



2023 TOP 100 GOOD PRACTICE STORY

Title: Moonlight Sea Concerts on the East Coast of Taiwan -
Sustainability in Action

Destination, Country: East Coast National Scenic Area, Taiwan

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In the category: Destination Management Environment & Climate Thriving Communities
 Nature & Scenery Culture & Tradition Business & Marketing

The Story in a picture:

The Moonlight Sea Concert - A localized sustainability event.



Summary:

The east coast of Taiwan boasts a diverse natural and cultural environment. However, it faces challenges as the outmigration of younger populations, slow industrial development and tourist short stay. The East Coast National Scenic Area Administration Tourism Bureau (ECNSA, the destination management authority), through the promotion of deep and sustainable tourism, connects local culture, lifestyle, natural environment, arts and humanities. Since 2015, we have been organizing the East Coast Land Art Festival. In 2016, we incorporated elements of music and hold Moonlight Sea Concerts at the Duli Visitor Center from June to September, on the days with the full moons. This event combines the unique moonlit seascape of the East Coast, diverse music and art performances, an art market, and exhibitions.

Instead of an artificial stage background, the Concert is set against a backdrop of moonlight, the sky, and the ocean. Visitors enjoy the concert on the grass and blessed by the moon. Performers present songs and dances belonging to them and this land. Stalls in the art market provide local and seasonal foods, natural materials handmade or eco-friendly products, but do not provide disposable tableware. Visitors are encouraged to bring their own shopping bags, utensils and water bottles. We reduce plastic and single-use items and food waste to support sustainable tourism.

The Moonlight Sea Concert is a sustainability event that breaks from previous forms of transient tourism, urging visitors to experience the natural ambiance, arts, and culture of the region in depth.





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Good Practice Story:

Destination description

Brief background of the destination.

1. The East Coast National Scenic Area spans parts of Hualien and Taitung County, with a surface area of 414.8 square kilometers (land: 258 square kilometers and ocean: 156.8 square kilometers). The coastline is 188 km long, and the area is home to 41,447 people, with indigenous populations accounting for 58.43%. In 2022, the East Coast National Scenic Area welcomed 3,142,628 people.
2. The Moonlight Sea Concert takes place at Chenggong Township, Taitung County of Taiwan, a struggling agriculture and fishing town. It is facing outmigration of younger populations and cultural gap.
3. The concert is held on a mountain in Duli and not close to any highways. In the past, it was merely a place where visitors visited for a quick bathroom break.

Issues faced

Problems/issues solved with the Good Practice Story.

1. Past activities in the area were largely one-day tours or visitors passing through to enter their destination.
2. Concerts and marketplaces lead a lot of garbage.
3. Visitors or vendors unwilling to comply with environmental protection measures.
4. Remote location that is hard to access.

Methods, steps, and tools applied

Solutions implemented to address the sustainability problems or issues.

1. Confirmed the beliefs and sustainability policies behind the concert. We believe that the concert should revolve around respect for nature and making art accessible. For example, we do not indulge in excessive stage decor. We do not provide disposable tableware but encourage visitors to carpool or take out shuttle buses to reduce carbon footprints.
2. We hold around eight to nine Moonlight Sea Concerts annually, depending on the full moons, between June and September. The concerts occur on both weeknights and weekends, contributing to tourism during regular days. Since the concert also takes place at night, it encourages visitors to stay in local hostels, dine in local restaurants, and join other tours in the area, resolving previous challenges with visitors only passing through.
3. Visitors are encouraged to bring their own shopping bags, tableware, straws, water bottles, and other personal items. Stalls in the art market are asked to reduce their plastics use and avoid using disposable tableware but can provide reusable cups or utensils with a deposit or use leaves as packaging materials. We provide cleaning dish sinks, trash and recycling bins so that visitors can clean and reuse their tableware and recycle. This has greatly reduced man-made garbage, solved the garbage problem and enforced responsible tourism.
4. The art market selects stalls on a monthly basis, and the application guidelines clearly state that priority will be given to environmentally friendly businesses. The evaluation criteria also consider booth decorations and encourage the use of seasonal local ingredients, natural materials for handmade products, and environmentally friendly packaging. We establish an on-site evaluation mechanism to reward those who demonstrate exemplary performance, while those who are unable to comply with the criteria may be eliminated from the market. In addition to reminding visitors to bring their own recyclable tableware, we lend tableware for free. This also helps visitors or stalls unwilling to comply with environmental protection measures.

