



MALAYSIA

CHAPTER

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NATIVE COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP IN ECOTOURISM

I.0 GENERAL INFORMATION

Official Name of “Best Practice” Initiative	Native Community Partnership In Ecotourism
Name of Contributor/ Organization	Borneo Adventure Sdn Bhd
Address/Contact Details	No. 55, Main Bazaar, 93000 Kuching, Sarawak, Malaysia Tel: +6082 245175 Fax: +6082 422626 Email: info@borneoadventure.com Website: www.borneoadventure.com Contact Person: Philip Yong (Managing Director)
Year The Initiative Was Started & Completed	1987
Location of Best Practice Project	Ulu Batang Ai (Upper Ai River) Sarawak
Awards/Recognition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● World Tourism and Travel Council Commendation Award, 1996. ● PATA Gold Award for Cultural Preservation, 1996. ● Green Globe, 1996. ● British Airways Tourism for Tomorrow Award, 1994. ● Conde Nast Traveler Ecotourism Contest, 1994.

2.0 KEY SUMMARY

- 2.1 Eco tour operator, Borneo Adventure’s multi-award ecotourism project is a success story of a community based tourism initiative on the Batang Ai river system involving the Iban people of Nanga Sumpa longhouse. Essentially, it is about a partnership with a 200 year old local farming and fishing community in developing a sustainable ecotourism product for the ‘outside world’ to



experience visiting an Iban longhouse and also the natural beauty of Sarawak's rainforest.

- 2.2 Borneo Adventure is a classic role model in sustainable tourism. It has since 1987, established a reputation for its integrity in the marketplace by staying close to its original objectives of offering travelers an alternative to mass tourism by placing an emphasis on the natural environment, sharing culture and history. Often their tours offer sights that most tourists do not get to see and also some real opportunities to discover the gem of Borneo.
- 2.3 It is also Borneo Adventures' mission to put ecotourism in the right perspective as it is losing its focus of what it should rightfully be as more and more operators are simply staking claims that theirs are also ecotourism ventures. This 'best practice' initiative showcases the 'where and how' ecotourism operators can put their acts in an effective way to ensure that their ventures adhere to the principles of sustainable tourism management.

3.0 THE OBJECTIVES

- 3.1. Indulge in ethical tourism activities that support the sustainability of tourism through long term conservation, care and maintenance, with the integrity of good service;
- 3.2. Provide appropriate social and economic returns to the local communities;
- 3.3. Ensure that the natural environment, the wildlife and its cultural components are always protected and conserved.



4.0 THE MODEL

4.1 This initiative has been guided by these strategies:

- Involving the longhouse community from the very start in any events;
- Providing interaction between tourists and the longhouse community on all its tours. (One example is the customary 'berandau' (dialogue) session where guests are invited to speak, share and swap experiences, stories as well as exchanging gifts with the local community);
- Involving the local community in conservation by hiring them for certain activities like guiding so that they have 'vested interest' in conservation efforts;
- Organizing 'staged' cultural type of show where the community puts on displays, shows or acts to deliver unforgettable experiences to tourists that are uniquely magical to Borneo;
- Sticking to the rule that tourists come as 'guests' of the longhouse community and are treated as such by their hosts to avoid disruption to the community's day-to-day activities;
- Maintaining a clean environment where food for tourists brought from Kuching is always taken back for recycling and/or disposal;
- Setting up a tourism committee involving the village headman to ensure fair remuneration for the various services provided like local guiding, boating, lodging services and handicraft sales.

4.2 The principle of the right carrying capacity is always adhered to where tour groups are kept small, (generally less than 20 people), and the guesthouse has been designed to accommodate no more than 30 people.

4.3 A number of experiential activities are organized to enrich the guests' experiences through nature and cultural tours like the following:

- Longhouse experience
- Mt Kinabalu climb
- Danum Valley tours
- World heritage site tours
- Tropical island adventure tours
- Wild water rafting
- Bario Highlands tours
- Red Ape trail
- Botanical tour of Borneo
- The Chinese in Borneo experience
- Borneo orchids and nepenthes
- Borneo culinary experience
- Endangered species and vanishing culture,

4.4 In addition to the money earned working as cooks, boat drivers, guides, etc, the local people can earn extra money by selling handicrafts. They are encouraged not to sell their heirlooms but to make high quality crafts that are distinctive of

the region. The most popular item sold is the traditional Iban blanket or 'Pua Kumbu' which is hand woven. Borneo Adventure is looking into increasing the numbers of handicrafts from the village and helping to bring to market more of what they produce.

