't enough data to model E. coli levels across all lakes, so we have used the volume of toxic algae (cyanobacteria) to measure whether a lake is swimmable.

Improving our water quality

The Government has announced a plan to improve New Zealand's waterways so that 90% are 'swimmable' by 2040. At the moment, 72% are considered safe to swim in, most of the time. Improving our lakes and rivers will take time and there is more we need to do in the years ahead to make it happen. The Clean Water package is an important step in achieving our goal of better water quality for New Zealanders and its visitors.

Investing in rivers and lakes

Applications were invited for the first round of funding through the new Freshwater Improvement Fund, which will contribute \$100 million towards improving waterways. (This funding round is now closed for applications) This, along with another \$350 million invested in water clean-ups, will make a significant contribution to improving water quality in the long term.

We have good quality rivers and lakes overall, but we need to do more

Compared to many parts of the world, New Zealand is lucky to have good quality waterways. But our waterways are under pressure in rural and urban areas. New Zealanders are clear we need to do more. Healthy rivers and lakes are important not just for swimming but for cultural, recreational and economic reasons too.

Source: Ministry for the Environment



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Malayisa

Perak takes a bold step in conservation



Due to over-commercialisation and some irresponsible tour operators who have disregarded to follow the rules and regulations set by authorities at Perak's Pulau Sembilan, the island will be closed to visitors until further notice.

The announcement was made by the Sultan of Perak himself, which was also the state government's decision to protect and conserve Pulau Sembilan from further damage. This is however, until stricter rules are established to protect the ecosystem and biodiversity of the beautiful island.

Such a bold step has been applauded by Andrew Sebastian, the CEO of Ecotourism & Conservation Society Malaysia (EcoMy) whom also agreed with the sultan that nature tourism activities were being tarnished by mass tourism and over-commercialisation, and urged other states governments in Malaysia to follow Perak's example.

Sebastian cited Cameron Highlands and Langkawi as "particularly sad cases" of over-commercialisation taking its toll on nature.

"Cameron Highlands' fame and fortune as a hill station for a quiet reprieve is marred by land use change, illegal farms, silted waterways, lack of access to clean fresh water and traffic congestion," he said.

"Meanwhile, Langkawi is heading towards being overdeveloped and unique ecosystems there are being jeopardised by mass tourism."

He said Malaysia's natural wealth made it easy for people to forget that its resources were limited.

"Malaysia has so much to offer, but there's a limit to how and when we can use its resources," he said. "We have to manage ourselves and I feel that Perak can take the lead."

Source: Free Malaysia Today

Malaysia scores better overall performance in tourism index

PETALING JAYA: Malaysia came in second after Singapore among nine South-East Asian nations in the Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Index 2017 by the World Economic Forum (WEF).

The report released on April 5 showed Singapore topping the table, followed by Malaysia, Thailand and Indonesia.

Globally, Malaysia dropped a spot from 2015 to 26th out of 136 countries. It, however, improved on its overall performance in the various indicators, rising from 4.41 points in 2015 to 4.50 in 2017.

The biennial report said Malaysia's improved performance was attributed to its price competitiveness, strong air connectivity, and beautiful natural resources.

The WEF report engaged leaders in the travel and tourism industry for an in-depth analysis of the industry competitiveness of 136 economies that accounted for over 98% of the world's GDP.

The index measured a set of factors and policies that enabled the sustainable development of the travel and tourism sector that included international openness, prioritisation of travel and tourism, human resources and labour market, health and hygiene, as well as safety and security.

The report said Malaysia could become more competitive by further prioritising the travel and tourism industry through investment in the development of its cultural resources and business travel.

It added that Malaysia should address environmental sustainability and preserve its beautiful natural environment.

In 2015, Malaysia recorded more than 25 million tourist arrivals, contributing almost RM80bil in tourism receipts. Spain, with its unique offerings of both cultural and natural resources, topped the rankings for the second time with a score of 5.43.

It is followed by France, Germany, Japan and Britain.

The WEF is a Swiss non-profit foundation that engages the foremost political, business and other leaders of society to shape global, regional and industry agendas.

Source: The Star Online

Sabah: A Leader in Sustainable Tourism

Sabah is currently one of Asia's most successful eco and adventure tourism destinations, with 3.4 million visitors in 2016, and over a million of them were from China alone. Many policymakers are looking into studying what the East Malaysian state has been doing right. Of course, the contribution to such success is also because of Sabah's rich biodiversity.

