

# Guidelines for the Development of Tourism Routes Based on Cultural Resources, Betong District, Yala Province

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**Abstracts:** This article aimed to investigate guidelines for developing tourism routes based on cultural resources of Betong District, Yala Province. The data were collected through in-depth interviews with 25 representatives of the community and analyzed with content analysis. The study found that the guidelines for the development of tourism routes based on resource bases were integrating the strengths of the main cultural resource capitals, particularly natural-based and cultural-based capitals to initiate eco-cultural tourism. This type of tourism would develop three important types of tourism routes: cultural tourism, eco-tourism, and cultural-eco tourism routes in Betong. The cultural-eco tourism routes would be special interest tourism routes integrating cultural and ecological tourism in Betong. Two short-trip tour programs could be offered: half-day trips and one-day trips. The research results could be expanded into more routes of tour programs that could be linked with tourism networks in Betong to offer more choices to tourists.

**Keywords:** Travel Guideline, Tourism Route Development, Cultural Resources, Betong District, Yala Province.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

“Siam’s Beautiful Southernmost Border Town”: Betong is a district in Yala Province with a large area situated in the southernmost of Thailand. Geographically, the area protrudes into the land of a neighboring country, Malaysia. This area is mostly a virgin forest and is in the midst of the unrest situation of the three Southern border provinces. The Southern Economic and Social Development Office (2019) indicates that the unrest has resulted in people both inside and outside the area having limitations in traveling and transporting systems of goods; they also have to take the safety of the route into consideration. Nevertheless, Betong District, Yala Province despite being in a difficult situation, is a border town contributing to the economic growth and tourism that help upgrade the growth and prosperity of the town. Thus, support from the government, people, private, and academic sectors is essential.

The true development guidelines require the integration of hard work from all sectors for tourism management. According to Barbados (2017)[1], such integration needs standards and protocols, and the efficiency of the group of people from outside to do the work with the participation of people in the area in planning the work to be done by this working group, and then that would be considered as a true group. Thinthan (2022) [10] specifies that one of the tourism development approaches is the service design based on three major variables: multi-culturalism, tourists who are outsiders, and locals who are insiders. These three variables should be involved in tourism management. Therefore, tourism routes are considered the start for tourists to visit the place. It is also important for them to know their destinations and the goals of their travel within a timeframe. The development of tourism routes, is thus, necessary. Srichongsaeng, et. al. (2018) [9] points out that tourism routes are collections of resources that are unique for tourism. They offer tourists awareness as well as potential assessment of the resource base. These are important elements for tourism route development leading to problem-solving and value-raising creatively.

Tourism route development can be conducted with the least waste of resource base, and its value is an integrated process that directly benefits the community. Tourism can grow when it is managed together with the economic, social, cultural, and environmental systems (Nawakanworrakul, 2019 [6]). Therefore, Betong can be considered an area ready for upgrading its tourism management. However, it still needs diverse tour programs to truly support and be delivered to the local community. A study by Kaewngam (2019) [5] on Betong: Tourism communication strategies under the violence crisis in the three Southern border provinces reports that Betong has clearly unique identities that make it interesting, especially its outstanding geographical location. Other unique identities include the largest post

box in the world, the first car tunnel in Thailand that goes around a mountain, a stadium with the highest location in Thailand, the first and largest Chinese language school in Betong, a large bronze Buddha image, etc. Betong is also outstanding in its way of life, culture, and traditions. Particularly, its unique foods and simple way of life are its own local ways which can be promoted for tourism.

This study aimed to explore and analyze cultural resource capital for use as an important condition to promote cultural tourism management in Betong. It is a fine and important tool extended from community confirmation. According to Boonwanno (2020) [2], tourism route development has to do with the community whose outstanding features are interesting for tourists to learn. The route map can be developed and gives tourists the highest benefit in learning about the local way of life. With the tourism routes, there would be more networks relating to tourism management that would benefit the planning of public relations and tourism management itself according to the analysis of the highlight or outstanding features, check-in points, and souvenir shops along the tourism routes.