5. Performances and activities align with local cultures and environmental protection. For example, the concerts feature Taiwanese singer-songwriters, indie bands, eco-friendly music, and indigenous cultural performances. We also added theater to promote environmental protection, a Trashion show (fashion show highlighting renewable fashion), wild food kitchens, contests on eco-friendly tableware and picnic designs, and other events, so that they are more willing to implement eco-friendly.
6. We encourage carpooling and offering transportation services help overcome the challenges of remote locations and limited accessibility.
7. We survey visitors, performers, and vendors to learn more about results yielded from our events and to review the enforcement of environmental measures and amount of waste.

Key success factors

Critical elements that led to successfully solving the issues.

1. Ensure that participants understand and identify this as a concert that values the land and its culture, attracting like-minded people to galvanize the power of implementation: We set a theme each year for the Land Art Festival, which revolves around lifestyle or the environment. The theme also extends to the concert and generates different sub-themes for each individual concert. For example, the 2023 Land Art Festival theme was "Sailing Across the Fifth Wave," which means overcoming failure in the Amis proverb.
2. The unique landscapes attract visitors from afar to this remote town to attend the music concert: At the concert, they can sit on the grass and witness the rising moon and golden moonlight casting its glow on the sea. It is as if this land is blessed, and visitors also receive blessings. By using natural scenery as the backdrop for the stage, combining it with a concert featuring music suitable for the theme, people are not only willing to travel for the concert but are also motivated to contribute to the environment.
3. Local support and participation: Past events had weak connections with local communities. Short one-time events failed to provide effective and cumulative publicity or economic impacts for the overall area. In the concerts and markets, over 90% of the on-site vendors are local businesses from the Hualien and Taitung areas. The event planning is also done by local businesses, and a large part of the performers are related to local culture. The surrounding community, including local residents, hostels, and villages, has shown strong support for the concerts and continues to motivate us.

Lessons learned

Challenges faced while implementing the Good Practice and their solutions.

1. In the beginning, stalls were a bit more challenging because they believed that environmental protection was merely a slogan. We had to increase stall support by screening applicants, raising awareness, and asking for visitor support. We also emphasized slow food and slow living, sharing that visitors bringing their own food containers can help reduce costs and waste, is more hygienic, and even makes the food look nicer. This has changed the mentality of stalls traders to avoid problems and do everything as fast as possible.
2. In the first few years, we found that there was not enough stage space, electricity or cleaning facilities. As such, we undertook improvement projects in 2019 and 2021, enhancing the stage flooring, electrical infrastructure, outdoor public restrooms, and installing additional permanent cleaning stations and leveling the lawns. Regular maintenance and upkeep are also necessary to ensure a more visitor-friendly environment.
3. We were also able to overcome understaffing with a volunteer recruitment, training, and service program to engage individuals who have a keen interest in Hualien, Taitung, and the arts. We

also work with local universities and relevant departments to cultivate talent and enhance the quality of our tour guides.

4. Instead of focusing solely on attracting large crowds and creating a lively atmosphere, we decided to design culturally and environmentally relevant programs with each concert's theme tailored to different audience segments, including traditional tribal, family-oriented, folk music, performing arts, and more. The inclusion of the "My Moonlight Sea Stage" selection process allows for diverse representation.
5. Cultivating and enhancing an appreciation for aesthetics, music, and art is a major challenge we faced. In addition to organizing ongoing events and increasing guided tours in collaboration with travel agencies, we introduced the "Open Studio" program in 2017, which opens up private art spaces for public visits and experiences. In 2021, we launched the "Art Connection" program, enabling businesses to propose and organize related activities independently. These initiatives emphasize the use of art, culture, and daily elements to provide diverse experiences.