However, Sabah or also known as the 'Land below the Wind', had its share of struggles to become a successful state today. About twenty-five years back, Sabah was facing a major economic dilemma. For decades, local businessmen had focused on extractive industries mainly, logging the state's vast and lush forests but by the early 1990's, it was clear that this was unsustainable.

Datuk Masidi Manjun, Sabah Minister of Tourism, Culture and Environment, is sanguine: "Back then, it wasn't difficult persuading ordinary Sabahans that conservation was the way forward. Sabahans have always had a close affinity with the forests."

"It helps that Tourism, Culture and the Environment are all under the same Ministry. This means we are able to craft and coordinate the right policies, thereby ensuring that everyone (including the private sector) is moving in the same direction."

"Sabahans are proud of their cultural heritage. This is taught and nurtured in schools. We are a multicultural and multi-religious people. The State Government is working hard to ensure that our native cultures thrive."

"It's also critical to encourage the community to maintain and take care of the natural beauty all around us - to ensure everything remains pristine so that we can leverage-off the attractions. Moreover, given that Eco-tourism is so important, conservation has to be an integral part of the government's development agenda."

Datuk Masidi added, "Every year, we add more to our permanent forest reserve. The International Union of Conservation of Nature requires that 10% of land should be 'Totally Protected Forest' (TPF). To date, Sabah has gazetted 23% as TPF with plans to reach 30% by 2025."

However, Sabah's forests are currently facing a huge threat over the controversial RM223 million Sukau Bridge in Kina-batangan, which continues to highlight the never-ending dilemma between conservation and economic development.

Sabah's experience in tourism clearly shows that the industry is not something that can be enacted into existence. It is a long-term process that requires the building trust, training service providers, and maintaining as well as improving standards, which entails a huge amount of patience especially when dealing with various stakeholders who become part of the industry.

Source: Astro Awani

Kiulu launches Tourist Pass for eco-tourism adventures

Kota Kinabalu: In conjunction with Visit Kiulu Month, the whole month of April was dedicated to promoting the humble district of Kiulu as an ecotourism and adventure destination. The initiative was also done by using a Kiulu Tourist Pass that gives travellers a special discount for the various eco-adventure activities available at the district.

At only RM5, travellers who buy the pass also contribute RM3 to the community of Kiulu to develop tourism activities there and the pass is valid for the whole year of 2017.

Sabah Tourism Board chairman Datuk Joniston Bangkuai said "Kiulu promises an enchanting experience by offering its scenic views where visitors will be taken through the Kiulu River Valley. The pass will also highlight the local attractions and activities along the way.

"Necessary information will also be made available in the pass to assist self-guided tourists and visitors alike in case of emergency," he said at the launching of the Kiulu Tourist Pass and Kiulu Arch here.

During the launching of the Kiulu Arch, Joniston also expressed his confidence in the increase of visitors to the small district of Kiulu after it has been transformed into an adventure and eco-tourism hub over the years.

The arch, located just at the road junction leading to Kiulu, has listed several tourism products, which can be easily viewed by those travelling into Tamparuli town.

The arch was sponsored by Warisan Harta Sdn Bhd and its subsidiary company Common Tower Technologies Sdn Bhd. An array of activities were lined-up during the Visit Kiulu Month event and some of the activities included a cultural festival, a tagal fishing challenge, tamu (market) and also a traditional food and drink fiesta!

Source: The Straits Times

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Discover Community-based Tourism in Central Laos

Phou Khao Khouay, or 'Buffalo Horn Mountain', is an intriguing and breathtaking nature reserve in Lao PDR. The mountains, rivers and pristine forests of this National Protected Area offer great opportunities for exploring nature in Laos.

The heart of Phou Khao Khouay is perfect for outdoor activities like trekking, canoeing, wildlife watching, picnicking and camping. Its proximity to Vientiane, the capital of Laos, makes it ideal for day trips or multiple day tours.

If you stay overnight in a traditional Lao village, you can discover the typical Lao hospitality and friendliness. It gives you a unique possibility to experience rural village life and go trekking in the nature reserve. This way, you will contribute to nature conservation in Central Laos!

Phou Khao Khouay is one of Laos' most beautiful nature reserves. This extensive sandstone mountain range is only 40 kilometers northeast of Vientiane. Lao P.D.R. designated it "National Protected Area" in 1993.