## **2. METHODS MATERIEL AND METHODS**

### **2.1 Key Informants**

The key informants were 25 people from all 5 districts: Betong, Aiyoeweng, Yarom, Than Nam thip, and Tano Maero. They were divided into 2 groups: 10 community leaders, and 15 community representatives, selected using purposive sampling from those involved in the management of cultural resource-based tourism in the areas.

### **2.2 Data Collection**

Setting community tourism routes, activity observation, and interviewing the key informants.

### **2.3 Research Instrument**

Semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions covering the content of the objectives within the research scope.

### **2.4 Data Analysis**

The data which covered concepts of cultural resource management, cultural tourism routes, and participation were classified into groups, and content analysis was performed, followed by descriptive analysis.

### **2.5 Data Validation**

Data triangulation was conducted concerning setting the time for observation of behaviors and interactions during the interview. Methodology triangulation was also performed to validate related theories, field data collection, and data-checking methods. Documents were also checked to ensure correct interpretations.

### **2.6 Protection of The Rights of Key Informants**

For data collection, the interview questions were designed to avoid controversial and sensitive content taking into consideration principles of researcher ethics. The protection of the rights of the target group included showing a research ethics certificate, explaining the objectives, and research methodology, and giving the opportunity to participants to ask questions. The data sources were kept strictly confidential to prevent damage to individuals and organizations.

### 3. RESULTS

The framework for designing suitable tourism routes was based on the existing limited resource base of Betong District. This included the consideration of the data obtained and the design of the routes for developing extended tour programs. It was found that the potential of the natural-based and cultural-based routes was suitable for eco-cultural tourism. In order to link the two terms to communicate the potential of the area, the English phrase “Cultural-Eco Route Betong” and the Thai phrase “Watthana-Thammachat” would be used. This could make the design of three types of tourism routes possible. These routes would be offered as short-trip tour programs for the half-day trip and one-day trip. The touring places on the routes could be arranged as desired by tourists depending on their interests and time as follows.

#### 3.1 Cultural-based tourism routes

The arrangement of cultural-based tourism routes is to highlight the tours for appreciation of places to learn the local ways of life. They are the foundation of the cultural and valuable heritage related to the environment concealing the communities' ways of life worthwhile for tourism. It encompasses traveling to archaeological and historical sites involving the ways of life in terms of local food, dressing, culture, and traditions for tourists to enjoy and understand. As a result, the tours could enable local people to have the responsibility and awareness in preserving the cultural heritage and the value of the environment because of their participation in tourism management of their own sub districts. The cultural-based tourism routes designed are as follows.

**Table 1. Classification table Attractions about Cultural-based Sites**

Cultural-based Sites	Subdistricts in Betong District, Yala Province
Piyamit Tunnel	Tano Maero Subdistrict
100-Year-Old Village	Tano Maero Subdistrict
The 54 A Sign (Siam Southernmost Border)	Betong District
Mongkhonrit Tunnel	Betong District
Street Art 1-5	Betong District
The Original Mailbox	Betong District
The Modeled Mailbox	Betong District
The City Gate	Betong District
The OK Betong Sign (Check-in point)	Betong District
The Clock Tower	Betong District
Sud Siam Park (Siam Southernmost Park)	Betong District
Betong Customs House	Betong District
The Old Community Learning Center	Betong District
Wat Phuttha Thiwat	Betong District
Wat Phothisatto Chaomae Kuan Im	Betong District
Toni Shrine (Betong Wiraratprasan School)	Betong District
Pae Kong Shrine	Than Nam Thip Subdistrict
Chap Yi Lui Sign (12 Satang Sign)	Than Nam Thip Subdistrict
Chantharattanaram Monastery (Pae Kong Mai)	Yarom Subdistrict
Ban Suan Mai 100-Year Bridge	Yarom Subdistrict

For cultural-based tourism, the short-trip tour programs for a half-day trip and a one-day trip are as follows.

