

International Journal of Social Science Exceptional Research

Sustainable tourism development in duong minh chau district, Tay Ninh

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Article Info

ISSN (online): 2583-8261

Volume: 03

Issue: 02

March-April 2024

Received: 10-02-2024;

Accepted: 16-03-2024

Page No: 54-59

Abstract

Nowadays, sustainable tourism development is one of the most essential targets in the socio-economic development strategy of Vietnam in general and Tay Ninh Province in particular. Especially, Duong Minh Chau district has many favorable conditions such as being an important trade bridge in the Southeast economic region, and having many historical and cultural relics, which include temples, shrines, revolutionary bases and so on. These relics are both pride and motivation to develop sustainable tourism, making a contribution to the economic and social development of Duong Minh Chau district. Based on theoretical research on sustainable tourism development and fieldwork surveys conducted in Duong Minh Chau district, the article contributes to identifying the value of this district's historical and cultural relics to promote tourism development. It is necessary for us to unify the guiding viewpoint of local authorities on the balance between preserving and exploiting the values of relics, combining propagating and mobilizing people's resources for exploitation and ensuring sustainable tourism development of the local areas in the future.

Keywords: Duong Minh Chau district; Historical and Cultural Relics; Revolutionary base Sustainable Tourism; Tay Ninh, Vietnam

1. Introduction, Research problems

Recently, sustainable tourism development has concerned and researched. There are some common research projects such as: Bill Bramwell, Bernard Lane (2005), showed that "Although tourism has brought many benefits, challenges such as infrastructure, resource management, cost of living and social issues have now come to the forefront".

Ralf Buckley (2012) addcorded that: "Social and environmental impacts, responses and indicators are reviewed for the mainstream tourism sector worldwide, in five categories: population, peace, prosperity, pollution and protection. Of the 5000 relevant publications, very few attempt to evaluate the entire global tourism sector in terms which reflect global research in sustainable development. The industry is not yet close to sustainability". In addition, there are other research projects such as: Rachel Dodds, 2012; Richard Welford *et al*, 1999; Bernard Lane, 1993. These projects approached sustainable tourism development from many different angles. It is the basis for us to approach the theory of sustainable tourism development.

In Vietnam, sustainable tourism development is also of interest in a number of research projects such as: Luu Thi Thu Thuy, 2020; Nguyen Thi Thuy Hanh, 2017; Le Duc Tho, Le Thi Hong Nhung, 2019; Nguyen Phuoc Quy Quang, 2017; ... Studies provide theoretical and practical bases for sustainable tourism development in some localities. However, clarifying the potential values and proposing solutions for sustainable tourism development in Duong Minh Chau district (Tay Ninh) has not been researched yet. Tourism is known as a "smokeless industry" and is being invested in developing in all countries around the world. Recently, Duong Minh Chau district has also had many policies to invest and flourish this "smokeless industry". Therefore, what potential does Duong Minh Chau district possess for tourism development? What solutions need to be implemented to develop sustainable local tourism in the upcoming time? This article will contribute to clarifying those issues.

2. Research methodology

Based on the analysis of domestic and foreign studies, the state regulations on tourism development, planning documents of Duong Minh Chau district, Tay Ninh Province aim to shed light on the local potential values with the purpose of prospering tourism. Besides, the author also conducted a practical survey to draw out the current reality of this district's historical and cultural relics. On that basis, we propose several necessary solutions to effectively promote the value of historical and cultural relics in sustainable local tourism development in the near future.

3. Research results

3.1. Potentials in tourism development of Duong Minh Chau district

Vietnam has already experience two arduous resistant wars, Duong Minh Chau revolutionary base district exists many historical and cultural relics of great value to the land and people living here.

Firstly, the historical and cultural relics at Duong Minh Chau revolutionary base district (Phuoc Ninh commune) have a lot of potential to establish themselves as a tourist destination and a resort complex. On the one hand, this is a historical relic site, an important revolutionary base of the locality and Tay Ninh province, and the "capital" of the resistance war against the French and Americans in the southern part of Vietnam. The state has already invested in the central area, and the infrastructure is relatively complete. With nearly 200 hectares of planted forest more than 30 years old, near the bank of Dau Tieng Lake, this area is actually suitable for developing traditional tourism, along with other types of tourism associated with forests and water surfaces. This will also be the convergence point of a series of activities correlated with historical sites: Cu Chi Tunnels, the Southern Revolutionary Base at Boi Loi, Ba Den Mountain, and the and the Central Committee of the South.

