

THE ROLE OF HOMESTAY TOURISM IN PROMOTING LOCAL CULTURE AND PROVIDING SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT FOR ETHNIC MINORITIES IN THAI NGUYEN: A CASE STUDY OF NOONG HOMESTAY MANAGEMENT MODEL

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Received: 18/8/2022 Revised: 06/12/2022 Published: 06/12/2022 KEYWORDS Homestay Cultural tourism Community-based tourism Ethnic minority Sustainable community development	This study investigates of the role of homestay tourism in promoting local culture and providing sustainable community development for ethnic minorities in Thai Nguyen using the case study of Noong homestay – a homestay operated by 03 ethnic minority families (Tay ethnic, Dao ethnic, and Nung ethnic). The major research methodologies are secondary data analysis, qualitative case study approach, focus group interview, and field-trip method. The findings suggest that homestay as a form of cultural and community-based tourism has a significant value in promoting local culture. The 03 factors of Authenticity, Engagement, and Culinary attraction are essential in homestay service to enhance visitors' cultural experience and satisfaction. Furthermore, homestay tourism is found to be an effective tool to provide sustainable community development for ethnic minorities in Thai Nguyen, as it can help them to earn financial income, express cultural identity, achieve ethnic minority empowerment, and preserve ethnic traditions for future generations.

VAI TRÒ CỦA DU LỊCH HOMESTAY TRONG VIỆC QUẢNG BÁ VĂN HÓA ĐỊA PHƯƠNG VÀ PHÁT TRIỂN BỀN VỮNG CHO CỘNG ĐỒNG TẠI THÁI NGUYÊN: NGHIÊN CỨU MÔ HÌNH QUẢN LÝ CỦA NOONG HOMESTAY

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THÔNG TIN BÀI BÁO	TÓM TẮT
Ngày nhận bài: 18/8/2022 Ngày hoàn thiện: 06/12/2022 Ngày đăng: 06/12/2022 TỪ KHÓA Homestay Du lịch văn hóa Du lịch cộng đồng Dân tộc thiểu số Phát triển bền vững cho cộng đồng	Bài báo này nghiên cứu về vai trò của du lịch homestay trong việc quảng bá văn hóa địa phương và phát triển cộng đồng bền vững cho các dân tộc thiểu số ở Thái Nguyên bằng cách nghiên cứu trường hợp của Noong homestay - một homestay được điều hành bởi 03 gia đình dân tộc thiểu số (dân tộc Tày, dân tộc Dao, và dân tộc Nùng). Các phương pháp nghiên cứu chính là phân tích dữ liệu thứ cấp, cách tiếp cận nghiên cứu trường hợp định tính, phỏng vấn nhóm tập trung và phương pháp đi thực địa. Các phát hiện cho thấy rằng, homestay với vai trò là một hình thức du lịch văn hóa và cộng đồng có một giá trị quan trọng trong việc quảng bá văn hóa địa phương. Ba yếu tố Chân thực, Gắn kết và Âm thực là yếu tố cần thiết trong dịch vụ homestay để nâng cao trải nghiệm văn hóa và sự hài lòng của du khách. Ngoài ra, du lịch homestay được coi là một công cụ hữu hiệu để phát triển cộng đồng bền vững cho đồng bào dân tộc thiểu số ở Thái Nguyên, vì nó có thể giúp họ kiếm thu nhập chính, thể hiện bản sắc văn hóa, nâng cao vị thế của dân tộc thiểu số và bảo tồn truyền thống dân tộc cho các thế hệ mai sau.

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1. Introduction

1.1. Thai Nguyen cultural tourism background

With the strengths of diverse natural and cultural assets, the tourism industry is an important vehicle for economic growth, job creation, and shared prosperity in Vietnam. The Decision No. 147/QĐ-TTg dated January 22, 2020 of the Prime Minister approving “Vietnam's tourism development strategy to 2030” affirmed that tourism would become the spearhead economic sector by 2030. Furthermore, tourism development in Vietnam needs to be focused on cultural tourism to associate tourism development with the conservation and promotion of heritage values and national cultural identity [1].

