



2023 TOP 100 GOOD PRACTICE STORY

Title: A Transformation of Abandoned Military Camp in Bitou Cape

Destination, Country: North East and Yilan 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:



Summary:

Bitou Cape, nestled in the north-eastern corner of Taiwan, is a headland. It houses a pathway often referred to as the "Mini Great Wall." The cape is known for its distinctive geological landscape, rich biodiversity, and seafood, magnetizing tourists from all over. Alongside the trail up the mountain lies a military camp that was abandoned in 2000. Recognizing the opportunity to leverage this idle space for tourism purposes, the Northeast and Yilan Coast National Scenic Area Administration (shortened as NEYC) initiated a renovation project for this abandoned Bitou Cape military camp.



Good Practice Story:

Destination description

Brief background of the destination.

Situated in the north-eastern corner of Taiwan, Bitou Cape is a coastal promontory known for its unique shape, which resembles a human nose when viewed from the sea—hence the name "Bitou" (Bitou 鼻頭 in Chinese means the tip of your nose). It boasts a striking wave-erosion landscape and a variety of forest habitats.

A radar station was established on the mountain top, once occupied by the R.O.C military and was abandoned and left idle since 2000. The deserted camp is located on the mountainside of Bitou Cape, adjacent to the Bitou Cape Trail. This trail, winding along the hill ridge and valley, has earned the nickname of the "Mini Great Wall."

Every year, approximately 200,000 tourists trek this path. However, the trail lacks any service-oriented shops along the way, requiring visitors to carry all their supplies for the hike. In addition, the structural integrity of the old camp buildings has raised safety concerns due to years of neglect and decay, potentially posing a risk to the visitors.

Issues faced

Problems/issues solved with the Good Practice Story.

The Northeast and Yilan Coast National Scenic Area Administration (NEYC) has initiated a renovation project for the abandoned Bitou Cape military camp to provide necessary amenities for visitors. However, they face the following challenges:

- 1. Environmental Impact Issue:** Removing and reconstructing this camp could significantly disrupt and impact the Bitou Cape landscape.
- 2. Incentives for Private Operations:** After the NEYC renovates the Bitou Cape camp, it will be leased out to private operators. The NEYC's lease cost needs to consider the cost of the camp's renovation. If the camp is reconstructed at a high cost, the rental fee will rise, which may affect operators' willingness to run businesses there.
- 3. Changes in Tourism Market Conditions:** From 2018 to 2020, the Bitou Cape Trail received an average of 200,000 visitors per year. However, with the outbreak of the pandemic in 2020, the number of visitors dropped by 50,000 between 2020 and 2022.

Methods, steps, and tools applied

Solutions implemented to address the sustainability problems or issues.

1. Responses to Environmental impact: The NEYC uses the existing building structures to strengthen, repair, and renovate them, creating buildings with military characteristics. The use of aerial ropeways for transporting materials avoids the need for access roads, reducing environmental damage. Besides, implement permeable pavement methods for pathways between the platform and buildings to allow water to infiltrate directly into the road's camp soil on rainy days.

2. Strategies to increase incentives for private operations: Renovating existing buildings and facilities helps reduce construction costs, consequently lowering rental prices to increase the feasibility of commercial leasing. By 2020, the base camp became a service hub for visitors with a staff of four, three of whom are locals, making up 75% locally and significantly reducing the cost of hiring. As all supplies for operating the camp are transported by manpower, efforts are made to reduce the use of disposable items, not only to avoid overburdening staff but also to considerably decrease purchasing costs.

3. Response to changes in tourism market conditions:

i. Boosting media visibility through community engagement and respecting local ecology: The NEYC invited nearby community residents and local primary schools to attend the opening ceremony of the renovated camp. An art contest is co-hosted with Bitou Elementary School, leading local students to learn about the history and transformation of the abandoned camp. In addition, a trail clean-up event is co-organized with Bitou Elementary School and the local community. A native lily restoration event is also held to enhance public knowledge and concern for local natural resources.

ii. Rental reduction to prevent layoffs: Restricted visitor activities were imposed during the pandemic period; hence, the NEYC waived rental fees for operators in 2021 and 2022 to reduce operational costs. In 2020, the NEYC reduced the rent for seven months and for three months in 2021. The condition for reducing the rent was that operators could not lay off staff, successfully helping them weather the pandemic and avoid labour shortages after the pandemic.

iii. Service Quality Improvement Plan: In 2022, when the operators could not operate due to the pandemic, the NEYC trained them to develop distinctive new products and redesign their brand image. Corresponding to the colourful stairs in the camp, rainbow-themed drinks were introduced. They also held a public contest for poetry and prose composition based on the sea-viewing image of Bitou Cape camp to be used on product packaging. Furthermore, they conducted plant arrangements to create a corridor at the visitor's resting area in Bitou Cape. The operators were trained to obtain plant trimming certifications during the non-operating period, allowing them to reboot after the pandemic. Certification details are attached.

