

RETHINKING ECOTOURISM

ASIAN ECOTOURISM NETWORK
ANNUAL REPORT 2020



Cover photo: *Geranium sp*

Asian Ecotourism Network

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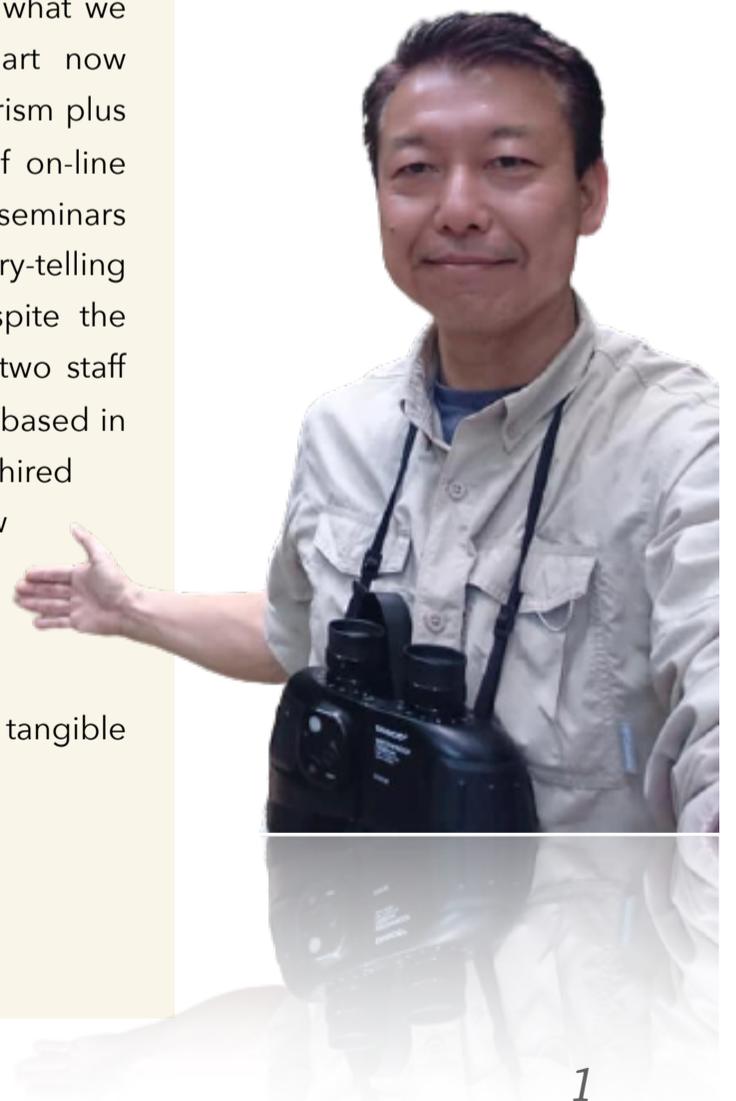
“AEN now brings you what we have achieved in the year 2020, a year that we will never forget and will be told for years to come. The COVID-19 definitely changed our lifestyle ...”