Thai Nguyen is a mountainous province in the Northeast Midlands and Mountains of Vietnam with great potential for tourism resources. Thai Nguyen is the gateway for socio-economic exchanges between the midland and mountainous areas and the Northern Delta. It borders Bac Kan province to the North, Vinh Phuc and Tuyen Quang provinces to the West, Lang Son, and Bac Giang provinces to the East, and Hanoi to the South [2].

Thai Nguyen has a great treasure of cultural heritage, with over 1,000 listed historical, cultural, and scenic sites. In particular, there are 01 special national-level ranked relic (including 13 points), 52 national-levels ranked and 221 provincial-level ranked relics, and 17 intangible cultural heritages recognized [3].

Table 1. Types of cultural tourism in Thai Nguyen [3]

Cultural tourism types in Thai Nguyen province	Site
1. Revolutionary historical relics group	ATK Dinh Hoa, 27/7 National Historical Relic Site, Mai Son relic (ATKII), Ly Nam De relic (Den Muc), The memorial of the Youth Volunteers of Company 915, The cluster of relics of the Thai Nguyen uprising 1917, the complex of relics of Van mountain - Vo mountain, Location Nguyen Ai Quoc School, Dinh Hoa district...
2. Historical, cultural, and spiritual relics group	Vietnam Museum of Ethnic Cultures, Than Sa Archaeological Site, Phu Lien Pagoda, Dan Pagoda, Hang Pagoda, Thien Tay Truc Pagoda, Ho Lenh Communal House, Phuong Do Communal House, Luc Giap Temple, Duom Temple...
3. Traditional folk festival group	Long Tong festival in Dinh Hoa district, Duom temple festival in Phu Luong district, Phuong Do communal house festival, Dinh - Temple - Cau Muoi temple in Phu Binh district, Luc Giap temple festival in Pho Yen town, Gia temple festival...
4. Intangible cultural heritage group	Then singing, Luon singing, Vi singing, Land puppet of the Tay; Soong Co of the San Diu, Tac Xinh - Sang Co dance of the San Chay people, Pa Dung of the Dao people, Sly singing of the Tay Nung people, Thai Nguyen tea culture...
5. Traditional craft villages group	Tan Cuong tea area, Trai Cai Minh Lap tea area, Song Cau (Dong Hy), Tuc Tranh tea area, Vo Tranh, Phu Do (Phu Luong), La Bang tea area (Dai Tu), Son Phu (Dinh Hoa); The village of weaving palm nets, making hats (Dinh Hoa)...
6. Typical ethnic minority traditional cultural village group	Dong Tam village, Tuc Tranh commune (Phu Luong district); Tan Do village, Hoa Binh commune, Dong Hy district; Ban Quyen village, Diem Mac commune, Dong Keu village, Phu Dinh commune, Dinh Hoa district; Trung Son village, Than Sa commune, Vo Nhai district, Kem hamlet, La Bang commune, Dai Tu district,...
7. Typical ethnic minority traditional cultural village group	Binh Long Tofu (Vo Nhai), Dinh Hoa Bao Thai Rice, Viet Cuong vermicelli (Dong Hy), Bo Dau Banh Chung (Phu Luong), Tram, Thau Dau sticky rice, Tuong Ban (Ha Chau Phu Binh) ...

There are 7 types of cultural tourism groups in Thai Nguyen: Revolutionary historical relics group; Historical, cultural, and spiritual relics group; Traditional folk festival group; Intangible cultural heritage group; Traditional craft villages group; Typical ethnic minority traditional cultural village group; Typical ethnic minority traditional cultural village group (table 1).

On the basis of such potential, the Provincial Party Committee of Thai Nguyen has set specific orientations for tourism development in Thai Nguyen to 2030, especially cultural tourism, to become the spearhead economic sector through Resolution No. 08/8/2018 and Action Plan No. 16-CTr/TU dated 3/8/2017. However, the implementation process in the period 2015-2020 was not commensurate with the potential, strengths, and expectations of society; and total revenue from tourism was low.

1.2. Cultural tourism and sustainable community-based tourism development

Culture is a set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of society or a social group that encompasses not only art and literature but also lifestyles, ways of living together, value systems, traditions, and beliefs [4].

