

Tourism Routes and Learning Activities in the King's Projects of Thailand

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Abstract

The King's royal initiated projects of Thailand are one of the most important strategies for developing the country. The projects have launched in all areas throughout Thailand. Benefits from the projects not only helped people live sufficiently but also led them how to learn and apply the knowledge to their lives. The majority of the projects have become learning centers for communities and turned to be tourism areas for visitors. The objectives of this preliminary research aimed to study tourism routes and learning activities of the King's projects in Phetchaburi province which located in the middle part of Thailand. The King's projects, such as Leam Phak Bia Royal-Initiated Project, Chung Hua Man Royal Project, Huay Sai Study and Development Center, and another two projects were studied.

Keywords: tourism route, learning activity, the King's royal initiated projects, Thailand

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Introduction

The royal initiated projects have been developed for over 50 years (started in 1952) by the late King Bhumibol Adulyadej (King Rama 9) with the objectives to develop the upcountry people's quality of life, and to develop and conserve the environment – both soil and water. At present, there are more than 4,000 royal-initiated projects throughout Thailand. After the death of King Bhumibol Adulyadej, Thai people have been keenly interested in these projects; they have visited them and learn what the late King had done for His country. Thus, many royal-initiated projects have been changed to be the resources of studies as well as tourist attractions of both Thai and foreign visitors.

In this study, concepts and principles of sustainable tourism, sufficiency economic, and royal- initiated projects, as well as creative learning were reviewed and applied. The authors defined tourism following the late King Bhumibol Adulyadej's initiated projects as a unique feature of the new tourism activities associated with the royal-initiated projects in Phetchaburi province; with the objectives of providing visitors with direct experience in the tourism activities, learning and understanding, impressing and seeing the values that lead to application to the benefits of living, contribute to the creation of products and the economic value of the community, as well as create consciousness of those involved in the conservation of sustainable tourism. Moreover, the authors defined creative learning as learning based on creativity and leading to innovation, which can be applied to the benefits of living. Also, the tourism following the late King Bhumibol Adulyadej's routes was defined as the routes to the tourist attractions in the royal- initiated projects in Phetchaburi province.

For the area of study, Phetchaburi is a province located in the central part of Thailand, bordering Pak Tho district in Ratchaburi province, and Amphawa district in Samut Songkhram province; Prachuab Khiri Khan province to the south; the Gulf of Thailand to the east, and; the Socialist Republic of the Union of Myanmar to the west. Most of the population is agriculturists (66.20 per cent) (www.petchaburi.go.th, 2012; Phetchaburi Agriculture and Technology College, 2012: 1-2; Phetchaburi Province, 2012: 3-4). Phetchaburi is in a group of provinces located in the lower part of central Thailand; it is considered very important according to the country geography since most of the terrain is lowland plain, it can facilitate traveling and link transportation by water and land. It also has variety of abundant resources and is considered an important economic center (National Research Council of Thailand, 2012: 3-4). Phetchaburi is a well-known province for its various tourist attractions with history, nature, sea and beautiful beaches. Additionally, it has 22 royal-initiated projects; many of them are well-known among tourists who visited to learn about them and buy their products, such as the royal-initiated project of Huay Sai Study and Development Center, Laem Phak Bia Research and Development Center, and Chang Hua Man, etc. (Phetchaburi Province, 2012: 32-37.)

Research Methodology

The research methodology used in this research is research and development (R&D) with multi-staged of data collection for both qualitative and quantitative data, namely:

1. **Research₁**: Field study to survey routes and models of available creative learning activities according to the late King Bhumibol Adulyadej's trail in Phetchaburi province.

2. **Development₁**: Create and develop models for tourism creative learning activities, based on the late King Bhumibol Adulyadej's trails.

3. **Research₂**: Implementation of the developed models for creative learning.

4. **Development₂**: Evaluation and improvement the implemented models of creative learning based on the late King Bhumibol Adulyadej's trails.

This article presented the findings from stage 1 in which the data were collected from the field survey of 5 royal-initiated projects, namely Laem Phak Bia, Chang Hua Man, Nong Jik, Punthurat and Huay Sai projects. The authors collected the data during January to June 2017 through in-depth interviews with 10 operating officials of the projects and 20 Thai tourists. The data were analyzed by content analysis and presented the findings in the essays with illustrations.

Findings

The findings of the preliminary study revealed that:

1. The tourism routes of the five projects were started from Tha-Yang to Cha-Am districts in Phetchaburi province, and it could be managed as one and a half day trip. The findings also revealed the potential of tourism in terms of tourism resources, available facilities, management, and cooperation of the people and organizations.

2. The creative learning activities of the areas included wastewater treatment, water conservation, mangrove conservation, growing plants in dry areas, feeding dairy cattle. The projects also produced daily organic products, and they offered the creative learning centers to farmers and visitors. Tourists could learn and experience the Thai way of life with the local people, in particular, farmers in the communities. With the large area of each project, visitors could also enjoy walking or cycling along the routes around the area.

The findings of this study confirmed both of the development from the late King Bhumibol Adulyadej's projects, and His dedication to the people.



Picture 1 Laem Phak Bia Royal-Initiated Project

There is a lecture building to educate visitors, a bus provided to take them to visit different sightseeing spots, and mangrove trails for their study.



Picture 2 Wastewater treatment within Laem Phak Bia Royal-Initiated Project

A part of the procedure to treat wastewater sent from downtown Phetchburi was shown. The treatment is through natural procedure; bring the wastewater into the treatment pond and waiting for settling until the water quality is improved.



Picture 3 Learning activities at the Huay Sai Study and Development Center

Within this royal-initiated project, the learning activities of planting vegetables, plants, fruits, and process of waste products such as charcoal for daily use, are demonstrated.

Conclusion

The findings reveal both of the development from the Royal Development Projects, and the dedication of the late King to his people. Currently, Thai people visit the Royal Development Projects not only to learn but also to follow the footsteps of our beloved King.

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