

Heritage matters

HOI AN OR THE ANCIENT AMARAVATHI IN VIETNAM



Bach Dang Street on the Thu Bon River in Hoi An World Heritage area is popular for local Heritage Cuisine. Almost all the houses are covered with pantiles. Natu or Vara penkulu. Hoi An has conserved over a thousand such houses.



Youth employment is a priority in Vietnam. Traditional crafts are promoted with poor so that they can benefit from tourism. Hoi An lamps are one of the most popular heritage souvenirs from Vietnam.



Heritage and tourism sites have created employment for differently abled people across Vietnam.

Vietnam is one of the few developing countries with impressive achievements in poverty reduction. Diversification of the resource base for local communities, responsive infrastructure development and expanding choices for the poor have been critical in the doi moi reform process (an economic reform and poverty eradication program).

Further choices in public and private sector partnerships provided for sustainable poverty reduction and human development. In this context, heritage sites have become demonstration projects where local community engagement has informed sustainable development. Hoi An Ancient Town in Central Vietnam is an impressive example. The surrounding district was once known as Amaravathi, heartland of the Cham civilisation, adjacent to the capital Simhapura.

Hoi An has more than eleven hundred architectural remains representing ten architectural forms. These are residential houses, places of worship for family ancestors, village communal houses, pagodas, temples, tombs, bridges, water wells, markets and assembly halls. The foundations of Hoi An built environment go back to the late sixteenth century.

However, the present architectural remains are mainly from the nineteenth century. There is evidence of the economic and cultural exchanges between Hoi An and China, Japan, India and several European countries. The residents of Hoi An, generation after generation have been living and working in the same houses. In the Ancient Town, a large number of heritage objects are kept; traditional crafts are

maintained; and heritage dishes, habits, customs, and festivities are fostered. Hoi An is a World Heritage site as the most intact port town of the 19th century in Asia.

To promote responsible conservation and tourism development of Hoi An, the municipal government divided the town area into two zones. Zone I or Intact Protection Zone covers the heritage in the Ancient Town and the associated areas, which must be protected with authenticity and integrity. Zone II or Ecological Environment and Landscape Protection Zone is the area surrounding Zone I, where structures can be built that contribute to the promotion of the heritage values provided that these structures do not affect the architecture, natural scenery and ecological environment of the Ancient Town. Zone II is further divided into Zone II-A and Zone II-B, each with its own set of detailed regulations pertaining to physical interventions of constructions and new developments.

Four key challenges were identified by the local authorities: conserving the authenticity and integrity of the Ancient Town; meeting the needs of the present residents who live in the heritage buildings; promoting and safeguarding the heritage values in tourism development; and improving the income and the standard of living of the people without compromising the heritage values.

The Home Owners Association, Women's Union and Youth Union provide the civil society participation in drafting action plans. A system of tax concessions among commercial street businesses was introduced to deal with disparities in wealth generation from the rapid growth of tourism. A total preparedness and response mechanism was introduced to address environmental degradation and disaster preparedness. Strategic stakeholder partnership of the local people became central to locating heritage in sustainable development.

The municipal government issued regulations on business, advertisement, and environmental hygiene. Project investment has been managed in three categories.



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Architectural structures: Classifying the historic buildings into different categories according to proprietary forms, historical and cultural values, conservation levels; using the classification as a basis to apply effective conservation and restoration methods.

Infrastructure development: Restoring and upgrading the systems of water supply and drainage, electricity, transportation; preventing environmental pollution and preserving natural landscapes.

Capacity building:

Training for heritage management staff and artisans from craft villages; conducting archaeological surveys for restoring and preserving heritage assets. Developments are regularly monitored; inspections are carried out; and stakeholder community participation is ensured.

Sustainable heritage development is driving relationship building with local communities. It has four elements: promoting a shared understanding of heritage conservation and sustainable development through projects; bringing together local communities and villages to take ownership of heritage conservation; diversifying visitor experiences through interpretive activities; and integrating conservation in economic development and responsible tourism. What has become critical is building the sense of ownership among local community groups through projects that demonstrate direct community benefits.

Valuable lessons could be learnt as we transform heritage management in Andhra Pradesh from the project driven approach to conservation and interpretation in Hoi An. To effectively manage, conserve, and promote a heritage site, it's essential to have comprehensive and long-term strategies based on conservation principles and community interests and benefits through strategic stakeholder cooperation, including governments, scientists and researchers; and the heritage house owners, business operators, and other local people.

The following statistics speak for themselves. Source is Hoi An Trade and Tourism Department. Total population of Hoi An district is only 82,000. It is obvious that benefits are shared across the country and its larger population.



Vietnam War Museum employs people affected by the American War. It also features an in-house band that plays both jazz and rock music. They travelled across the US to raise awareness about the legacies of war and promoting a culture of peace.



All the museum directors in Ho Chi Minh City or Saigon are women who passionately safeguard and present their history and heritage with pride and dignity.



Hoi An silk was endangered. Vietnamese Government invested through a public-private partnership to revitalise the heritage silk of central Vietnam.

Growth in visitation at Hoi An				
Category of visitors	2005	2010	2015	2020
Domestic	350 275	615 496	1 138 915	2 128 232
International	342 859	736 648	1 377 377	2 469 134
Total visitors	693 134	1 352 144	2 516 292	4 597 366

Overnight stays or bed nights in Hoi An				
Category of visitors	2005	2010	2015	2020
Domestic	57 820	128 800	271 700	545 000
International	289 082	568 800	1 071 300	1 929 000
Total lodgers	346 902	697 600	1 343 000	2 474 000

Accommodation unit/room forecast in Hoi An				
Accommodation	2005	2010	2015	2020
Standard rooms	2 703	4 744	10 336	19 832
Non-standard rooms	30	32	35	35
Total	2 733	4 776	10 671	19 867

Income forecast from Hoi An tourism (US\$ mn)			
Category of turnover	2010	2015	2020
Domestic visitors	25.99	85.51	190.75
International visitors	134.41	1071.3	2314.8
Total turnover	160.40	1156.81	2505.55

Labour forecast for Hoi An tourism (unit: person)			
Category of labour	2010	2015	2020
Direct labour in tourism	5 056	11 459	26 772
Indirect labour in services	11 122	25 210	53 544
Total	16 178	36 669	80 316

GDP norm and investment capital forecast for Hoi An tourism (US\$ mn)			
GDP	2010	2015	2020
Total GDP increasing values of Hoi An tourism	195.5	596.7	895.1
Total GDP of Hoi An tourism and trade	104.26	358.793.5	613.143
GDP rate of tourism and trade compared with Hoi An town's GDP	53.33	60.13	68.5
Total capital investment demands for tourism	312.8	1076.4	1962.048

In 2008, Hoi An was chosen as one of the 110 historic destinations in the world by National Geographic magazine. Hoi An is part of the cultural route along with My Son and its Saivite temples, and Hue World Heritage sites. The focus on the livelihood of the primary stakeholder communities using heritage as a powerful tool for articulating their unique sense of place and identity has become the lifeline for the sustainable development and growth of Hoi An and the region.

Next week: Heritage Matters will look at the rapidly eroding village goddess heritage and its significance for the identity of Telugu people