Cultural tourism refers to the experience of tourists with different lifestyles of local people, enabling tourists to get insights into the local customs, traditions, and places of architectural, historic, and archaeological earlier times [5]. Apart from visiting monuments and sites, cultural tourists also engage in cultural experiences such as art performances, handicrafts, rituals, and cuisine to get an understanding of local culture [5]. Therefore, cultural tourism is concerned with not only consuming cultural products of the past but also associating with experiencing the modern life and culture of people [6].

Cultural tourism plays a vital role in the regional development of many tourist places with several socio-economic benefits. First, the local community will receive revenue from tourists' spending in the cultural tourist area. The obtained fund from tourism activities will be used for the investment of local tourism capital such as human labor, housing, and traditional activities, which in turn increase the living standard and education of local people. Second, cultural tourism also provides jobs for the youth, women, and local ethnic minorities. Third, cultural tourism helps improve the environmental quality as tourists seek to visit functional, clean, and unpolluted cultural tourist sites. Finally, cultural tourism is positively associated with the conservation and protection of local culture. As visitor's essential motivation is to learn, discover, experience, and consume the tangible and intangible cultural attractions/products in the tourism destination; thus, in order to sustain the financial funds from cultural tourism activities, local government and people will invest to conserve, safeguarding and develop local cultural attractions and rituals. Therefore, cultural tourism helps keep alive and protect cultural traditions and ethnic identity [7], [8].

According to the United Nations Brundtland Commission [9], sustainability is "meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." Sustainable community-based tourism development consists of three elements of economic (economic benefits, local job, and participation, visitor management, institutional mechanism); environmental (waste reduction, environmental protection, environmentally friendly plans, process monitoring); and social-cultural (community well-being and satisfaction, community participation and empowerment, visitor satisfaction) development [10].

As cultural tourism offers economic benefits for local people, while also preserving the local identity and traditional culture and promoting environmental protection [7], [8], thus, cultural tourism is strongly associated with sustainable community-based tourism development.

1.3. Homestay context

Homestay is a type of community-based tourism in which interactions between host families and tourists are encouraged to promote cultural exchange and respect for the host's culture [11].

In the ASEAN region, a homestay program is a tourism alternative in which tourists are given the opportunity to experience the way of life in a typical village with the local community. With affordable prices and a high degree of cultural and educational features, the homestay has become the popular accommodation choice of international tourists when coming to ASEAN countries. The attractive point of homestay tourism is based on the tourist's village experience which is highly influenced by the community and communal activities [12].

In contrast with mass tourism, in order to achieve sustainable development, the homestay model should be in low scale, low density, flexible and spontaneous operation. Furthermore, it should be owned and operated by local communities, so the economic benefits can be used for local development. The homestay program can enhance localities' living standards through the generation of income, support local culture, and arts and crafts business encourages restoration of local and historic sites, and foster nature conservation efforts through community education. Therefore, the homestay program is proved to be an effective form of tourism to foster local culture, enhance local stand of living, and poverty reduction in ASEAN countries, especially in rural areas [12], [13].

Thai Nguyen province has huge potential for cultural tourism with over 1,000 listed historical, cultural, and scenic sites. In particular, there are 01 special national-level ranked relic (including 13 points), 52 national-levels ranked and 221 provincial-level ranked relics, and 17 intangible cultural heritages recognized. The cultural tourism sites in Thai Nguyen include 7 categories: Revolutionary historical relics group; Historical, cultural, and spiritual relics group; Traditional folk festival group; Intangible cultural heritage group; Traditional craft villages group; Typical ethnic minority traditional cultural village group; Typical ethnic minority traditional cultural village group. The People's Committee of Thai Nguyen Province has set specific orientations for tourism development in Thai Nguyen to 2030, especially cultural tourism, to become the spearhead economic sector. Therefore, cultural tourism in Thai Nguyen is a potential and important field for researchers.

The studies about cultural tourism in Thai Nguyen majorly focus on tea culture and tea-related tourism [14], [15]; cultural tourism related to local culture, ethnic minorities, historical sites, and folk festivals, in general, has not received attention from researchers.

In order to fill the gap in the cultural tourism research field in Thai Nguyen, this paper investigates the case of Noong homestay, a homestay operated by 03 ethnic minority families, to determine the role of homestay in promoting cultural tourism and sustainable community development for minor ethnic in Thai Nguyen. Furthermore, the paper also gives insights and suggests cultural tourism development in Thai Nguyen for the local government.