The landscape and ecosystem varies from sheer sandstone cliffs and pristine river gorges to rough mountain slopes. Three large rivers and numerous tributaries empty into the nearby Mekong. In the centre of the reserve lies the beautiful Ang Nam Leuk reservoir. Another reservoir, Ang Nam Mang 3, has only recently been completed and still shows the scars of construction work. It is located in the very west of the park.

Covering three provinces, Phou Khao Khouay stretches over about 80 kilometers from west to east and up to 40 kilometers from north to south. The area covers about 2000 square kilometers. The highest mountain peak is 1671 meters high. The diversity of forest types in the area includes evergreen, mixed deciduous, dry dipterocarp and pine. During the rainy season, from May to October, the reserve comes alive as the forests become green and lush. The waterfalls then reach full flow and vibrantly coloured butterflies fill the air. 50-60% of all orchids found and identified as of now in Laos (nearly 500 of expected +/- 800 species) are also present in Phou Khao Khouay.

Source: <http://www.trekkingcentrallaos.com/>

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Laos

Sri Lanka



Sri Lanka: Your Next Eco Tourism Destination.

Sri Lanka, an island once known for sun, sand and sea has now gained international recognition as a destination with a thousand more things to do. From wildlife safaris to windswept mountain retreats, breathtaking sights to ancient, historical sites, from East coast to West, and North to South, Sri Lanka is truly a land to experience and enjoy.

Post war, Sri Lankan tourism has developed rapidly to cater to the influx of tourists. Hotels, motels, homestays and hostels, boutique villas and luxury abodes dot the island, enticing visitors to appreciate true Sri Lankan hospitality and have the best time of their lives.

However, as tourism evolves, so does the traveler, who has now become more discerning, more responsible, more eco conscious and definitely preferring to veer off the beaten track in search of a more immersive experience. In keeping with this trend, many exotic places in Sri Lanka now offer an eco experience; uniting conservation, communities and sustainable travel, and ready to embrace these adventure-seekers and to share its 'local way of life' in a responsible manner.

Sri Lanka as a country has all the ingredients and natural advantage of showing off her strengths of historic, cultural and social make up that is unquestionably eco conscious and credibly sustainable. Sri Lankans as a whole are open, friendly and extremely hospitable. The openness of Sri Lankan culture and the simple willingness to showcase what they do and how they live, in their homes, their trades, crafts and cultural practices, religious beliefs, rituals, traditions, cuisine and a host of other aspects makes it all the easier to practice eco tourism.

Over 60% of travelers visiting Sri Lanka currently are looking to experience something new and to experience the lesser known, untouched locations rather than the well used tourism hotspots in the country.

With a growing segment of the Gen Z traveler (Born late 1990s) who are interested in understanding the impact they make by their purchase choices and conscious about the sustainability issues connected with travel, it is important that Sri Lanka looks at more appealing authentic travel experiences that connects with this new segment of traveler.

Statistics say that over 60% of these young travelers have a grand vision of changing the world, compared to 39% millennials with the same thought process, and Sri Lanka with her pristine landscape and open culture is ripe for attracting their attention; if positioned the correct way.

As more people understand this need, several new eco tourism destinations have cropped up and have gained fame for consciously promoting eco tourism. With eco concepts that feature Wattle & Daub homes, Tree Houses made out of recycled and up-cycled materials that showcase the local lifestyle of rural farmers, along with community based experiences being the heart of its offering where guests have the opportunity to embrace the authenticity and of being a part of the landscape and community, these model projects are ideal and replicable in other parts of the country.

As Sri Lanka makes it to every traveler's 'bucket list', we hope for an even more differentiated destination, with a credible, authentic, full immersion, sustainable / responsible travel product and value proposition for Sri Lanka in the next decade.