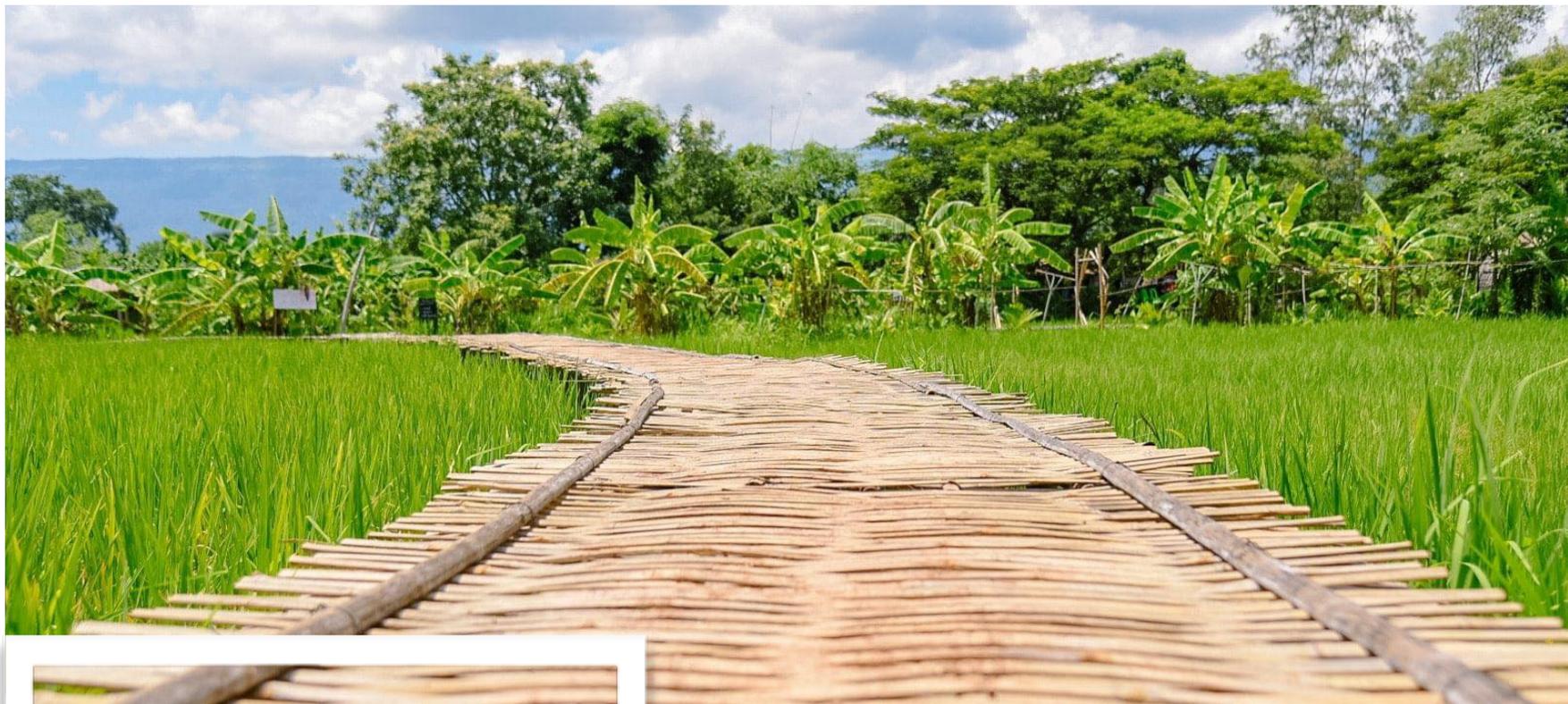
A Message from our Chair

AEN now brings you what we have achieved in the year 2020, a year that we will never forget and will be told for years to come. In January 2020, the board members kick-started the year by holding a face-to-face ecotourism seminar in Chengdu Xiling Snow Mountain in China. It was so successful that everybody felt the start of a promising year. In fact, having to announce our second Declaration on Climate Change Adaptation and Redefining Ecotourism Seasonality means a lot as we see more seasonal variations and unexpected weather patterns that affect us all as global citizens.

The COVID-19 definitely changed our lifestyle but also affected what we have been planning, the International Ecotourism Travel Mart now rescheduled to be held in 2022, the International Year of Ecotourism plus 20. Amidst these alterations, we acted fast to host a number of on-line seminars commemorating the Earth Day on April 22. These seminars covering new normal prospects as well as the importance of story-telling and training in ecotourism brought many of us together despite the physical distance. Another not to be missed is the addition of two staff members in the administrative office namely Tshering Lhamtshok based in Bhutan and Priya Bhalla based in India who are selected to be hired and proven their commitment to move us forward. AEN is now more interwoven in mind and much more active than ever before.

Join us to be the force of promoting authentic ecotourism with tangible actions.





Meet our Executive Board

MASARU TAKAYAMA (Japan)



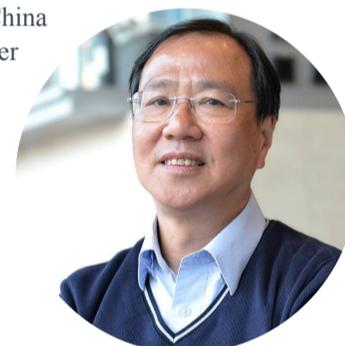
Chairperson

Masaru is the chairperson and founding board member of AEN and the Japan Alliance for Responsible Travel Agencies. With expertise in community based tourism, energy conservation, green building, natural sciences, and marine environment, Masaru is advisor to the Asia Pacific Tourism Exchange Centre and Green Destinations, auditor and advisor to Travelife, and a trainer at GSTC.

ALAN WONG (HONG KONG, CHINA)

Vice Chair

Alan Wong is the Dean and Professor of China Hospitality and Tourism School, and the founder and an expert consultant for G&D Tourism, Hospitality and Educational Consulting. A prolific author, Albert is also a certified GSTC (Global Sustainable Tourism Council) trainer, a Green Destination auditor/advisor and provides sustainable ecotourism training in Hong Kong and other ASEAN countries.



SUPAPORN PRACHUMPAI (THAILAND)

Secretary

Supi is a charter member and Secretary to the Asian Ecotourism Network. She is also the Vice President of the Thai Ecotourism and Adventure Travel Association (TEATA). She has actively engaged in developing GSTC-based sustainable tourism standards for supply chains in cooperation with the Thai government, non-profits, and international tourism organizations. She currently manages the Royal Silk Holidays and the Country Lake Nature Lodge in partnership with Travelife working towards sustainability in tourism.



