

Tourism Renovation Plan for the Historic Site of the Confucius Temple in Taipei City

Reshaping Confucian Culture, Regenerating the Historic District of Tatung and Experiencing the Thousand-year-old Spirit



On Teacher's Day of 2011, the annual memorial ceremony for Confucius was held in the Taipei Confucius Temple. It was the crack of dawn, but many people were already on hand. It became noisy in front of the temple as visitors began lining up, waiting to get into the temple to observe the ceremony. With the commencement of the Shih Tian Ceremony, the ministering official, Mayor Hau Lung-bin, led the ceremony. Through a series of rituals, the sonorous tones of nanguan, a stringed instrument, and the awe-inspiring and dignified dancing of Liu I Dance, the memorial ceremony came to a perfect end. Another important event of the day was the delivery of wisdom cakes by Mayor Hau Lung-bin. Students about to take exams prayed they could pass their exams after feasting upon some wisdom cake, while parents hoped their children would gain some wisdom and learn to respect their teachers and the teachers' lessons.

After participating in the memorial ceremony for Confucius, some people felt refreshed by the Confucius Temple and its surrounding landscape. The Taipei Confucius Temple was built in 1925 and has been much weathered by time. It is the only Confucius temple built by public donations and the only one in Taiwan that is headed by the direct descendants of the traditional officers of the Taipei Confucius Temple, a recognized orthodox Confucius temple. It would be a shame for it to end up in a decayed and dilapidated state. Fortunately, in 2009, the Taipei City Government began sponsoring a project entitled the "Tourism Regeneration Plan for the Historic Site of the Taipei Confucius Temple" in order to apply for funds from the Bureau of Tourism under the Ministry of Transportation. The application was accepted. Through structural and exterior improvements, the Confucius Temple in Taipei now has a brand new appearance.





Renovation of the Confucius Temple and Its Surroundings to Promote Tourism

The project to renovate the Confucius Temple was one of the five projects selected from among the many projects proposed by 23 cities and counties throughout the country. Once it was accepted, the 3-year period allotted to carry out the project, which began from 2009, came to an end in 2011. In cooperation with a wide range of departments and private enterprises, the integration of local tourism resources and local resources, the renovation of tourist attractions, and the innovation and overall marketing plan, the special Confucian cultural context of the historic site of the Confucius Temple was transformed into an important site of Confucianism as well as a major international tourist attraction. In addition, the Taipei City Government hoped that the project would promote the regeneration and development of the whole area.

Once the project was approved under the name “Tourism Regeneration Plan for the Historic Site of the Confucius Temple in Taipei City,” the whole area around the temple was included. In general, with the Confucius Temple, Talung Elementary School, and Bao An Temple forming the center, this area covers the district formed by the axis of Hami Street and Talung Street. Major structures in the area include the Confucius Temple, Talung Elementary School, Bao An Temple, Linsheng Gardens, Six Arts Square, and Forty-Four Ancient Stores. The whole project gained significance by the symbolism of Confucianism, the setting for ceremonies of traditional beliefs, educational heritage and the historical and cultural contexts present. The project was divided into 9 categories and 23 sub-projects. The following is a brief introduction of the 9 categories.

1. Landscape Improvement: A Reconstruction of the Confucian Gardens Based on Humanist Principles

The reconstruction project included three areas: the interior of the Confucius Temple, the area around the Confucius Temple, and the area's navigational system. Based on the concept of “humanism,” the interior of the Confucius Temple was reconstructed to demonstrate “a Confucius Temple built by the public,” “ancient ceremonies and rituals,” “Confucian gardens and courtyards.” Such principles as “education for all without discrimination” and “touring around different kingdoms” served as guidelines. The reconstruction work included tree-planting in the garden areas and improvement of the garden landscape to emphasize the unique cultural atmosphere of Confucianism in the area and on the tourist route. Moreover, Minglun Hall was also reconstructed with a new 4D Theater to promote the temple's activities and functions.