Achievements and Results

Direct and indirect results of the Good Practice.

The Moonlight Sea Concert has been held since 2016, and this year, 2023, marks its 8th year. Here has been a significant transformation during the years. Below are some quantitative impacts:

1. In 2016, we welcomed over 10,000 visitors across six concerts. By 2020, we had over 45,000 visitors and nine concerts.
2. The number of stall applicants also increased from 30 in 2016 to 133 in 2023. The number of accepted stalls also increased from 25 to 47, which means the acceptance rate decreased from 83% to 35%. This indicates that stalls now have more appreciation for how the event is organized, and the quality of the event has also improved.
3. Compliance with the non-provision of disposable tableware and packaging by stalls has increased from 20% to 95% (mainly due to food hygiene considerations). Taking 2022 as an example, each person has reduced the usage of approximately one disposable cup and 1.5 food packaging boxes, resulting in a total reduction of 23,000 disposable cups and 34,500 disposable packaging boxes.
4. The income of stalls has increased from an average of around NT\$4,000 per booth in 2016 to approximately NT\$10,000 per booth in 2022. Based on estimates from visitor surveys, it is estimated that visitors spent approximately NT\$6.38 million at the market in 2022.
5. User Fees. In the beginning, stalls were exempt from paying registration fees and deposits. Later on, we continued to waive the registration fee but started requiring deposits. By 2022, we started charging a registration fee of NT\$500 or NT\$1,000 (based on stall type) and required a deposit of NT\$3,000. As for music concerts, we introduced one ticketed concert in 2021 and increased the number of ticketed concerts to two in 2023.
6. As for corporate social responsibility (CSR), in 2022, six companies supported the ideologies behind our concerts and sponsored NT\$2.5 million in total. In 2023, there was increased participation from companies, and their involvement in the event was listed as part of their CSR initiatives. A total of six companies sponsored the event with a combined contribution of NT\$3.25 million.

7. Qualitative impacts:

- (1) The success of this event model has inspired other event organizers to adopt a similar approach in their planning and execution.
- (2) We established a collaborative framework among government agencies, professionals (in arts and music), local groups, and businesses; created a bottom-up approach for regional environmental management; and fostered economic growth in the area.
- (3) We collaborated with local and international performing artists with the Moonlight Sea Concerts, creating a local art platform and strengthening aesthetics.

(4) Support and empathy for the coexistence between human activities and our natural environments have fostered a greater willingness among visitors to travel sustainably, with a focus on in-depth and slow explorations into the area. The Moonlight Sea Concerts also encourages visitors to extend their stay and learn more about local cultures, thereby promoting sustainable tourism.

Tips for other destinations

Your suggestions or recommendations for other destinations facing the same issues or implementing similar solutions

1. Consistent effort is crucial to sustainability. Visitor numbers should not be the only measure of tourism development. The only path to success is considering how you can benefit the local communities, uphold commitments to quality, and stay true to your ideologies.
2. Active participation and involvement of local people and industries are essential. This event provides a platform for local businesses, small farmers, and artisans to participate collectively and showcase their products through the market.

Recognitions and Additional references

Recognitions and awards the Good Practice received and supporting evidence.

1. Introductory video of the Moonlight Sea Concerts. <https://youtu.be/fRXyJ1YfyBU>
2. Land Art Festival & Moonlight Sea Concert website, Chinese: <https://www.teclandart.tw/zh/2023msc/> ,English: <https://www.teclandart.tw/en/2023msc-2/> , The Chinese website contains information from previous years.
3. Introduction of art market in June 2023: <https://www.teclandart.tw/zh/10788-2/>
4. Moonlight Sea Concerts Planning.
5. The stalls recruitment and evaluation.
6. Photographs and related achievements from the Moonlight Sea Concerts.