4.5 Borneo Adventure's other sustainable tourism-led initiatives are:

- **Scholarship Fund**
Set up a scholarship fund in the name of the late Tuai Rumah Along, a community elder where RM10 is given for every guest taken to their area;
- **Study Incentives**
Give out special incentive bonus to kids who do well and earn the top 5 positions in their class;
- **Interest Free Loans**
Assist the community in areas like purchasing outboard motors, boat building, etc;
- **Securing Funding**
Assist the community to source funds from non-governmental bodies to fund a water supply project, health care services and community help projects.

5.0 THE IMPACT

- 5.1. 'Earning money from tourism while at home', this tourism initiative has helped raise the community's socio-economic standard of living by providing an additional source of income. For example, income from direct payment to the longhouse for 2005 exceeded RM162,000 and this does not include other receipts such as handicraft sales which is about RM100,000 annually, unrecorded gratuities and the educational fund given out to the families. For about 24 families, this works out to be on an average of well over RM11,000 per family per year. This figure does not include the farming receipts. The leakage from the revenue is minimal and the multiplier effect is good for the families and the surrounding area.
- 5.2. Tourism has not changed the area's social fabric; the people continue to pursue their traditional livelihood of farming and fishing with tourism providing a cash supplement.
- 5.3. The many 'mini-projects' initiated for the community have raised their living conditions and standards. One of them, for instance, is the 'rebuilding' of their long house. Since the start of the initiatives, the longhouse has grown in size from 24 to 28 doors (i.e 28 family 'apartments' within the longhouse) and is a good indication of economic benefits from tourism. Another example is the



collaboration between Borneo Adventures and CIDA (Canadian International Aid Agency), which has resulted in longhouses having better drainage and a proper sanitation system.

- 5.4. Following Borneo Adventure's pioneering efforts at Batang Ai, a number of other tour companies have started to send tourists to other longhouses at Batang Ai. Tourism is now at a level that has even attracted Hilton International to open a Batang Ai Longhouse Resort.

6.0 LESSONS LEARNED

- 6.1 Carrying capacity is a constraint for many areas as they are often so choked with tourists that the natural resources are endangered and the quality of the tourists' experience is diminished. Thus, there must be new ways to expand the carrying capacity of the area in order to bring in more tourists there. In this case, Borneo Adventure has resolved this by building a second lodge at nearby Tibu longhouse to avoid sending too many visitors to Nanga Sumpa. This has the extended benefit of helping another community receive the socio-economic benefits of tourism.
- 6.2 Owners and stakeholders should not too impatient about reaping immediate returns from ecotourism projects. Unrealistic expectation is a common problem of many in the public and private sectors who want to reap quick rewards. The 'durian tree' analogy is a good lesson for many. When introducing tourism into the local community, tour operators or policy planners should see themselves as bringing the durian plant to the village and the villagers supply the land and the work. The durian tree gestation period will take a certain number of years no matter how much fertilizer is added or how good a gardener is. It is still going to take that number of years to 'grow' the fruit.



6.3 Managing local community relations is delicate. There are a few advices here:

- Keep a open dialogue with the community on all matters including resolving petty thefts of tourists' possessions, unruly behaviors towards tourists, etc.;
- Get the local community to be 'just themselves' instead of 'play acting' when welcoming or when interacting with the tourists to prevent 'hospitality fatigue';
- Engage in close dialogue and reach win-win consensus on how tourism products should be planned and developed. One example is that, although the local community welcomes the idea of receiving guests they have asked the company to build a lodge on a land adjacent to the longhouse so that tourists can spend the night there rather than sleep in the longhouse itself. It is a practical suggestion where the tourists can experience the longhouse life without disrupting the community as they go about their daily lives;
- Be 'transparent' upfront with them especially on sensitive matters like:
 - a) Revenue and how it should be perceived as an additional income rather than replacing their traditional sources of income such as farming and fishing;
 - b) Seasonality and the ups and downs of global tourism industry, which means income fluctuation from season to season;

6.4 'Seeing the forest but not the trees'. When undertaking a project to focus on both internal and external considerations, a balanced perspective is always the best way to ensure success in anything.