On the other hand, in front of the Dau Tieng Lake bed, it is the largest artificial irrigation reservoir in Southeast Asia. Dau Tieng Lake is considered a "water bag of heaven" because it is replenished from Bien Ho (Great Lake - Cambodia) and hundreds of streams and tributaries flowing to create a source of life for fishermen fishing on the lake bed. This is also a main source of clean water to supply Ho Chi Minh City's domestic water plants. The lake bed has many natural oases called usual names such as Dong Bo Island, Xin Island, Trang Island, Nhim Island and so on. When travelling here, visitors can rent boats to experience exploration and immerse in the wild beauty of both the lake bed and natural oases.

In the middle of a vast lake, few people (if not local people) know the existence of Nhim Island, with a total area of about 1,000 hectares, of which nearly 300 hectares are mound land and primary forest land, the rest is seasonal semi-flooded area (Vietnam National Administration of Tourism, 2016) ^[14]. Residents live on agriculture yearly, mainly growing cassava and exploiting aquatic products in the lake. Since 2003, Tay Ninh province has had a project to plant protective forests on Nhim Island, also contributing to making the biological system here more diverse and pristine. With the wild beauty bestowed by nature and a prime location, Nhim Island is an ideal place to develop eco-tourism and resorts to attract domestic and foreign tourists. During hot summer days or tiring working days, when individuals experience a simple

life and enjoy folk dishes in a poetic setting, specifically Nhim island, it is a great therapy for the spiritual life of each visitor.

Secondly, several relics of revolutionary bases spread throughout communes such as Lang - Cha La revolutionary base (Cha La commune) and Suoi Mon revolutionary base (Phan commune), are ideal places to invest in fostering tourism and traditional cultural activities. Lang - Cha La revolutionary base is a large base area with continuous forests, rivers, streams, and fields creating a dangerous position, consisting of Phuoc Minh, Phuoc Ninh, Lang communes and Cha La today. During the resistance war against the US, the revolutionary base was the place where important meetings of the Eastern Military Commission took place to make combat strategies and successfully organize famous battles of Duong Minh Chau militia to capture the Ben Cui plantation, Dau Tieng Branch in 1957. Ms. Huynh Thi Ai Le - Secretary of the Party Committee of Cha La Commune shared: "Lang base - Cha La in the past was a revolutionary base, but today it is not only a place of traditional education, but also the gathering place of the armed forces every year. This place that once played a strategic role during the period of revolutionary struggle, and nowadays striving in peace every day, every hour to build and maintain Cha La commune - heroic commune of the Armed Forces is now a new rural commune. Forever and ever, the historical relics of Lang - Cha La Base will always be the pride of the young generation today and in the in the future"(Dai Duong, 2021). Obviously, with the advantage of developing eco-tourism and a heroic testament to the nation's patriotic tradition, Lang - Cha La base, if it were well invested and exploited, this would support the phase of local economic and social development.

Additionally, Suoi Mon revolutionary base belongs to the Ba Den Mountain National Tourist Area complex. According to planning, the 30 square kilometer Ba Den mountain area is part of the management area of Ninh Son ward, Ninh Thanh ward, Thanh Tan commune, Tan Binh commune (Tay Ninh city), Phan commune, and Suoi Da commune (Duong Minh Chau district), approximately 11km from Tay Ninh city center. Ba Den mountain complex is located in the middle of a plain made of granite, granodionite, and so on, with 3 high peaks: Ba Den mountain (986m high), Phung mountain (372m high) and Heo mountain - also known as Dat mountain (335m high), which is an area with beautiful landscapes, a cool and fresh climate, and historical and cultural relics such as pagodas and caves. The festivals, which occur at the beginning of the lunar year, attract a large number of tourists to this province and the Southern provinces. At the foot of Ba Den Mountain, Suoi Mon base once caused great terror to enemies during the resistance war against the US. If exploited successfully, this is also a perfect place to combine eco-tourism, traditional tourism, and recreational activities with the complex at Ba Den Mountain.