ALBERT TEO CHIN KION (Malaysia)

Vice Chair

Albert is the vice chair at AEN, and had been in the tourism industry for over four decades. He is the founder of the award winning Borneo Ecotours and the Sukau Rainforest Lodge. He also founded the Borneo Ecotourism Solutions and Technologies.



ARY S. SUHANDI (Indonesia)

Vice Chair

Ary is the vice chair of AEN and has been a leader of nature-based tourism in Indonesia since 1987. His work involves establishing and promoting ecotourism destination and community-based tourism development all over Indonesia; advisory to local and national government. Ary is the founder and Director of the Indonesian Ecotourism Network (INDECON).

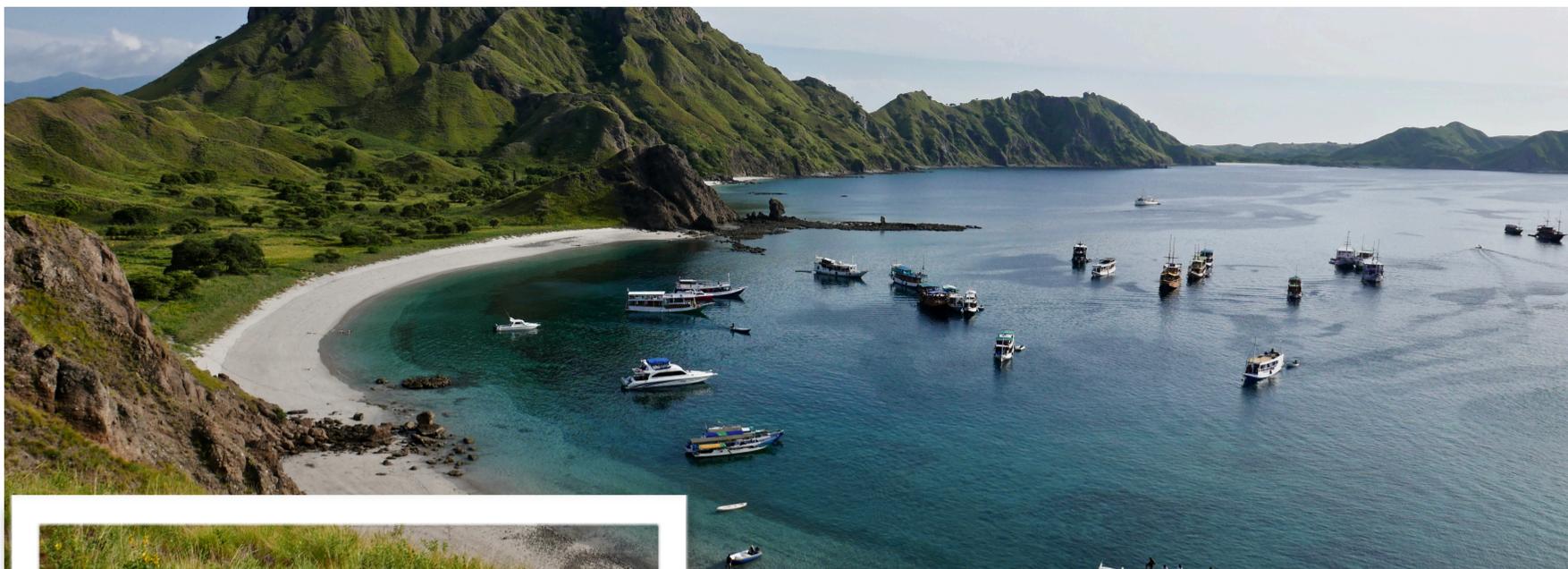


ZANE SMITH (New Zealand)

Strategy and Marketing Director

Zane is the strategy and marketing director at AEN. He has over twenty years of eco and adventure tourism and actively engages in bringing the theory of ecotourism to practice around the world. He teaches ecotourism and environmental sciences at Tai Poutini Polytechnic, and operates a tourism consultancy and professionals development retreat company.





AEN 2020 Highlights



- * Asian Ecotourism Standard for Accommodation (AESA) finalised and available in eight (8) regional languages.
- * Six Themes with 123 criteria and corresponding indicators
 1. Sustainability
 2. Food and beverage
 3. Waste management and recycling
 4. Energy and water
 5. Green purchasing, and
 6. Care for environment



- * The Korean Ecotourism Society joined the Asian Ecotourism Network taking our member countries to seventeen (17)



*AEN and ISST launched the International Ecotourism Travel Mart 2022 - International Year of Ecotourism plus 20 (IETM IYE+20)



- * AEN joins AEN Xiling Snow Mountain Declaration on Climate Change Adaptation and Redefining Ecotourism Seasonality