2. Methodology

2.1. Secondary data analysis

Secondary data was collected from a government report, journals, books, newspapers, the internet, etc. on tourism-related issues in homestay. From the collected data, the author conducted analysis, evaluation, and synthesis to serve the research problem.

2.2. Primary data analysis

A single case study with a qualitative approach was employed for this paper. A qualitative case study is an approach that aims to answer the question of "how" and "why" that gives the researcher a deeper exploration of a phenomenon through a variety of lenses and helps reveal the boundaries between the phenomenon and the context that is believed to be relevant [16]. Presently, there is no study available about the role of homestays in promoting cultural tourism and sustainable community development for ethnic minorities in Thai Nguyen. Furthermore, the nature of homestay tourism is concerned with many various social aspects, environmental concerns, cultural phenomena as well as economic matters, and management problems. Therefore, an in-depth understanding of such circumstances was considered essential.

Noong homestay was selected based on its nature as a cultural and community-based tourism type, especially since the homestay is operated by local ethnic minority families, which makes the homestay have the value of offering specific ethnic minorities' culture to tourists.

In this paper, an in-depth group interview with 03 homestay managers (head of the 03 ethnic minority families) was conducted.

2.3. Field-trip

During the research process, 02 field-trips to Noong homestay were carried by the researchers to obtain information and take photos to serve the research purpose.

3. Results and discussion

3.1. Noong homestay background



(a) Noong homestay's front-view



(b) Map location

Figure 1. Noong homestay front-view and location
(Source: Noong homestay facebook fanpage)

Noong homestay was built 20 years ago as the home of a Tay ethnic husband and a Dao ethnic wife and their Dao ethnic mother-in-law. Four months ago, they decided to cooperate with two other Tay ethnic and Nung ethnic families to offer homestay services for tourists. Presently, the homestay is operated by 03 ethnic minority families: 01 Dao ethnic family, 01 Tay ethnic family, and 01 Nung ethnic family (Figure 1a). The total number of ethnic minority members in the homestay is 10 people.

Noong homestay is located in the heart of Thai Nguyen city and lies by the riverside of the Cau river. The homestay is 100 m from Ben Tuong bridge, 300 m from Vo Nguyen Giap square, and 600 m from the Vietnam Museum of Ethnic Culture (Figure 1b).

The total area of the homestay consisting of the Tay-architecture stilt house and yard is 500 square meters.

The homestay offers the room service of public stilt bedroom that can accommodate up to 20 people (Figure 2a). Furthermore, they offer various services such as ethnic cuisine of Tay, Nung, and Dao ethnic groups; food soaked with medicinal herbs of Dao people; ethnic minority products; the daily life of ethnic families experiences; ethnic minority's cultural-educational stories, ethnic minorities' traditional costumes hiring service; Then singing, folk songs, folk dance, cauldron culture, fire stoves and other cultural exchanges of Viet Bac region (Figure 2).

The main marketing and communication channel of Noong homestay is through its Facebook fanpage. According to the owners, the customers mostly observe information about their services on the homestay Facebook fanpage or the owners' personal social media accounts, contact them, and make reservations. Furthermore, another source of marketing channel is Google Maps. Visitors, especially foreign tourists, can see the location information on Google Maps and come to the homestay. Although the owners know about other marketing channels of OTAs such as Agoda and

Booking.com, they stated that they have currently not sold rooms on OTAs in order to keep control of the tourist capacity of the homestay and prevent mass tourism. Furthermore, the ethnic minority families also collaborate with travel agencies to welcome group tours.



Figure 2. Noong homestay's services
(Source: Photographs from the fieldwork, August 2022)

After four months of operation, Noong homestay have welcomed several international and domestic tourists. Domestic tourists are majorly the group of tourists from universities in Vietnam or people that have concerns for traditional ethnic minority culture. International tourists mostly reach the homestay through their social media fanpage and Google Maps.

3.2. Homestay and local culture promotion

Homestay is a type of community-based tourism in which interactions between host families and tourists are encouraged to promote cultural exchange and respect for the host's culture [11]. Homestay has become increasingly popular for tourists who look for discovering the local cultural identities.