Thirdly, Duong Minh Chau also has great potential to exploit the value of spiritual tourism and traditional national culture. Currently, the majority of residents follow the Cao Dai religion [universal system] with a system of Cao Dai temples throughout the communes in the district. On the way from Ho Chi Minh City to Duong Minh Chau, visitors will pass by Cao Dai temples located on the main road such as Cao Dai Temple Truong Mit; Cha La, Phan, Suoi Da and so on. Therefore, if we can exploit the traditional cultural values of Cao Dai

religion such as costumes, ceremonial music, and ancestor worship rituals to serve the spiritual life of tourists, which will create motivation to attract tourists to Duong Minh Chau. In particular, during the process of reclaiming and living in new lands, residents also created unique traditional cultural activities such as communal houses and temples. Lately, Duong Minh Chau has many small temples and two communal houses recognized as provincial-level historical and cultural relics: Phuoc Hoi communal house (Suoi Da Commune) and Bau Dinh Temple (Truong Mit Commune). Phuoc Hoi communal house is majestic on a large campus next to Road 781, very convenient for transportation. Phuoc Hoi communal house still keeps important treasures such as King Thieu Tri's decree on the merits of Mr. Pham Van Dien. The communal house was built in an architectural style that is typical of Southern communal houses but also has its own unique features. Today, Phuoc Hoi Communal House still maintains traditional cultural activities such as Ky Yen festival on the full moon day of the third month (March 15) of the lunar calendar. Phuoc Hoi communal house is nearly two hundred years old, a cultural heritage, and a spiritual symbol with extremely important meaning in local people's minds. Village communal house festivals are a spiritual bridge among people, among the past, present and future, contributing to enriching the cultural life of the village and preserving the precious assets of the national spiritual and cultural heritage. Therefore, if the values of the communal house are well exploited, it will create favorable conditions to attract tourists to Duong Minh Chau. This contributes to economic and social development and improves people's lives.

3.2. Solutions for sustainable tourism development in Duong Minh Chau district

Duong Minh Chau is a land with many advantages to attract tourists to visit, explore ecological resources, and organize a trip to traditional and historical places. According to researchers, "the potential benefits include improving visitors management, local economic and environmental benefits as well as fuller community participation" (Bill Bramwell, Bernard Lane, 2005) are important factors promoting sustainable tourism development. Therefore, the most important mission is that we need to have the necessary solutions to develop sustainable tourism.

According to Term 14, Charter 3 of the Tourism Law in 2017, "Sustainable tourism development is tourism development that simultaneously meets socio-economic and environmental requirements, ensuring harmony of interests of all subjects who participate in tourism activities, without jeopardizing the ability to meet future tourism needs" (National Assembly of the Vietnam Republic Socialist, 2017) ^[8]. Thus, sustainable tourism development has its own characteristics, associated with services to improve local economic and social life and make sure an unpolluted living environment. Tourism development must guarantee cooperation between the interests of participating entities: tourists - local residents - tourism services human resources and so forth. In order to achieve this, we need to coordinate and implement a number of solutions aligned with the following method:

First, tourism development is associated with preserving and promoting the values of historical relics, national cultures, and natural resources. Richard Welford *et al* (1999) ^[13] argue

that sustainable tourism development requires "the management of all resources in a way that satisfies economic, social and aesthetic needs whilst maintaining cultural integrity, the development of ecosystems, biodiversity and life support systems" (Richard Welford *et al*, 1999) ^[13]. Sustainable tourism development must be associated with preserving and promoting existing historical, cultural and natural resource values for economic and social development. Therefore, the authorities of Tay Ninh province and Duong Minh Chau district need to have close coordination in implementing the State's guidelines and policies on preserving and promoting the value of the relic sites. Based on the state's legal documents and the government's resolution, Tay Ninh province and so on, Duong Minh Chau district leaders need to promulgate a mechanism for management, investment and exploitation of the relic sites. Besides preserving traditional cultural features, we must also proactively and actively absorb the quintessential human cultural values to build an advanced culture that enriches national identity.

Besides, we need to effectively implement Decision No. 36/2005/QĐ-TTg dated February 24, 2005 of the Prime Minister on taking November 23rd every year as "Vietnam Cultural Heritage Day". We have to "educate patriotic traditions, national pride, and a sense of responsibility to protect cultural heritage among the population; enhance the sense of responsibility and pride of those working to protect, preserve and promote the value of national cultural heritage in the cause of building and developing an advanced Vietnamese culture, and enriching national identity" (Government, 2005). For the youth of Duong Minh Chau today, we have to strengthen education to preserve the cultural and patriotic traditions of our ancestors. Therefore, the government needs to promote propaganda and education to protect patriotic traditions, direct school units (at least in the district) to bring students to the relics to study and research, form students' pride in the heroic traditions of their ancestors and gratitude to those who have sacrificed their lives for the peace and development of Vietnam today.