E-learning & Online Training

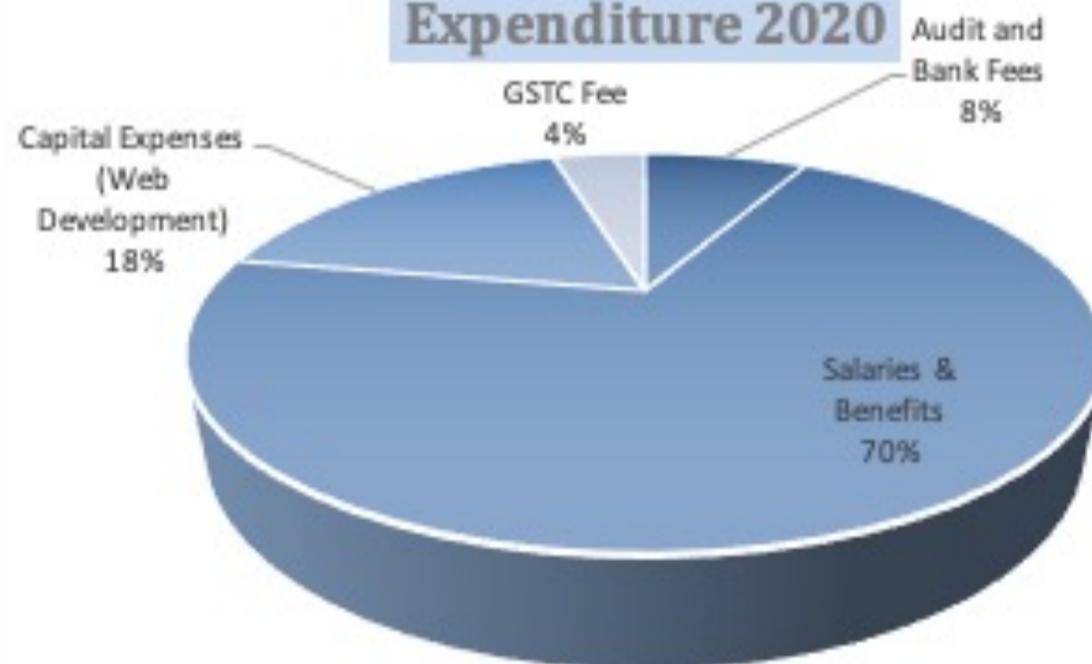
- * Ecotourism and Covid-19: learnings and sharing of experiences from the Asia Pacific region
- * Online trainings and seminars
- * DASTA by Masaru Takayama
- * GSTC training by Kazu Arai
- * Sunway University training by various board members

AEN Financials in Brief

Revenue 2020



Expenditure 2020





About Asian Ecotourism Network

4

Australia
Bhutan
Cambodia
China
Hongkong
(China)
India
Indonesia
Japan
Laos
Malaysia
Mongolia
Nepal
New Zealand
Philippines
Singapore
South Korea
Sri Lanka
Taiwan
Thailand

WHO WE ARE

The Asian Ecotourism Network is a regional initiative of the Global Ecotourism Network (GEN), with seventeen (17) member countries in the Asia Pacific region working towards connecting stakeholders (private, public, non-profits, and academia) for knowledge transfer, consulting, marketing, and business development to achieve sustainability for people and planet.

OUR ISSUES OF CONCERN

- * Tourism's threats to indigenous people and cultures especially in Asia and the Pacific , a region rich in cultural diversity and indigenous groups.
- * Marine and terrestrial degradation and environmental footprints from mass production and consumption.
- * Exceeding carrying capacities in ecologically sensitive areas (Over-tourism)
- * Greenwashing in the tourism industry.
- * Lack of political will to protect environment and cultures from impacts of tourism vis-à-vis revenue.

OUR RESPONSE

- * Be conservation advocates protecting marine and terrestrial ecosystems and biodiversity.
- * Promote community entrepreneurship through empowerment, skills transfer and capacity building.
- * Become a platform for indigenous peoples and rural communities developing ecotourism and protecting cultural heritages.
- * Standardize and develop certification programs and products for sustainable tourism in the region to avoid green washing.
- * Foster political goodwill and partnerships for policies and programs on sustainable tourism in the region.

OUR MISSION STATEMENT

Our mission is to connect AEN stakeholders for knowledge transfer, consulting, marketing, and business development to achieve sustainability



AEN Xiling Snow Mountain Declaration on Climate Change Adaptation

On January 7 2020, the Asian Ecotourism Network joined over 40 experts and participants from the Asia Pacific region in the ecotourism forum themed 'Redefining Ecotourism Seasonality' coinciding with the semi-annual general meeting of AEN in Xiling Snow Mountain, Chengdu (China). In-depth discussions over the next three days led to the Declaration on Xiling Snow Mountain.



AEN Xiling Snow Mountain Declaration on Climate Change Adaptation and Redefining Ecotourism Seasonality 亚洲生态旅游联盟《西岭雪山宣言》 ——适应气候变化，重新定义生态旅游的季节性

We, over 40 experts and participants from different countries and regions in Asia and Asian Ecotourism Network (AEN) participated in ecotourism forum themed "Redefining Ecotourism Seasonality"- the Semi-Annual General Meeting of AEN in Xiling Snow Mountain, Chengdu, China, from January 7th to 9th, 2020. Through extensive and in-depth exchange of views and discussion of all representatives, the Declaration on Xiling Snow Mountain was unanimously adopted.