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TOURISM ADAPTIVE REUSE OF HERITAGE ASSETS

1.0 GENERAL INFORMATION

Official Name of “Best Practice” Initiative	Tourism Adaptive Reuse Of Heritage Assets
Name of Contributor/ Organization	Bon Ton Restaurant & Resort Langkawi
Address/Contact Details	Pantai Cenang, Langkawi 07000 Tel: +604 955 3643 / 955 6787 Fax: +604 955 4791 Email : info@bontonresort.com.my Website: www.bontonresort.com.my Contact Person: Narelle McMurtrie (Owner)
Year The Initiative Was Started & Completed	Opened in 1994. Relocation of seven traditional Malaysian kampong houses & reconstruction began in 1995 and is still ongoing.
Location of Best Practice Project	Pulau Langkawi, Malaysia

2.0 KEY SUMMARY

- 2.1 Bon Ton is regarded as one of the best collections of traditional northern Malay homes in Malaysia. An innovative restoration of traditional Malay houses into accommodation, which would otherwise be in a state of neglect.
- 2.2 Bon Ton Resort is located 10 minutes from the airport and 5 minutes from the main beach of Pantai Cenang. Through the sympathetic reuse of old and neglected resources, it has become one of the islands most stylish, unique and intimate resorts.
- 2.3 The vision and commitment towards sustainability of tourism on this island and the desire to provide genuine ‘kampung’ or village house accommodation led Narelle McMurtrie, the Australian owner, to scour the countryside and purchase these traditional Malay houses which were antiques, abandoned and neglected. Rather than letting these heritage assets continue to fall into disrepair, which would have rendered them unrecognizable; these precious heritage structures were restored for productive use, appreciated and preserved for future generations to enjoy.

- 2.4 These wooden structures were painstakingly dismantled, transported and reassembled within a 70-year old coconut plantation covering 1.5 hectares. The architectural details, including original louvered shutters and latticed panels were restored. Old style bathrooms with shower water going through the floor boards to the drain underneath were also restored.
- 2.5 These houses were once family residences and are large enough to house visitors in spacious surroundings. The staff's commitment to an intimate, non-intrusive level of service, results in a seamless stay.



3.0 THE OBJECTIVES

- 3.1 Conserve Malaysia's heritage in order to protect and preserve its cultural distinctiveness and the quality of the environment;
- 3.2 Play an active role in contributing towards social and economic goals because cultural heritage is no longer an elite possession of a few but a human right for everyone to appreciate and enjoy;
- 3.3 Provide visitors with the unique opportunity to experience, understand and enjoy the value of heritage assets.

4.0 THE MODEL

- 4.1 It is about putting together an integrated and 'authentic' traditional Malay kampong retreat made up of 7 antique Malay houses and a Chinese provision shop ranging from 50-120 years old and relocating them from their original locations in various parts of Kedah to the island of Langkawi.
- 4.2 With the restoration to their original form, each house was installed with modern amenities and decorated in a unique Asian style. The 7 types of accommodation are individually named:
- **Black Coral**
A 100-year old Malay nobleman's house with intricate carved pieces of timber which enable the natural flow of air throughout the house;



- **Yellow Orchid**
Once a fisherman's house, it has now been transformed into a summery colorful house with a large elongated front verandah previously used for storing and maintaining fishing equipment;
- **Blue Ginger**
Once a simple house with a bedroom and attached kitchen area built some 60-years ago, it has been rejuvenated with a coat of bright blue paint with red trimming;
- **White Frangipani**
An 80-year old Malay house with a distinctive main reception area for men, a raised sleeping platform, and a kitchen with a link house entrance for the women;
- **Silk Villa**
A 120-year old grand and charming house with old plantation style shutters and intricate carvings;
- **Palm and Laguna**
Both houses are majestic looking. They are 120-year old and have extra large bedrooms and bathrooms with beautiful carved panels above the windows;
- **Chin Chin**
This large wooden house, which once belonged to a successful Chinese wholesaler in Langkawi, was constructed in 1957, in the same year Malaysia achieved its independence. It now serves as one of Malaysia's most unique and stylish bars.

4.3 The concept has been further extended to develop a host of complimentary tourism-related products to complete this uniquely Malaysian resort. Some of these are:

- A contemporary Asian-inspired building with a restaurant specializing in some of Malaysia's best Nyonya cuisine and 'west meets spice' food;



- A well-stocked vintage wine cellar;
- An antique motor yacht to cruise round the 104 islands of Langkawi;
- A shop selling books on Malaysia, 'made-in-Malaysia' handicrafts and unique textiles sourced from throughout the region;
- A guided tour for visitors when the houses are unoccupied; this is opened to the restaurant guests. This tour is to raise awareness and promote the local Malay culture and heritage.