Second, local authorities need to develop mechanisms and policies regulating propaganda and mobilizing people to participate in performing a good role in coordinating with functional agencies in preserving and exploiting relics that service tourism development. According to the Law on Tourism, "The community has the right to partake and gain legal benefits from tourism activities; be responsible for protecting tourism resources and local cultural identity; maintain security, order, social safety, and protect the environment" (National Assembly of the Vietnam Republic Socialist, 2017) ^[8]. Rachel Dodds also says that "From a destination management perspective, it was agreed that local government should be prioritized for the long-term survival of the tourism industry" (Rachel Dodds, 2012). Therefore, to preserve and exploit the value of relics for sustainable tourism development, specialized agencies need to develop content to propagate the law on relics to the people with concise, easy-to-understand content, and recalled simplicity. On the other hand, forms of propaganda and mobilization of people need to be richer and more diverse to attract community participation in protecting monuments. More importantly, we need to make people clearly understand the role of monuments in their lives so that they voluntarily join hands in protecting monuments. Only then will the work of

preserving monuments be most effective.

We need to promote the role of the community in protecting monuments with the motto “bringing monuments to the community”, mobilizing local residents to take part in managing and protecting monuments, and at the same time concerning with the community benefits. We need to “enhance the role of local people in community tourism development so that people are aware that when participating in tourism activities, they will be respected and their rights will be shared” (Nguyen Phuoc Quy Quang, 2017). This is a key issue that needs to be resolved to ensure harmony between responsibilities and rights for people living around monuments. In addition, the government needs to promote educational propaganda and raise awareness for the community who is the subject of the monument. Strengthening the dissemination of laws, equipping people with understanding and knowledge about the value of monuments, principles of behavior with monuments, building and cultivating sustainable values is the “sacred nature” of each monument, to both create the uniqueness of the monument and attract tourists from many different areas to pay a visit. The people's cooperation and contribution is an important factor to contribute to preserving and incorporating historical and cultural relics into tourism development. People are both the subjects serving tourism development and the beneficiaries of the benefits that the tourism industry brings. Therefore, people must be trained and fostered to raise their sense of responsibility to the community. Only then will be exploiting the value of relics into sustainable tourism development in the future.

Third, combining relic conservation and exploiting relic values is quite effective in local tourism development. Preserving and promoting the value of relics are two main aspects in preserving relics today. These are two factors that exist in parallel but are very necessary and complement each other. If we are too inclined towards conservation, the value of relics will only lie in the relics themselves and have no role in the socio-economy. On the contrary, if we only focus on exploiting the value of relics without investing in conservation, the relics will inevitably be destroyed and damaged. As a result, we need to combine effectively and harmoniously between preserving and promoting the value of relics in real life.

The most important goal in preserving and conserving relics is to bring the value of the relics closer to people's lives and serve socio-economic development, especially the growth of the local tourism industry. More importantly, the government needs to “propose the creation of new tourism products, strengthen the construction of inter-regional tourism programs and routes to diversify tourism products, and coordinate tourism activities among provinces in the region with other localities to become a linked chain of tourism services” (Luu Thi Thu Thuy, 2020). Local authorities, along with travel companies, several related organization units and people strengthen propaganda and promotion of the cultural heritage system including historical and cultural relics, scenic spots, ceremonies, festivals and unique cultural features of ethnic groups in the area with many rich and diverse forms, various types and publications of tourism information. At the same time, the district government needs to increase investment, restoration, and effective exploitation of cultural heritage. Tourism development is associated with strengthening the preservation and development of culture in

an advanced direction, enriching the national identity. When investing in tourism development, we “need to evaluate the economic impact, clearly prioritize which kinds of development are appropriate, will bring benefits to local communities and minimize the negative impact on their lives” (Le Duc Tho, Le Thi Hong Nhung, 2019). The exploitation of cultural heritage in tourism activities must ensure growth but not place negative consequences for local culture and the environment. To avoid changes that cause damage or harm to monuments, we need to harmoniously combine the two missions of preserving and promoting the value of monuments.