我们40位来自亚太不同国家以及亚洲生态旅游联盟的专家和与会者，于2020年1月7日至9日在中国成都西岭雪山参加了以“重新定义生态旅游的季节性”为主题的生态旅游论坛，即亚洲生态旅游联盟的半年度会议。通过全体代表广泛、深入地交换意见和讨论，一致通过了《西岭雪山宣言》。

Recognizing the importance of ecotourism as a tool to sustain the well-being of the local people, conserve culture and environment, and create knowledge and understanding through interpretation and education, 承认生态旅游作为一种维持当地人民福祉、保护文化和环境、并通过解说和教育来创造知识和增进理解的重要手段的重要性。

Asian Ecotourism Network hereby
亚洲生态旅游联盟在此庄严宣布：

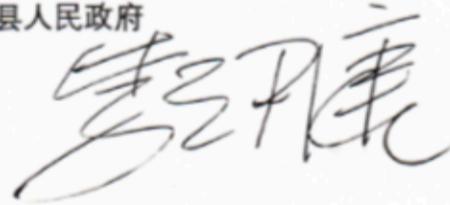
Solemnly proclaims the following AEN Declaration of Climate Change Adaptation and Redefining Ecotourism Seasonality to be adopted in Asia Pacific countries to adjust to actual or expected climate and seasonal challenges in a sustainable manner: 亚洲国家和地区将接受以下的亚洲生态旅游联盟有关适应气候变化和重新定义生态旅游季节性的宣言，并以可持续的方式应对实际或预期的气候和季节性挑战。

1. Understand the dynamism of climate change and seasonalities that affect tourism seasonality;
了解影响旅游季节性的气候变化的机制;

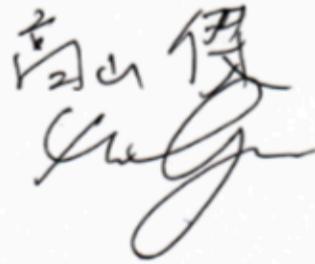
2. Be aware of credible carbon offset activities that can be undertaken to alleviate the travel-induced impacts;
了解能够采取的可靠的碳补偿活动，以减轻旅行造成的影响;
3. Take actions on minimizing carbon footprint through practical tourism design and operation;
通过切实可行的旅游设计和运营使碳足迹最小化;
4. Seek effective strategies to climate and seasonal adaptation that benefit the local people, visitors, and the industry;
寻求有效的气候和季节适应策略，使当地居民、游客和旅游企业受益;
5. Provide tourism stakeholders and the industry with environmental education opportunities in particular with climate and seasonal adaptations;
为旅游利益相关者及业界提供环境教育的机会，尤其要提供有关气候及季节性适应性的教育机会;
6. Create favorable conditions for community participation to maintain their sustainable livelihood;
为社区参与创造有利条件来维持当地的可持续生计;
7. Encourage Asia Pacific countries to learn from each other, share good practices, and achieve our common Sustainable Development Goals.
鼓励亚太国家相互学习、相互借鉴来实现我们共同的可持续发展目标。