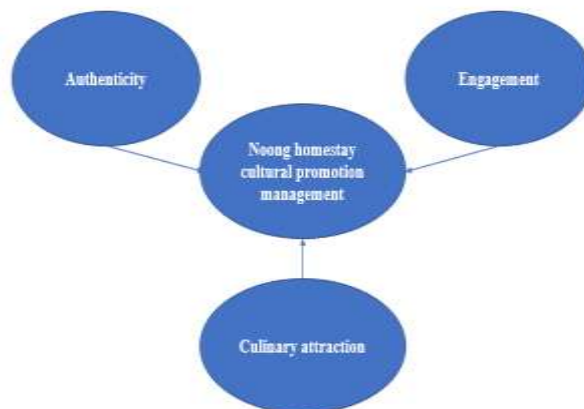


Figure 3. Noong homestay's local culture promotion management model

Based on the interview with 03 heads of ethnic families in Noong homestay, three factors were found to be essential in promoting local culture for tourists, including Authenticity, Engagement, and Culinary attraction (Figure 3).

3.2.1. Authenticity

In tourism, authenticity refers to tourism objects, tourism sites, tourist attractions, and tourist experiences [17]. Authenticity can be seen as the quality of being ‘authentic’ and ‘real’ or ‘real and “genuine”’ [17], [18]. Cultural visitors tend to seek authenticity in their travel experience and search for an in-depth understanding of their destinations in terms of authentic local lifestyles, customs, cultural sights, and heritage attractions [19]. The level of authenticity in cultural tourism is found to be strongly associated with tourist satisfaction [19], [20]. Authenticity is a key attribute in cultural and heritage tourism which can enhance the quality of heritage and behavioral intentions to consume cultural attractions [21].

According to the interview result, authenticity is a vital factor to promote local culture in Noong homestay. As the 03 ethnic families live in Noong homestay, tourists who stay in the homestay can experience the daily life of local ethnic minorities. Unless there are tour groups who request to use private dining service, all guests staying in the homestay will eat with ethnic families as their family members. Furthermore, the owners emphasized the importance of all family members as the “ethnic cultural representative” as all of the family can deliver authentic and educational stories to visitors about the culture of Tay, Nung, and Dao ethnic people. Furthermore, all of them know how to play traditional musical instruments and perform traditional dances, so guests can see the performance anytime they request the service. All of their food and medical herbs are ethnic products as well. The owners stated that being authentic is important to be able to promote their culture to guests and preserve their traditions for the next generation.

3.2.2. Engagement

Tourist engagement commonly refers to tourists’ involvement with and commitment to a tourism experience [22] and is defined as “a state of being involved with and committed to a specific market offering” [23]. Tourist engagement can lead to a higher level of tourist satisfaction, loyalty, commitment, Word-of-mouth publicity, and behavioral intentions [23], [24].

Guest experience and engagement are emphasized in Noong homestay. Guests who stay in the homestay can join the family in their daily activities such as dining, medical herb harvesting, and traditional dancing “Sap dance” activities... Furthermore, the homestay also offers authentic ethnic traditional costumes for tourists to wear and experience “being an ethnic minority person”. Consequently, visitors can have a deeper understanding of the local culture. According to the owners, guest engagement is a crucial factor for overall tourist satisfaction.

Mrs. Ly Chien (Focus group interview, August 2022) stated: *“In order to foster guest cultural experience, we are especially concerned about guests’ engagement in our services. Different from the mere “performance” of cultural activities, we want our guests to join us in our daily activities and traditional folk dance and singing. Our guests also enjoy the experience too! The majority of them praise the experience and tell us they will return and recommend our services to their friends.”*

3.2.3. Culinary attraction

Studies also found that local cuisine can be considered the ‘symbolic’ factor that can represent one’s culture and identity [25]; and can be used to promote local rural tourism [26].

Noong homestay provides the traditional cuisine of Tay, Nung, and Dao for visitors with specific ethnic food such as Khau Nhuc, Five-colored sticky rice (Xoi Ngu Sac), Lam rice, ant eggs caviar, and leaf wines...