Key success factors

Critical elements that led to successfully solving the issues.

1. Retaining local elements: The land on which Bitou camp sits was originally owned by the Ministry of National Defense, R.O.C, and the Maritime and Port Bureau, MOTC. The NEYC began coordination in 2011 and took over management in 2019. Following consensus with the local community to "preserve the existing military style," existing structures were fully utilized for modifications, with no additional development or expansion carried out. The exterior of the buildings and facilities incorporates the historical military and natural environmental features of the original structures.

2. Creating innovative, distinctive tourist attractions: In addition to using appropriate colour schemes to enhance the hardware features of the site, the NEYC assisted the operators in reshaping their brand, providing catering training and plant trimming expertise. Additionally, the idea of a rainbow's diverse imagery was used to develop rainbow-themed drinks, creating a romantic ambiance.

3. Rental reduction to prevent layoffs: Employees are a company's most precious asset, especially for Bitou camp. The camp relies on manual labour for transporting materials, with a walking time of 30 minutes, making recruitment particularly challenging. The rent reduction measures implemented in 2020 and 2021 by NEYC retained four employees.

Lessons learned

Challenges faced while implementing the Good Practice and their solutions.

1. Connection with the local living circle of the fishing port: Bitou camp is connected to the Bitou fishing port life and local elementary schools through Bitou Trail. This recreational space is operated with a cafe design combining military features with modernity. Surrounding the Bitou fishing port are tourism-related businesses, including seafood restaurants, local seafood sales, as well as cafes and restaurants with exotic styles, and water recreational activity providers.

How to form a recreational pattern in which the local community continues to invest, participate, and identify requires local consensus. There is a lack of depth in the form of cultural tourism combining tourism with fishing village culture, and the necessity and feasibility of its development still need discussion.

2. The challenges of sustainable development: An increase in tourists may exacerbate issues such as inadequate parking space, as well as increasing waste and pollution. The NEYC encourages the public to apply for clean-up activities on the Bitou Trail and encourages visitors to take their trash down the trail. In an effort to minimize the impact of tourism.

Regarding the issue of parking space, the NEYC strengthens the advocacy and improves some public transportation networks. It uses the concept of a tourism belt to improve the service functions of the surrounding spots to disperse tourist traffic.

Achievements and Results

Direct and indirect results of the Good Practice.

1. The renovation of Bitou Camp won the Excellent Heritage Preservation and Reuse Award in Environment and Culture category in the FIABCI-Taiwan Real Estate Excellence Award 2021.

2. The annual tourism output value of the Bitou area is calculated based on the annual visitor count (Bitou Trail and Bitou Service Area) statistical data and average daily consumption per visitor. In 2019 and 2020, there were 194,000 and 192,732 visitors (tourism output value about TWD 281 million and TWD 309 million). In 2021, there were 146,414 visitors (due to restrictions imposed by the level 3 alert for COVID-19, tourism output value was not calculated), and in 2022, there were 139,557 visitors (tourism output value about TWD 181 million).

3. From May to December 2020, Bitou camp generated revenue of TWD 1.8 million, followed by TWD 1.4 million in 2021 (closed from May to July due to COVID-19), approximately TWD 1.8 million in 2022, and TWD 650,000 up until April in 2023. Currently, there are 39 businesses operating in the area surrounding Bitou fishing port (including Bitou camp). These businesses include restaurants,

seafood sales, recreational services (diving, snorkeling, sea fishing, yachting, rock climbing), and a group providing smart ocean cleaning services—the Azure Alliance has also moved in.

Tips for other destinations

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

- 1.** One strategy for achieving a balance between satisfying tourist needs and reducing landscape impact in environmentally sensitive areas is to transform existing abandoned buildings into recreational service facilities.
- 2.** Introducing innovative elements into emerging sites requires consideration not only of local history and landscape features in design but also of increasing identification through participation and interaction with the local community. This approach aims to facilitate subsequent sustainable operation.
- 3.** In response to changes in tourism market conditions caused by the COVID-19 epidemic, destination management units can reduce business costs for operators. Simultaneously, they can enhance the quality of service in the software aspect to respond to post-epidemic tourist recreation needs. This approach aims to help revitalize the subsequent tourism industry.

Recognitions and Additional references

Recognitions and awards the Good Practice received and supporting evidence.

Results of planting maintenance course and innovative product development project for contractors conducted by NEYC.

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1JQiOGA-V9-67Ei8LdfH08VnIQleGFZg?usp=drive_link

The Map of the private tourism sectors/enterprises in the Bitou area by B1 house café.

https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=pfbid02tzgKpifKEA6n1gLE25zhTWxJ54ESP4xjEQedxqPqZUCyN52G9VVnJAH pgHZTF1o5I&id=100063486716872&sfnsn=mo&mibextid=RUBZ1f