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Japan



Many may not think of Japan as an ecotourism destination though there is a quite big number of ecotourism activities taking place nationwide. This is largely due to the involvement by the Ministry of Environment that supports five pillars in promoting ecotourism; 1) Defining ecotourism 2) Creating a web-based portal site featuring destinations, operators, and ecotour products 3) Giving annual ecotourism awards 4) Providing ecotourism promotion manual to public 4) Designated 13 ecotourism model sites 2004-2007

Historically, Japan Ecotourism Society (JES) established in 1998, has been playing a major role in promoting ecotourism on a national level mainly comprising members from travel agencies and tour operators. The big board structure from multi-industries including the Diet members, top universities, and JATA, it makes it more difficult to take a swift and concrete decisions while she has advantages working closely with the central and regional governments and DMOs. JES has conducted a number of ecotourism guide training and an authority in giving the national ecotourism awards. On the other hand, another national body, namely Ecotourism Japan (EJ), was later established in 2007 to fill-in-the-gaps of what JES has limits in the delivery – training and education with nature schools and community development. The latter is more engaged in the international circle in a way that promotes GSTC standards working in collaboration with UNWTO Asia Pacific Regional Office. EJ is also a AEN satellite office based in Japan that boasts of nation-wide network with over 130 representatives bridging and weaving the rural and urban Japan. Last but not least, there is a few other dozens of regional and smaller-scale ecotourism entities that we would like to interview and provide them information to the international readers in the forthcoming issues.

Useful Ecotourism Links in Japan

- <http://www.japaneselawtranslation.go.jp/law/detail/?id=2614&vm=04&re=02> (Ecotourism Promotion Law)
- www.ecotourism.gr.jp (JES)
- www.ecotourism-center.jp (EJ)
- <https://www.env.go.jp/nature/ecotourism/try-ecotourism/>

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Thailand



1) Thai Government include CBT to National Policy & Strategy

As community based tourism has been included into the National Development Policy since March 2017, the Ministry of Tourism has set up a national working group to develop and promote community based tours in domestic and international market on 10th April 2017. The working group consists of DASTA, Thai Responsible Tourism Association, Thai Ecotourism and Adventure Travel Association, Thai Research Fund, AEN and private companies offering community based tour programs including Hive Sters, Royal Silk Holidays and Local Alike. There are 111 selected communities from 920 which have been developed to receive tourists to be included in this pilot project. The working group's duty is to create business matching model between tourism business and the selected communities. Implementation also includes capacity building, training and marketing access.



2) Koh Mak low carbon holidays by DASTA

Royal Silk Holidays has been contracted by DASTA to develop low carbon tourism activities on Koh Mak Island during the period of January - October 2017. AEN is involved as a project partner along with the academic team from Mae Fa Luang University. The objectives of this project is to create low carbon holiday tour program on Koh Mak Island which DASTA has successfully developed low carbon initiative project for 5 years and received PATA Gold Awards for education and training category.

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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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Adventure Travel Trade Association



Lao National Institute of Tourism and Hospitality



Silver Mountain Group ::: Nepal



Society for Sustainable Tourism & Development
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Bali Eco Tour ::: Indonesia



Borneo Eco Tours ::: Malaysia



Nikoi Island ::: Indonesia



Eco Action ::: China



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



Tourism Development Society



The Blue Yonder :: India



Taiwan Ecotourism Association :: Taiwan

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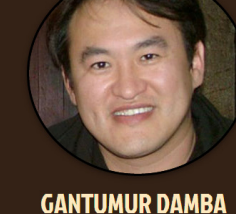
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Strategic Partners





AEN Trip to Taiwan

April 2017, AEN Board Member gathered in Taiwan for Ecotourism Watch Group and The Annual Conference of the Taiwan Ecotourism Association.

The trip started with International Firefly Symposium and firefly watching. Continued by the visit to Wulai Tribe, where we learned about Atayal's history, culture and tradition.

Headed north to YangmingShan National Park, the visit to Yangmingwushu where the late president of Taiwan spent his summer time and welcomed his international guests. End the day with a small trail in the Bamboo Trail while smelling the Sulphur from the Volcano Mountain and observed the Qixing Mountain in the close distance.

The wheel turned south to the Alishan then DasyueShan area for the longer trails, where we witnessed the richness and beauty of nature, enjoyed and excited about the varieties of plants and tree along the way, breathed the fresh air and cool breeze.

Ended the trip with success presentation from TEA and AEN board members, who shared their experiences and challenges in the Ecotourism of their countries.

7 days of fruitfulness knowledge, networking and activities, explored the beauty of Taiwan from North to South. Not to mention the kind hospitalities of Taiwanese guides/volunteers and TEA Team, who made this trip was more remarkable.

We were touched by your sincere and kind heart and we are looking forward to visit you again.

AEN Head Office

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