Fourth, promoting information and communication work on historical and cultural relics to tourists is to develop local tourism. Recently, along with promoting the collection, research, and compilation of party history, party committees at all levels, Duong Minh Chau district government and federal organizations have had activities to deploy traditional education about revolutionary history among cadres, party members and people, especially among the younger generation. Thereby, partly raising awareness and sense of responsibility of officials, party members and people in preserving and promoting the values of historical relics have contributed to creating motivation for socio-economic development. However, this work has not yet met practical requirements and has not penetrated deeply into the masses. Therefore, the District People's Committee (People's Committee) needs to seriously and effectively implement the Cultural Heritage Law on propagating and disseminating the value of historical and cultural relics to the people. Cultural and mass information agencies have “the responsibility to propagate and widely disseminate domestically and abroad the cultural heritage values of the Vietnamese ethnic community, contributing to raising awareness of preserving and promoting the value of cultural heritage among people” (National Assembly of the Vietnam Republic Socialist, 2001)^[7]. We need to “strengthen the connection between all levels, ministries, central branches and localities from the leadership to the people, and strengthen the connection between the tourism industry and other industries” (Nguyen Thi Thuy Hanh, 2017). Propaganda and popularization of the value of historical and cultural relics need to be widely deployed to raise people's understanding and awareness of protecting relics. Local authorities need to promote information and propaganda work to transform from awareness to action among officials, party members and people of all walks of life about the meaning and role of conserving and promoting the value of historical and cultural relics to meet the requirements of fostering industrialization and urbanization. This is one of the important measures for people to better understand the value of relics, bring relics into the community to mobilize community strength in preserving and promoting the value of relics.

On the other hand, it is necessary to have coordinated agencies such as the District Propaganda Department, the District Department of Education and Training, educational units, and schools in the area to convey the relics' values to the young generations. We need to introduce extracurricular learning programs into schools according to the guidance of the education sector to help students form the learning habit of finding the history and meaning of local historical and cultural relics. The government needs to encourage schools to register to care for local cultural heritage. At the same time,

the government and the school coordinated to organize discussions between officials and teachers in the education and cultural sectors with the Ho Chi Minh Communist Youth Union on partaking in protecting and promoting cultural-historic values. Therefore, the young generation has the opportunity to learn and contribute to the work of preserving and promoting the value of relics, thereby illuminating the love for the homeland and preserving the beauty of good national cultural values.

Fifth, calling for investment capital for the preservation of historical - cultural relics and investment develops local tourism. Local authorities need to take advantage of central and local capital sources and socialized capital sources to restore and embellish historical and cultural relics, organize festivals, and develop tourism according to provincial regulations. The biggest difficulty in preserving and promoting the value of historical and cultural relics in Duong Minh Chau district recently is the investment resources for this work. Investing resources in preserving monuments includes many forms, such as increasing budget investment in culture, ensuring funding for cultural development programs, and promoting the collection, restoration, and preservation of local relics and festival values. Therefore, the government needs to prioritize investing resources in preserving and promoting these cultural and historical relics. The government needs to consider increasing investment from the state budget for the management, conservation and promotion of monument values, focusing on contents such as planning; renovation and embellishment work; protection of monuments, integration of economic development programs with the introduction of local cultural identity to mobilize resources for socialization.

According to the researchers, “the future of sustainable tourism depends on its implementation by businesses and policymakers. That relies on academics becoming more involved in business and policy work, which requires the establishment of multidisciplinary institutes and international research groups” (Bernard Lane, 1993). Therefore, in addition to capital from the state budget, the District People's Committee needs to promote socialization and mobilize the strength of the local community. Mobilizing businesses, especially those located in the district, provides financial support to properly protect, restore, and promote the value of local historical and cultural relics. The most difficult thing about calling for investment and mobilizing investment capital for monuments is solving the problem of benefits for investors. Policies need to ensure harmony between the interests of investors and the preservation and conservation of the value of relics, avoiding the commercialization and spiritualization of relics to serve economic benefits.