### **Cultural-based tour itinerary (One-day trip)**

08.30 – 09.00	Meeting point at the OK Betong Sign (Check-in point)
09.00 – 10.00	The Original Mailbox, the Modeled Mailbox, Mongkhonrit Tunnel, and the Clock Tower
10.00 – 11.00	Wat Phuttha Thiwat, Toni Shrine, and Sud Siam Park
11.00 – 12.00	Piyamit Tunnel, and 100-Year-Old Village
12.00 – 13.00	Lunch
13.00 - 14.00	Piyamit Tunnel
14.00 - 15.00	Pae Kong Shrine, and Chap Yi Lui Sign
15.00 – 15.30	Chantharattanaram Monastery (Pae Kong Mai), and Ban Suan Mai 100-Year Bridge
15.30 – 17.00	The 54 A Sign (Siam Southernmost Border), and Betong Customs House
17.00	The End of the Tour Program

### **Cultural-based tour itinerary (Half-day trip)**

08.30 – 09.00	Meeting point at the Original Mailbox, the Clock Tower, and the Modeled Mailbox
09.00 – 10.00	Street Art 1-5, and the Original Mailbox
10.00 – 11.00	Toni Shrine, and Wat Phutthisatto Chaomae Kuan Im
11.00 – 12.00	Piyamit Tunnel, and 100-Year-Old Village
12.00	The End of the Tour Program

It can be said that cultural tourism management in Betong District has included places that are one way of life involving culture and traditions with highlights in food resources. Consequently, cultural and traditional tourism has given the honor, and respect to the rights of the community that are accepted and respected through new experiences of tourists visiting Betong District. This also has encouraged tourism management by locals as capital to support themselves continuously.

### **3.2 Ecotourism routes**

The natural highlights of the area are all entwined with the local communities in the development. The conservation of the resource bases is outstanding and cannot be separated from the communities where conservation exists from upstream, midstream, to downstream. All the beauty created by nature in the areas has been renowned as tourist attractions and the natural beauty has constantly been mentioned among tourists who have visited the places.

**Table 2. Classification table Attractions about Ecotourism**

<b>Ecotourism Attractions</b>	<b>Subdistricts in Betong District, Yala Province</b>
Aiyoeweng Sea of Mist	Aiyoeweng Subdistrict
Tae Pusuchu Hanging Bridge	Aiyoeweng Subdistrict
King Rama 9 Waterfalls	Aiyoeweng Subdistrict
Aiyoeweng Rafting Point	Aiyoeweng Subdistrict
Na Ko Hot Springs	Aiyoeweng Subdistrict
Betong Winter Flower Garden	Tano Maero Subdistrict
The 1,000-Year-Old Tree	Tano Maero Subdistrict
Gunung Palong, a Two-Land Sea of Mist	Betong Subdistrict
Charo Ganga Sea of Mist / Charo Ganga Viewpoint	Betong Subdistrict
Charo Ayam Cave	Betong Subdistrict
Homestay Camping Site	Than Nam Thip Subdistrict
Tai Tong Sea of Mist	Than Nam Thip Subdistrict
Than Nam Thip Waterfalls (7 levels)	Than Nam Thip Subdistrict
Red Lotus Pond	Than Nam Thip Subdistrict

For ecotourism, a half-day trip and a one-day trip were arranged as follows.

#### **Ecotourism itinerary (One-day trip)**

08.30 – 09.00	Meeting point at Tae Pusuchu Hanging Bridge
09.00 – 10.00	Aiyoeweng Sea of Mist
10.00 – 11.00	King Rama 9 Waterfalls, and Na Ko Hot Springs
11.00 – 12.00	Betong Winter Flower Garden
12.00 – 13.00	Lunch
13.00 - 14.00	The 1,000-Year-Old Tree
14.00 - 15.00	Than Nam Thip Waterfalls (7 levels), Red Lotus Pond
15.00 – 16.30	Homestay Camping Site, and Tai Tong Sea of Mist
16.30	The End of the Tour Program

#### **Ecotourism itinerary (Half-day trip)**

08.00 – 10.00	Charo Ganga Sea of Mist / Charo Ganga Viewpoint
10.00 – 11.00	Charo Ayam Cave
11.00 – 12.00	Gunung Palong, a Two-land Sea of Mist
12.00	The End of the Tour Program

### 3.3 Special Interest Tourism Routes

These routes have all the characteristics of special interest tourism because the field data revealed that they could be upgraded to educational areas as they have subdistricts that are learning resources. There are community entertainment activities that are enjoyable, fun, exciting, and adventurous making Betong even more memorable to tourists. Ethnic tourism is another type of tourism offered on these routes for tourists to have new experiences and learn more about the communities' way of life. This includes the outstanding ways of life of the Chinese and former Chinese guerrillas of the Communist Party of Malaya (Malaya or Malayu was the former name of Malaysia). They played an important role in founding Betong town. Short-trip tour programs for these special interest tourism routes were designed as follows.