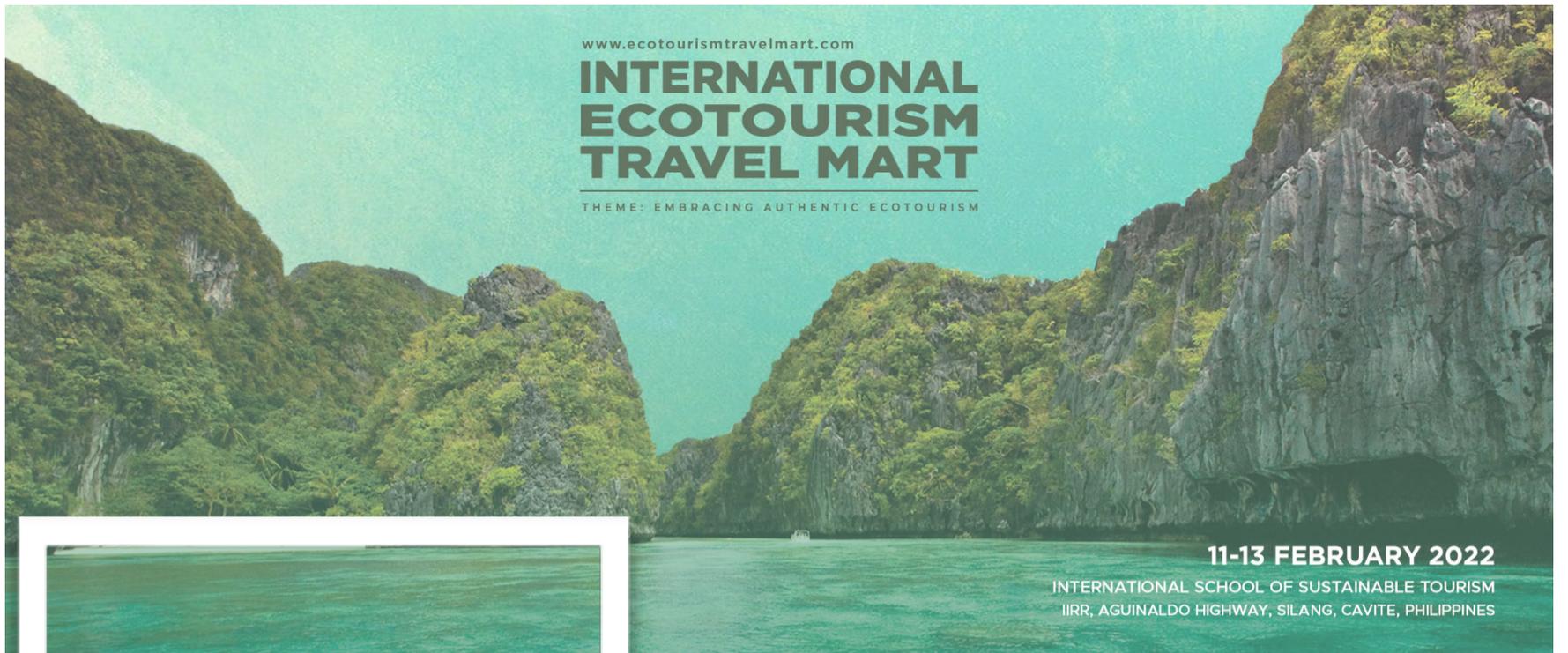
Asian Ecotourism Network
亚洲生态旅游联盟

Dayi County People's Government
大邑县人民政府



January 7, 2020
Xiling Snow Mountain, Chengdu
2020年1月7日
西岭雪山





Launching of the International Ecotourism Travel Mart

IETM 2022 (IYE+20)

The Asian Ecotourism Network (AEN), in partnership with the International School for Sustainable Tourism (ISST) launched the International Ecotourism Travel Mart (IETM2022 IYE+20) website on Sunday, 27th September, coinciding with the World Tourism Day.

The IETM 2022 IYE+20 is the first green travel exhibition commemorating 20 years since the International Year of Ecotourism (IYE 2002). The IETM is an annual event especially designed to bring together delegates and exhibitors to showcase products and services that have a strong ecotourism component, green technology, and sustainable green practices. The first event is scheduled to be hosted in the Philippines from 11th to 13th February 2022.

At the core of IETM, now and in the future, is our effort to achieve sustainability goals to:

- ❖ *experience nature and culture in all its diversity;*
- ❖ *ensure the protection and preservation of environment and culture;*
- ❖ *generate awareness, appreciation, and care for the destinations; and*
- ❖ *create income for the local communities.*

<https://www.ecotourismtravelmart.com/>

For a region rich in diverse natural and cultural resources, the spotlight of the event is on ecotourism and the travel mart aims at:

- * **Sharing best practices on ecotourism from international experts in the field;**
- * **Provide an opportunity to network with ecotourism’s foremost advocates and leaders;**
- * **Create networks and partnerships for ecotourism stakeholders on a global and regional level;**
- * **Promote country’s potential ecotourism sites, indigenous practices and culture;**
- * **Create dynamism and excitement about ecotourism through eco-film, demonstrations and artistic performances.**
- * **Promote the adoption of measures to mitigate and adapt to the challenges of climate change including climate-related risk management.**
- * **Promote long term political will for authentic ecotourism programs to help achieve sustainable development goals.**

- **Watch us on <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VGondJ8w5I0>**

Online Interactive Ecotourism Series Launch

As part of the ITEM 2022 IYE+20, we designed an interactive online forum series on specific ecotourism titles that offer practical insights and effective steps to help improve sustainability knowledge and practice. From the history of ecotourism to best practices in the region, the series brings over 400 years of combined experiences by AEN speakers and panelists on sustainability knowledge, best practices, and lessons.

For a guide to the forum and workshop schedule, visit <https://www.ecotourismtravelmart.com/>

Series 1: Ecotourism, Biodiversity & Wildlife Conservation

- * Ecotourism & biodiversity
- * Ecotourism & climate action
- * Ecotourism & energy
- * Carrying capacities

Series 2: Socio cultural dimensions of ecotourism

- * poverty alleviation & ecotourism
- * Ecotourism & culture
- * Ecotourism & indigenous peoples
- * Community benefits from ecotourism
- * Women in ecotourism
- * Community organisation for ecotourism

Series 3: Economics/ business of ecotourism

- * Ecotourism policy
- * Financial model of ecotourism business
- * Measuring & monitoring in ecotourism
- * Startup of ecotourism
- * Is ecotourism profitable
- * Marketing, research & development of ecotourism
- * Co-creating ecotourism experiences in enhancing destination competitiveness