The homestay owners stated that serving only ethnic traditional cuisine is essential in Noong homestay to promote their traditional ethnic culture to tourists. Furthermore, all of the ethnic minority family members in Noong homestay can cook ethnic foods and consume them daily “as a way to transfer and protect our culture to our next generations and visitors”.

3.3. Homestay and sustainable community development for ethnic minorities

Cultural tourism is one of the most rapidly growing tourism in the world. Cultural tourism provides several benefits for the local community such as economic benefits from tourist spending, cultural promotion preservation, protect local identity, enhance local employment, youth, women, and ethnic minorities empowerment [7], [8].

Homestay as a form of cultural and community-based tourism is proved to be an effective tool to promote sustainable community development for the local community, especially in rural development, gender equality, and ethnic minority empowerment [27].

According to the heads of ethnic families, homestay tourism offers them several benefits for sustainable development.

Firstly, homestay tourism helps them to get economic benefits from the financial spending of tourists when using their accommodation and additional services. The financial fund will be spent for their daily living expenses and also be reinvested to improve their service, such as buying authentic traditional ethnic costumes for visitors to hire. According to the interviewees, although they operate homestays to earn income, they will not pursue “mass tourism”. The interviewees stated that in order to be sustainable, the operation of ethnic minority homestays needs to be kept on a small scale with authentic ethnic cultural services and products. This opinion is also supported by various researchers [12], [13].

According to Mrs. Nguyen Thi Tuyet Nhung (Homestay owners - Focus group interview, August 2022): *“Apart from living expenses, the money we get from tourist activities will be used to buy authentic ethnic costumes. For example, the costume you are wearing is from the H’Mong ethnic people in Ha Giang province. The price for this hand-made authentic costume is 5 million VND. In Noong homestay, we only use authentic ethnic tools and costumes. Our goal is to promote authentic traditional ethnic culture for visitors.”*

Secondly, homestay tourism helps ethnic minorities to be empowered. Through sharing their cultural stories, ethnic minorities can express their unique “cultural identity” to visitors, thus promoting their community to society.

Finally, homestay tourism enables ethnic minorities to protect and preserve their culture. According to the interviewees, presently, young ethnic minorities tend to find jobs in big cities and gradually forget their “cultural identity”, thus leading to a high risk of cultural degradation. The interviewees are also Tay, Dao, and Nung ethnic families living in Thai Nguyen city. Although they can keep their traditions, their second generation may forget the traditions if they do not operate homestay services. Homestay tourism does not only offer them the chance to earn a livelihood and share their ethnic identity, but also helps them to transfer the traditions to the next generation. As their next generations continue the homestay as a source of income, their ethnic culture will be protected and sustained in the future.

As sustainability is “meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs,” [9] the finding from the study proved that homestay helps ethnic minorities to earn income and benefits, express their cultural identity, while also preserving and sustaining their traditions for the next generations, hence homestay can offer sustainable community development for ethnic minorities.

4. Conclusions

This study investigates the role of homestay tourism in promoting local culture and providing sustainable community development for ethnic minorities in Thai Nguyen using the case study of

Noong homestay – a homestay operated by 03 ethnic minority families (Tay ethnic, Dao ethnic, and Nung ethnic).

The findings suggest that homestay as a form of cultural and community-based tourism has a significant value in promoting local culture. 03 factors of Authenticity, Engagement, and Culinary attraction are essential in homestay service to enhance visitors' cultural experience and satisfaction.

Furthermore, homestay tourism is found to be an effective tool to provide sustainable community development for ethnic minorities in Thai Nguyen, as it can help them to earn financial income, express cultural identity, achieve ethnic minority empowerment, and preserve ethnic traditions for future generations.

This study fills the gap in the cultural tourism field in Thai Nguyen as presently there is no study about homestay and ethnic minorities' cultural tourism in Thai Nguyen. Furthermore, this study gives insights into a cultural managerial application for future homestay investors. Finally, Thai Nguyen government aims to set tourism, especially cultural tourism the spearhead economic sector by 2030. However, the implementation process in the period 2015-2020 was not commensurate with the potential, strengths, and expectations of society, and the total revenue from tourism was low. Thus, this study also gives some suggestions for government officials regarding the future orientation of Thai Nguyen cultural tourism.

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