**Table 3. Classification table Attractions about Special Interest Tourism**

Special Interest Tourism Attractions	Subdistricts in Betong District, Yala Province
Chulabhorn Phatthana Village 10	Aiyoweng Subdistrict
Chulabhorn Phatthana Village 10 Community Museum	Aiyoweng Subdistrict
Fish Raising Learning Groups: Raising Pla Nin (Nile Tilapias) in a flowing river, Pla Chin (carps) in ponds, and Pla Phluang Chomphu (Cyprinidae) in ponds	Tano Maero Subdistrict
Thaiguns Shooting Range, Betong	Tano Maero Subdistrict
The Modelled Siam Southernmost Milestone 53A	Than Nam Thip Subdistrict
The Siam Southernmost Curves 54 A (Two curves)	Than Nam Thip Subdistrict
Betong International Airport	Yarom Subdistrict

There are places that are outstanding with good local food prepared using raw materials available in the communities and could be included in the program of gastronomy tourism as a supplement to the tourism business and expanded to the community restaurant business as well.

**Table 4. Classification table Attractions about Famous Places and Local Dishes**

Famous Places and Local Dishes	Subdistricts in Betong District, Yala Province
Ancient Coffee	Aiyoweng Subdistrict
Pizza with Pla Nin Sai Nam Lai Topping	Aiyoweng Subdistrict
Halal Soup	Aiyoweng Subdistrict
Dorae Soup	Aiyoweng Subdistrict
Chue Wu Watercress Garden	Tano Maero Subdistrict
Betong Grass Jelly (Two places)	Tano Maero Subdistrict
Betong Noodles	Betong Subdistrict
Betong Chicken	Betong Subdistrict

#### Special interest tourism itinerary (One-day trip)

08.30 – 09.00	Meeting Point at Chulaborn Phatthana Village 10
09.00 – 11.00	Chulabhorn Phatthana Village 10, Chulabhorn Phatthana Village 10 Community Museum
11.00 – 12.00	Fish Raising Learning Groups: Raising Pla Nin (Nile Tilapias) in a flowing river, Pla Chin (carps) in ponds, and Pla Phluang Chomphu (Cyprinidae) in ponds
12.00 – 13.00	Lunch at a famous local restaurant
13.00 - 14.00	Thaiguns Shooting Range, Betong

14.30 - 15.30	The Modelled Siam Southernmost Milestone 53A, and the Siam Southernmost Curves 54 A (Two curves)
15.30 – 16.30	Betong International Airport
16.30	The End of the Tour Program

#### **Special interest tourism itinerary (Half-day trip)**

08.30 – 09.00	Meeting Point at Chulaborn Phatthana Village 10
09.00 – 10.30	Chulabhorn Phatthana Village 10, Chulabhorn Phatthana Village 10 Community Museum
10.30 – 11.00	Snack of Betong Grass Jelly (Km. 4)
11.00 –12.00	Betong International Airport
12.00	The End of the Tour Program with Betong Chicken and Betong Noodles as Lunch

As described, all five subdistricts of Betong District have the potential for the development of tourism routes and tour itineraries could be arranged as shown in the above tables. They cover resource bases in each subdistrict and the tour activities are up-to-date for the present time. For example, adventurous activities and camping activities could attract tourists of all age groups because in these places tourists could do other activities as well. Due to the fact that the tourism routes have supplement activities in addition to the main activities and that they are suitable for tourists who are interested in doing the activities, these routes could also increase the length of stay among tourists with special interests. The highlights of each subdistrict can also feature minor highlights that could extend the tourists' length of stay as the tour programs in terms of time and touring scope could be arranged to offer more choices of tour itineraries. Above all, the specified types of tourism could help achieve tourism goals and objectives.