Series 4: Training & education

- * ecotourism defined: dos and don'ts
- * History of ecotourism
- * Standards & certifications
- * Ecotourism destination management
- * Education modules in ecotourism
- * Eco guiding & interpretation
- * Skills development to meet the needs of ecotourism

Series 5: Technology & Media for Ecotourism

- * Digitally empowered ecotourism
- * Low technology approaches to sustainability
- * Ecotourism & infotech
- * Ecotourism & media
- * The power of storytelling in ecotourism

Series 6: Emerging trends

- * the new normal
- * Eco-solution of travelling
- * Best practices from the Asia-Pacific region



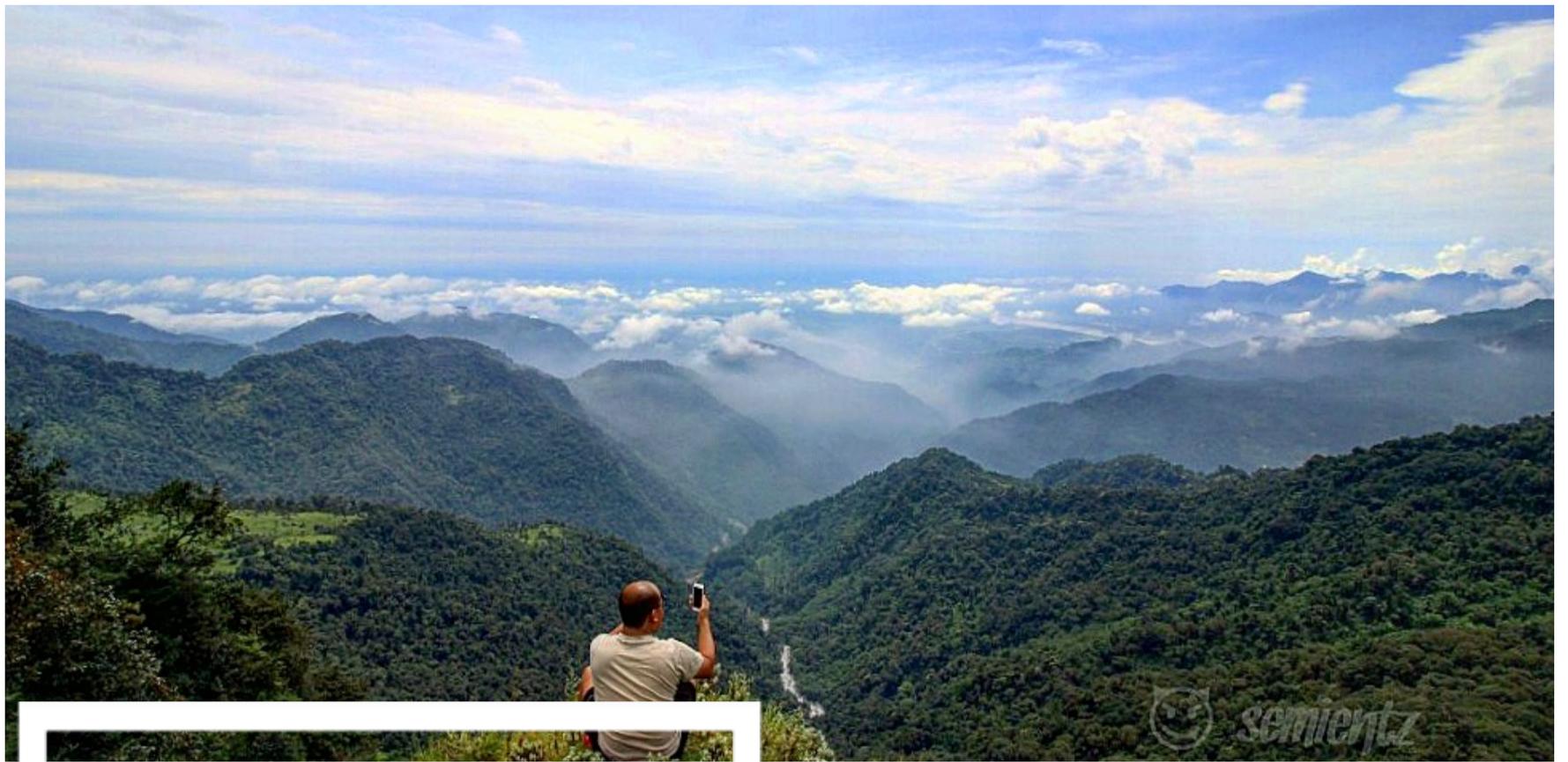
Asian Ecotourism Standard for Accommodation (AESA)

The Ecotourism Standard for Accommodations (AESA) is the outcome of a long process of consensus building of the seventeen member countries of AEN since 2017. By the year end, the Japan Ecolodge Association transferred its rights of the GSTC recognized Environmentally Sustainable Accommodations International Standard (ESAIS) to the Asian Ecotourism Network following its closure. By July 2019, the revised standard was fully recognized as equivalent to the GSTC Industry Criteria by the GSTC Accreditation Panel with the stated scope of the standard extending to ecolodges and eco resorts or nature-based lodges in the Asia Pacific region.

