



**Good Practice Story Title:**

*From the unexpected to the surprising: 'Flowers' energizes community life.*

**Destination:** *Taichung City*

**Country:** *Taiwan*

**Submitting Organization:** *Taichung City Government Tourism and Travel Bureau*

**Category:**

- Destination Management
- Nature & Scenery
- Environment & Climate
- Culture & Tradition
- X Thriving Communities
- Business & Marketing

**Destination description:**

Taichung is the second-largest city in Taiwan, with the second-largest population. Located in the centre of Taiwan, Taichung enjoys an excellent location, climate, and pace of life. Coupled with a thriving industry, the public has long recognised us as the most livable city in Taiwan.

From tranquil wetlands at sea level to soaring mountains 3886 metres above sea level, from historic downtowns to modern metropolitan areas, breathtaking natural landscapes, rich cultural heritage, and convenient low-carbon transport networks, Taichung is rich in diverse tourist landscapes. We're so excited to welcome more sustainable travellers are welcome to enjoy a fantastic holiday in Taichung!



### **Summary of Good Practice Story:**

In the mountainous rural district of Xinshe in central Taiwan's Taichung City, residents have mainly relied on agriculture (fruits, mushrooms) for their livelihoods. In 2005, an agency responsible for conducting local seedling research sought to improve the soil using green manure. The result was unexpected, a 32-hectare "sea of flowers," which attracted crowds of tourists, bringing a series of problems including traffic jams, chaotic arrangement of vendor stalls, and environmental pollution, which began to affect the quality of life of residents and reduced their support for these activities. In response, the destination manager spent 10 years gradually resolving many of these issues. Last year, it initiated a collaborative project with elderly residents, as part of its efforts to implement new experiences for residents, businesses, and tourists. All these surprises have come about due to flower power.

### **Issues faced:**

Xinshe District was once a mainly agricultural area, with residents making a living by growing fruits and mushrooms. In 2005, due to the implementation of a soil improvement program by a stakeholder (Taiwan Seed Improvement and Propagation Station under the Ministry of Agriculture), 32 hectares of farmland were unexpectedly turned into a colorful sea of flowers. This attracted large numbers of tourists who came to view the flowers. In flower season, this district became a popular outdoor tourism and recreational destination. However, the development of this grand and beautiful landscape was not without its problems, including traffic jams, chaotic arrangement of vendor stalls, and environmental pollution. In addition, the quality of life of residents was impacted, which reduced their support of these activities.

Starting in 2011, we initiated a series of improvement measures and collaborated with the Taiwan Seed Improvement and Propagation Station to develop an event brand, Sea of Flowers in Xinshe and Taichung International Flower Carpet Festival, and publicized it. Taichung's Xinshe District has become a popular tourist destination nationally, with significant increases in income from tourism.

However, this has also forced us to be more proactive in improving many issues, such as transportation connections, overall event planning (venue configuration, venue maintenance, and disposal of large quantities of flowers at the end of the show), and the recognition of the Flower Carpet Festival by residents and businesses. In other words, we



have been working on how to allow participants to be healed by the flower creations during the Flower Carpet Festival every year.

**Solution:**

At the beginning of the festival, we thought more about connecting more units and enterprises to make the overall scale of the event more significant. Gradually, we realized that the whole area seemed overloaded, not only during the event or the restoration of the environment after the end of the event, but also because all the work required more manpower, material resources, and time to recover, which was different from what we had initially thought at the early stage of the event's planning.

Over the past nearly 10 years, we have carried out discussions and cooperation with various agencies, with the purpose of increasing stakeholder participation. Through various collaborative methods we have sought to increase support for these activities, by seeking benefits for local residents and businesses. We have focused on improvements in three areas: 1. Transportation routes; 2. Local economy; 3. Environmental clean-up. To resolve traffic congestion on roads to the event area, we have implemented a shuttle bus service. In addition, we have designated a vendor area and the products that can be sold, as well as centralized waste management with regular waste removal to continue to reduce the negative impacts of large number of tourists during events and maintain the quality of life and the environment for residents.

**Methods, Steps, and Tools Applied:**

1. Free shuttle bus service: To alleviate traffic congestion along roads within and into this area caused by the influx of tourists during the event period, we implemented free weekend shuttle bus service. From the initial single route, this service expanded to three routes. Awareness of this service and its routes is raised through a variety of promotional methods to increase usage.
2. MRT extension and connections: In addition to increasing shuttle bus routes, we connected shuttle bus service with the city's MRT (Metro) line in 2023. This has effectively expanded the scope of the shuttle bus service network and increased usage. Moreover, the number of shuttle bus routes further expanded to five, increasing user convenience.