#### **4. DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSIONS**

The important representations of Betong District are the beauty in self-creation and its cultural capital that have resulted in its ability to utilize the resource bases including those in the forms of local food, historical structures, traditions, rituals, beliefs, etc. These are the foundations of good conservation management based on the principles of accumulation and expansion of capital. Siririsak (2018) [8] indicates that cultural revival is one of the bodies of existing knowledge for the community to realize and support cultural objects. This is part of the activities that are the practices that people can restore as part of maintaining the ways of life according to tradition. Betong District can extend such activities obtained from the forum process as reflected by the results of activities. The types of tourism would highlight cultural tourism, ecotourism, educational tourism, and experimental tourism. Cohen (1979) [3] explains that the activities are learning behavior when people enjoy talking with locals to learn and understand the local ways of life and are interested in adapting to the local environments in addition to traveling focusing on environmental conservation activities and seeking new experiences.

The confirmation of data results was performed to consult about guidelines for tourism promotion through having the communities of the five subdistricts set the routes focusing on resource bases and making the maps of their own subdistricts. It was found that the communities could locate their own locations clearly and they could also tell stories about the history of each map to the researchers. Consequently, the tables classifying the resource bases were made

and important places were categorized as related to the programs on the tourism routes. The routes based on the resource bases of Betong were arranged in two sets of short-trip tour programs: half-day and one-day programs for the three types of tourism as appropriate. They offer choices for tourists who have limited time to cover most of the important places on the routes with similar contexts. Pianroj, et. al. (2015) [7] . specify that suitable tourism management allows tourists time for traveling and adaptation, and thus socio-cultural consideration is required. Historical and cultural attractions need to be developed to suit the tourism routes. Knowledge should be included to impress, benefit, and satisfy tourists for marketing results. Good tourism routes will result in word-of-mouth that encourages revisits among tourists who were satisfied with the tourism routes. Therefore, this will increase the variety of tours such as natural and historical tours based on the resources in Betong which can be the starting point for tourism on digital media platforms for Betong.

The analysis of cultural resources and the feasibility of developing tourism routes in all five subdistricts of Betong District revealed that the routes developed in conjunction with the communities could be upgraded to cultural resource routes in three development directions. 1) Cultural tourism routes: It was found that all five subdistricts had the potential for development and they could incorporate gastronomical tourism into the routes. People in the communities are bound together and their ways of life are tied with places such as temples, shrines, ancient villages, and historical sites that have become check-in points. Thus, cultural tourism routes are the most suitable as one of the main types of tourism routes for this research project. 2) Ecotourism routes are also very interesting because there are diverse natural resources that can possibly be important tourist attractions in all five subdistricts. They are now attractions at the community level and are being extended to be tourist attractions for people outside the community in the near future. The places are different in their geophysical characteristics. However, they can all be upgraded to adventure trails for tourists who are interested in adventure tours as these places are suitable for adventurous activities.

Last is 3) Special interest tourism routes. These routes are to add interesting special learning activities for tourists who focus on the learning process to learn more. There are learning centers, risky play activities, and camping sites found in four subdistricts. They demonstrate more highlights of Betong very well. The results of this feasibility study of tourism routes development are to provide an understanding and links of tourism opportunities in many subdistricts. ICOMOS (2008) [4] indicates that developing tourism routes requires coordination and interactions that must reflect the diversity and emphasize participation. It is evidenced that the development of tourism routes based on the resource bases of Betong has been valuable and directly achieved the extension of the tourism policy.

## **5. RECOMMEDATIONS**

### **5.1 Recommendations for application of research results**

1. The study results are of tourism routes in Betong District, Yala Province, and could be taken into consideration when planning to upgrade the readiness of the areas and resource growth.

2. The study results could be used in expanding tourism routes based on cultural resources which provide clear indicators for operations. The routes could be improved and used to develop more tourism routes in the future.

### **5.2 Recommendations concerning policy**

1. The government, private, and academic sectors could strategically coordinate to arrange more tourism programs.

2. More strategies should be initiated for the development of additional transportation routes to link with the neighboring country and nearby provinces.



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This study was financially supported by the Fundamental Fund from Science, Research and Innovation Fund for 2023, contract No. LIA6601025S, and was approved for human research ethics, certificate No. E-05/2565.

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.15379/ijmst.v10i1.3005>

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