With six themes, 123 criteria and corresponding indicators, the AESA is unique to the Asia-Pacific context in comparison to its global equivalents, in that it meets the needs and addresses the ecotourism business concerns of the region. The standard also complies with and is recognized by the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) to bring optimal ecological, economic and social benefits to the entire ecosystem of the region in particular, and to contribute the global sustainable development goals in general.

By December 2020, the AESA was made available in eight regional languages translated by our board members - English, Hindi (India), Traditional Chinese, Simplified Chinese, Bahasa Malaysia, Khmer (Cambodia), Lao and Vietnamese.

The online system of AESA will help accommodation providers in the Asia-Pacific region to manage and improve their ecotourism business's social and environmental impacts by complying with AESA criteria.



E-Learning: Ecotourism Amidst Covid-19

Covid-19 pandemic took a big toll on the tourism sector (UNWTO) and the ensuing global economic recession hit all the tourism destinations severely. However, the pandemic also presented an opportunity for the global community to discuss the role of nature as a foundation for a healthy and sustainable planet and ecotourism is now, more than ever, in the spotlight to provide alternative solutions to restore and maintain a healthy environment when tourism picks up post Covid-19.

On April 1, 2020, UNWTO called on the international leadership and stakeholders for tourism to be included as a priority in future recovery efforts and address this challenge with sound judgment and proportionate measures. At AEN, we responded to the call hosting a series of online seminars commemorating the Earth Day on April 22. The seminars covered new normal prospects as well as the importance of story-telling and training in ecotourism bringing those of us in the sector together despite the physical distance.

“COVID-19 is disruptor of seismic proportion. We were projecting another year of growth and profit for 2020. Within months the world was turned upside down. 45 days of lockdown was imposed on all from 18th March and companies were required by law to give full pay to staff for not working when there was no income. Cash was leaking fast. How to stop the bleeding while reducing the staff from 152 to 51 and managing our losses and work the strategies for a strong recovery at the same time based on our core values is our story.”

(Albert Teo Chin Kion, Vice Chair AEN)



DASTA Training

On 5th August, the founding chair of AEN, Masaru Takayama made a special presentation on 'Understanding GD TOP100 on all levels' for DASTA (Designated Areas for Sustainable Tourism Administration), a Thai public administration agency to foster a deeper understanding on the 30 core criteria that Green Destinations (GD) offer as part of its TOP100 program. DASTA has been a big supporter of GD and AEN is a regional strategic partner of the GD training and TOP 100.



GSTC/AEN Sustainable Tourism Training, Kamaishi, Japan

“Sustainability had been always ambiguous term, but now I know what it is in tourism with concrete examples.”

Asami Komatsu (Participant)

The GSTC, in partnership with the Asian Ecotourism Network, conducted a 3-day training program from 9th -9th December 2020 in Kamaishi, Japan. Fifteen (15) industry professionals from Kamaishi city attended the training.

Based on the GSTC Criteria, the global baseline standard for sustainability in tourism, the training covered sustainability best practices for businesses and destinations, as well as key topics such as global trends in sustainable tourism, sustainability marketing, or how to deal with COVID-19.

The training also included a hands-on onsite sustainability field work of Michinoku Coastal Trail <http://tohoku.env.go.jp/mct/english/> with Sanganjima.

The GSTC Sustainable Tourism Training Program (STTP) offers training opportunities around the world (both online and in-person) throughout the year for tourism professionals interested and engaged in sustainability.



**AEN Webinar Training for Institutions
begins with Sunway University, Malaysia**

Online Trainings and Webinars

On 19th October 2020, three AEN Board members were invited to speak on a series of webinars on 'sustainable tourism development' organised by the School of Hospitality at the Sunway University in Malaysia. Targeted at student learnings on the impacts of tourism on the environment, socio-cultural, and economics, 135 participants of the university were given insights into conservation and development through three broad themes of ecotourism:

The management perspective of stakeholders by Professor Alan Wong;

Over Tourism, the new buzzword in tourism by Mr. Srilal Miththapala;

Social Carrying Capacity (SCC) in Gorhi-Terelj National Park in Mongolia by Damba Gantumur Damba (Phd)



www.asianecotourism.org

594/6 Asoke Dindaeng Road, Dindaeng, Bangkok 10400 Thailand; Hours of operation: M-F 0900-1700 (GMT+7); tel. +66-(0)26416063-5

Photo credits: Ary S. Suhandi, Albert Teo Chin Kion, Masaru Takayama, Gana Damba, Sonam Tobgay, Priya Bhalla, Tshering Lhamtshok.