5.0 THE IMPACT

5.1. Probably the most effective indicator as to whether Bon Ton has created an impact is through the feedback from the guests and visitors with some of them being published in travel magazines and websites. Some of them are:

- **Jewel of the North**
'The closest you'll get to experience a successful marriage of the charms of Bali with commercialism is at Bon Ton Resort, Langkawi. Bon Ton, however manages an authentically, some say, "heart" that many in Bali have lost. Bon Ton Resort lives in a place of history.'
The Edge Singapore.
- **BonTon - the Best Resort in Asia**
'This was one of the best holidays I have ever had!! The resort is very quiet, peaceful and is in a great position! The houses are fantastically done out seen as they are so old.'
A Trip Advisor Member, United Kingdom.
- **The Jewel in Langkawi**
'Bon Ton is one of those places you hope you'll discover when you plan your own holiday because you want small charactered, boutique, personal experiences that connect you to a country's culture. Bon Ton does this in so many ways.'
A Bon Ton Guest.
- **Rainforest Retreats**
'The Bon Ton Resort on the other side of the island near Pantai Cenang, really is a little gem and likely to be unlike anything you have ever come across before. Accommodation in one of seven antique wooden Malay houses relocated from other parts of Langkawi. The whole place has more the feeling of a club than a hotel.'
Daily Telegraph, UK.



6.0 LESSONS LEARNED

- 6.1. Tourism can be a powerful option to save neglected heritage assets through injecting a new lease of life to them as well as adding economic value to the project. This 'best practice' initiative is a good case study to show that:
- Adopting a sustainable management approach can achieve a win-win outcome for all relevant parties;
 - Saving and restoring heritage assets is also a good business decision as through adaptive reuse, they can be turned into a profitable tourism product.
- 6.2 Consistent feedback from guests reveals that people are looking for a more personal cultural experience when they holiday in a foreign place. Tourists are looking for local style accommodation. They do not want brick hotels that can be found in any country. Tourists also want smaller hotels so that they can interact with the local staff. Langkawi is an ideal island to do this as the local and expatriate community live in harmony together and tourists are openly welcomed;
- 6.3 Learn about sustainable management from indigenous knowledge. The traditional Malay house is influenced by various factors like climate, lifestyle, the owner's economic status, the surroundings, available building materials and various myths and taboos. These houses are well adapted to the hot tropical climate in which they are found and provide an excellent example on the use of appropriate technology.

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WILD ASIA'S RESPONSIBLE TOURISM INITIATIVE

I.0 GENERAL INFORMATION

Official Name of "Best Practice" Initiative	Wild Asia's Responsible Tourism Initiative
Name of Contributor/ Organization	Wild Asia
Address/Contact Details	Upper Penthouse, Wisma RKT, 2 Jalan Raja Abdullah, 50300 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia Tel: +6012 212 0694 Fax: - Email : reza@wildasia.net Website: www.wildasia.net Contact Person: Dr Reza Azmi
Year The Initiative Was Started & Completed	January 2005
Location of Best Practice Project	Initiated in Malaysia and has extended to Sri Lanka, Vietnam, India, Laos, and Australia
Awards Won	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Tourism Malaysia Best Media Publisher for 2004 and 2005

2.0 KEY SUMMARY

- 2.1 Wild Asia (WA) is an independent Malaysian conservation organization that aims to promote the conservation of natural areas in Asia by supporting initiatives that are pro-environment and protects the local cultures and the economies. Widely known through its website www.wildasia.net, it is dedicated to promoting 'Responsible Tourism' across Asia.
- 2.2 Responsible Tourism (RT) refers to tourism operations that are managed in a manner that protects the natural environment, respects local cultures, benefits local communities and offers quality travel experiences for visitors.
- 2.3 The mainstay of WA's tourism activities is to help protect, conserve and preserve Asia's natural environment and local cultures. Escalating tourism volume is putting these at risk. WA works with Asian tourism operators to help them

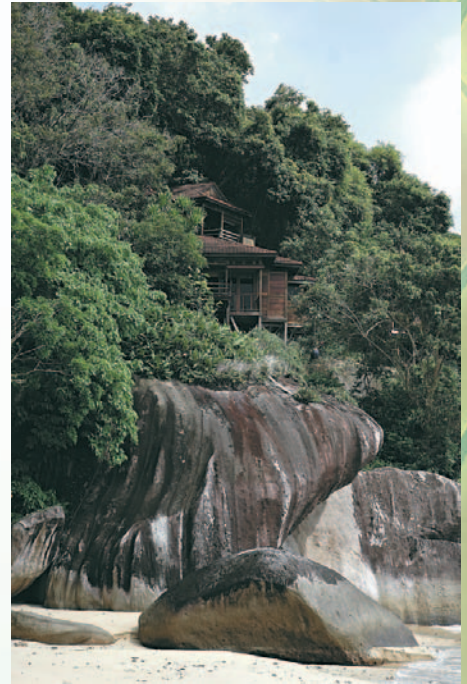


understand the principles of sustainable tourism and to promote best management practices amongst them.