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

Duong Minh Chau is a land with a favorable location, a heroic revolutionary tradition and many important potentials for sustainable tourism development. Preserving and promoting the values of historical relics associated with economic and social development and sustainable tourism development in the locality is very necessary. To effectively exploit the value of historical and cultural relics in sustainable tourism development, we have the following recommendations:

For the People's Committee of Tay Ninh province: Provincial leaders need to thoroughly direct and strictly

implement the issue of protecting cultural heritage as proposed by the Party's Resolution. The authorities of Tay Ninh province and Duong Minh Chau district need to have close coordination in implementing the State's guidelines and policies in preserving and promoting the value of the relic site. Based on legal documents, State regulations and local characteristics, the government promulgates more specific regulations, closely following the actual local situation on conservation, exploitation and conservation. Promoting the value of the province's cultural heritage is to serve the province's sustainable tourism development, which is the most fundamental solution to create a legal corridor for Duong Minh Chau District People's Committee to issue regulations on management, protection and use of historical and cultural relics in the district to serve sustainable tourism development.

For Duong Minh Chau district government

Local authorities need to have an accurate assessment of the role of historical and cultural relics in people's lives and promptly provide necessary directions in building and planning policies for preserving and promoting the values of monuments. The government needs to issue a policy to exploit the relic sites in a sustainable way, put the relic area into service and develop tourism to contribute to economic, cultural and social transformation for Duong Minh Chau district.

The government needs to have incentives and connections with travel companies and tour operators to promote and introduce to tourists the historical and cultural relics of Duong Minh Chau district when they come to visit Tay Ninh. Duong Minh Chau has an important position, connecting two important tourism chains such as:

+ From Binh Duong to Cau Mountain - Dau Tieng Lake - Nhim Island - Duong Minh Chau Revolutionary Base - Ba Den Mountain - Tay Ninh Holy See - Southern Department Central Base - Xa Mat Border Gate - Moc Bai Border Gate to the City Ho Chi Minh.

+ Ho Chi Minh City - Southern Department Central Base - Tay Ninh Holy See - Ba Den Mountain - Duong Minh Chau Base - Nhim Island - Dau Tieng Lake - Cau Mountain and back to Ho Chi Minh City.

With two attractive tourism chains as above, combining sightseeing and resort tourism, spiritual tourism, and patriotic traditional education if exploited effectively, the historical and cultural relics of Duong Minh Chau district will promote values and contribute to creating additional sources of income for local people. Thereby, it contributes to the local socio-economic development.

In addition, the District People's Committee also needs to concentrate on investing in the training of specialized staff in preserving and exploiting relics. The government needs to develop a guiding framework for organizing daily and religious activities at relics to ensure legal regulations, civilization, and in accordance with good traditional customs and traditions of the nation. Strengthening inspection of security, order and preserving the environmental landscape of the monuments. Form consulting organizations to evaluate the value of monuments, especially during the process of embellishing and restoring monuments, the government needs to mobilize experts and scientists to participate in research, restoration and repair of monuments to their original state. Additionally, we need to promote the

community's monitoring responsibility to promptly detect and correct errors that may occur during the implementation of projects, in order to maximally protect the original structural elements into relics during the process of preserving and restoring the relics.

For the government and residents of communes

Commune authorities coordinate with the District People's Committee to effectively implement Decision No. 36/2005/QĐ-TTg dated February 24, 2005 of the Prime Minister on taking November 23rd annually as "Vietnam Cultural Heritage Day". We must "educate patriotic traditions, national pride, and a sense of responsibility to protect cultural heritage among the entire population, enhance the sense of responsibility and pride of those working to protect, preserve and promote the value of national cultural heritage in the cause of building and developing an advanced culture enriching Vietnamese national identity" (Government, 2005). For the youth of Duong Minh Chau today, we must strengthen education to preserve the cultural and patriotic traditions of our ancestors. Therefore, the government needs to promote propaganda and education about protecting patriotic traditions, and direct school units to take students to relics to study and research heroic traditions of our ancestors, who passed away for the peace and development of Vietnam today.

The government needs to regularly organize activities related to historical and cultural relics such as visiting traditional destinations, and organizing competitions to learn about local relics in order to maximize the participation of local people into cultural activities. Thereby, all residents come into contact with the relics and see their role and responsibility in preserving and promoting the value of the relics. The local people will increase their awareness of respecting the law on relics preservation and protection. Both local people and the government have well implemented measures to protect the relic sites, promote the value of the relic sites and exploit them to serve sustainable tourism development, contributing to improving people's lives.

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