3. Vendor management system: During events, vendors are allowed to set up stalls in a designated area. In addition to reducing the impact on tourist flow, this enables tourists to easily and safely walk around the event site. Trash cans are appropriately placed and checked and emptied regularly to maintain environmental cleanliness.
4. Local employment opportunities: The Taichung International Flower Carpet Festival is a large-scale event requiring at least six months of preparation. Every year, the planning agency provides short-term or part-time employment opportunities to local residents and farmers. Everyone works together to cultivate flowering plants and decorate the event site. In the process, more opportunities for cooperation and support are created.
5. Co-creation with elderly residents: We invited elderly residents (100 people), with an average age of around 80, to participate in co-creation projects. Under the guidance of horticultural therapists, these elderly residents created elegant potted plant arrangements, which were displayed during the event. Once the event ended, they took their works home to beautify their immediate surroundings.
6. In terms of flower procurement, apart from selecting healthy seedlings of disease-resistant varieties, we also require the industry not to use chemical pesticides in cultivation. On the land where the event is held, we adopt crop rotation and fallow cultivation measures every year and remove weeds by manual weeding or mulching without using herbicides to minimize the negative impacts of holding the event every year on the land's carrying capacity.
7. Our ongoing research also focuses on how to allow flowers to be watered without consuming too much water during such a long exhibition period. The current method is to use a plant water retainer, a highly absorbent polymer, and let it mix with the soil to play the role of temporary water storage. It can absorb 200 times more water and release it to the plants when needed. It absorbs 200 times more water and releases it to the plant when needed. The water retention agent dissolves directly, is non-toxic, and does not burden the environment.

#### **Achievements and Results:**

1. Based on the results of a visitor questionnaire-based survey, 42% of visitors used the shuttle bus service and 36% drove their own vehicle in 2023. In 2022, 36% of visitors used the shuttle bus service and 41% drove their own vehicle. There was an increase of 6% in the proportion of visitors using the shuttle bus service and a 5% decrease in the proportion of visitors driving their own vehicles.





2. Designated vendor area: It is important to increase on-site buying momentum without creating competition for existing businesses. With year-on-year improvements and theme creation, the number of stalls has increased, reaching a total of 124 in 2023. To protect local businesses, it is mostly residents of Xinshe District and mountainous areas who are invited to set up stalls by the managing agency. According to 2023 statistics, total sales in the designated vendor area reached NT\$48 million.
3. At least 150,000 flowering plants are planted at the event site every year, with much manpower needed in the early and late stages of event planning. Last year, 792 farmers provided assistance and around 690 short-term employment opportunities were created. On average, 700 short-term employment opportunities are created each year.
4. During the preparatory period for this large-scale event, horticultural therapy services were provided to 100 local elderly residents, who had an average age of around 80. They each created unique potted plant arrangements based on three goals: long-term green care, art co-creation, and community beautification. To increase support for this event among residents, we will conduct follow-up questionnaire-based surveys to fully understand their opinions and the results will serve as the basis for future improvements. For new stakeholders, by publicizing sustainability issues and setting carbon emission reduction goals, local organizations will be able to autonomously implement sustainable practices.
5. Last year, we began to strengthen the concept of sustainability; the number of potted flowers set up in the past has been greatly reduced; we let all the flowers in situ for the use of green fertilizer, so last year, after the end of the event, there is no potted flowers for adoption; large-scale artwork is at the end of the event, as well as for the adoption of the unit to carry out works of art, the last year, the adoption of units are power plants, schools and associations.

### **Lessons Learned and Advice:**

In the past, we only surveyed the opinions of tourists via questionnaires. The opinions of local business owners/residents were obtained during local briefing sessions and post-event reviews. For more than 10 years, we have developed collaborative projects with different stakeholders to increase participation and support. Last year, we focused on the physical and mental health of the elderly, with good response. Although only 100 works produced by elderly residents were on display this time, a small proportion of the total





150,000 flowering plants, in the future we plan to expand this project as part of the effort to increase benefits to stakeholders.

There are often differing opinions regarding the benefits of organizing large-scale events. In addition to focusing on local economic development, we have obtained a deeper understanding of the impact of traffic, which has led us to continue improving transportation and shuttle bus services. We expect to start with smaller units, such as boroughs, to conduct further surveys and propose solutions that combine technological tools to effectively reduce the perception of inconvenient mobility during event periods and enable residents to share in the economic benefits of this event.

We attach significant importance to the lifespan of flowers; in the selection of flower species, we give priority to selecting species that are suitable for the local climate, season and soil so that these flowers can be used as soil green fertilizer directly in situ after the end of the exhibition period. Those that have been assembled into pots of flowers will be opened to other organizations for adoption, as they have a higher survival rate so that flowers can continue to grow after the end of the event, and use the Xinshe's local production of the We also used locally produced orchids from Xinshe as part of the installation art materials.

In addition to stepping up our efforts to educate vendors to reduce the provision of disposable items, we also reminded visitors to bring their water bottles and tableware, and we also made environmental bags as a promotional tool so that visitors could use them directly instead of plastic bags for garbage disposal; we set up waste separation canisters at the event and made use of distinctive words and patterns to make it easier for users to separate garbage, and to reduce the waste recycling rate caused by misjudgment of waste separation. However, there is no accurate data record of the trash generated from past activities. This year, we will formulate specific measures to reduce garbage and monitor the amount of waste for reference in setting the sustainability objective.

In the future, we will explain the importance of reducing disposable items to participants at the event site through various means and discuss some incentives to provide small rewards or discounts for those who have already engaged in sustainable behaviours so as to encourage everyone to actively practice green behaviours.





## Recognitions and Additional References

1. 2023 Taichung International Flower Carpet Festival (in Chinese)

<https://travel.taichung.gov.tw/zh-tw/event/activitydetail/8235>

2. "Like a Fairyland!" In its first two weeks the 2023 Taichung International Carpet Festival attracts more than two million visitors (in Chinese)

<https://travel.taichung.gov.tw/zh-tw/event/newsdetail/8564>