- 2.4 Although many tourism operators are practicing some form of responsible tourism, there is no standard framework or cohesive effort to put RT into action. WA has initiated this by facilitating and coordinating voluntary self-assessments by tourism operators to assess their operations against the RT criteria. This forms the baseline from which further RT efforts are launched.
- 2.5 The RT initiative is a vehicle that draws together all stakeholders – e.g., tourism operators, travelers, government departments, related organizations and local communities – under a common goal, with a clear channel for communication and feedback.
- 2.6 It is driven and managed by the WA team and RT volunteers from a wide variety of backgrounds; including conservation professionals (biodiversity, forestry, community and environmental specialists), media specialists (design, photography, web and other new media), and published writers.

3.0 THE OBJECTIVES

- 3.1 Promote the conservation of natural environments and offer opportunities and benefits for local communities through tourism;
- 3.2 Educate tourism operators and the general public on the importance of RT and that ‘going green’ pays;
- 3.3 Provide a standard RT code of conduct for operators to determine the quality of their operations based on RT criteria, giving them a basis on where they stand and how they can narrow the gap;
- 3.4 Provide consultancy and advisory services for tourism operators on ways in which they can upgrade their operations to RT standards and requirements;
- 3.5 Provide a channel for tourism operators to learn from one another.



4.0 THE MODEL

4.1 The Wild Asia RT initiative covers 3 main areas:

- Environmental responsibility: preserving biodiversity and wildlife;
- Social responsibility: preserving local cultures and developing local communities;
- Economic responsibility: preventing revenue that 'leaks' out of the local area.



4.2 The main thrust of WA is its website www.wildasia.net which is used as its key communication and marketing tool. The website currently attracts about 6,000 visitors a day who are interested in conservation, nature, travel and the tourism industry.

4.3 Through this internet platform, the Wild Asia Travel Network is set up for members (i.e., tourism operators) who have participated in WA's RT Self-Assessment. The incentives for members include:

- a) Access to WA RT resources;
- b) Exclusive marketing opportunities via WA's online Travel Centre.

5.0 THE IMPACT

5.1 RT awareness has grown as evidenced from these success indicators:

- A website that attracts 6,000 visitors a day;
- A membership of 30 operators with more coming on board.

5.2 Increasing RT awareness will yield numerous benefits to tourism operators, customers and communities.

5.2.1 Operators

- Cost savings through more efficient energy use and supply chain management;
- Brand enhancement leading to increased tourist volume and business growth through their exposure in www.wildasia.net;
- Distribution channel for their products and services;
- Rich resources for them to develop or enhance their products and services;
- Marketing feedback in the form of customer surveys and assessments where tourists indicate their expectations of a RT holiday, provides invaluable information on how operators should manage their tourism business.



5.2.2 Customers

- Information on where they can book an RT holiday;
- Involvement in the collective responsibility to protect tourist destinations as well as in RT projects;
- A channel for feedback to operators as responsible tourists through online customer feedback forms.

5.2.3 Community

- Environmental and heritage protection and preservation of their local areas;
- Economic development in increased employment opportunities, increased tourist revenue, entrepreneurial development through the set up of their own cottage industries, handicrafts, tour-guiding operations and other tourism related businesses;
- Human resource development with their involvement in decision-making and tourism development process;
- Social development through better education, health and social infrastructure.



6.0 LESSONS LEARNED

- 6.1 A key success factor for WA is its shrewd use of technology as an excellent communication tool by way of its website.
- 6.2 Credibility building is another key success factor for WA which has resulted in keen participation and interest by stakeholders – operators, community, travelers, corporations, advertising agencies, government organizations, etc.
- 6.3 Voluntary work requires the ‘creative’ use of resources. In WA’s case, funding efforts are through private corporations, commissions from RT holidays, sales of collaterals, membership fees, trade shows, etc.
- 6.4 Continued and renewed efforts are needed to find new innovative ways to sustain and heighten awareness and interest for its own ‘organizational sustainability’ which could otherwise lead to its own demise. In this regard, WA focuses in these:
- Participating in strategic tourism meetings or other meetings to lobby Government and other agencies;
 - Building alliances with other stakeholders – the media, other business operators, education centres, international tourism think-tanks, foreign embassies, etc.