The areas surrounding the Confucius Temple were improved; the landscaping along the streets and building facades from the MRT Yuanshan Station to the temple were renovated through cleaning and beautifying the exterior walls, rearranging exterior facilities, beautifying billboards and signs, and creating improved street lighting. In addition, the area around Six Arts Square was improved, the Tunhuang No. 1 Commons was beautified, and freeway ramps underwent renovation to fit the local historical and cultural characteristics and increase the tourism value of the whole area.

Finally, the navigation system in the temple was improved: informational signs for tourists and designated tourist areas were installed, and tourist information in various languages and signs were made available for the convenience of visitors.



2. The Project on Transportation Improvement: Offering Convenient Public Transport to Promote Tourism

The project included improvement of the area in and around Yuanshan Transfer Station, the construction of extensive parking areas, the construction of an underground parking lot at Talung Elementary School, and improvement of local traffic control facilities. This project was carried out for the purpose of promoting tourism in the area through the development of a convenient public transportation system and parking facilities.

3. Regular Demonstrations and Performances of Specific Themes: Ancient Rituals and Ceremonies, Experiencing Confucianism

The memorial ceremony in honor of Confucius is held every spring and fall. To enable visitors to truly appreciate the rituals of the ceremony and the Confucian spirit, starting from October 12, 2010, “Demonstration of Rituals of the Ancient Ceremony” is presented at Dacheng Hall every Tuesday and Sunday to show the dignified ancient ceremony and the graceful dance to Ya music (a kind of ancient court music that is an integral part of the memorial ceremony for Confucius). In addition, the activity called “Experiencing Confucianism: the Tea Ceremony of True Gentlemen” is held for the public to allow them to experience Taiwan’s tea culture and the tradition of respecting and thanking teachers. “The Books and the Way” is an activity that combines books and rituals to encourage students to set their goals, study hard, and learn the contents of books, so that they can keep to the path of becoming true Confucian gentlemen.

4. Workshops on Confucianism and Chinese Traditional Culture E-learning and Digital Archives: Learning About the Confucian Tradition in a Comprehensive Way

This part includes two activities: the “workshop on Confucianism and Traditional Culture” and “E-learning and the digitalized archives of Confucianism, Production development of story game software.”

The “workshop on Confucianism and Traditional Culture” is a series of courses to be held 51 times starting from August, 2010, for both locals and foreigners to understand the history and culture as well as the invaluable heritage of the Talungtung area. The courses include: “Youth Camp of Confucianism,” “Camp for Experiencing Chinese Confucianism,” “Holiday Family Camp of Little Confucian Scholars,” “Handicraft Series in the Confucius Temple,” “Clip Art DIY,” and Story-telling.

The “E-learning and digitalized archives of Confucianism, Production development of story game software” offers a multi-learning environment with Confucian features through the design of the “Confucianism Cultural Net of the Confucius Temple in Taipei City” with information for people to truly understand the architectural significance of the temple, the history of Confucian temples, virtual tours, the lives of Confucian sages, the development of Confucianism, cultural relics of the memorial ceremony for Confucius, touring routes of different kingdoms, and local characteristics.



5. Learning Confucian Culture and Virtual Experience Situational: Experience of Confucianism and the Beauty of Talungtung

This part includes three activities: “Experiencing the Six Arts,” “Experiencing and Learning Chinese Characters and Culture,” and “Situational Plays or Action Plays about the Confucius Temple”.

Renovation and decoration of the east wing, the west wing, the east warehouse and the space on both sides of Lingxing Gate for exhibitions of “Experiencing the Six Arts” started in November, 2010. With lively high-tech multi-media facilities, these exhibitions illustrate the content of Confucian schools for the visiting public to experience the Six Arts (etiquette, music, archery, charioteering, calligraphy, and math) and to promote the cultural spirit of Confucianism with lively and innovative displays.

The “Experiencing and Learning Chinese Characters and Culture” includes the “Cultural Festival of Chinese Characters and Culture” and “A Cultural Stroll of Confucianism” to show visitors the beauty of Chinese characters and Talungtung.

“Situational plays or Action plays about the Confucius Temple” are staged in the outdoor theater (Situational Theater) on weekend evenings. The plays all revolve around Confucius as well as local stories concerning historical sources of Talungtung. From October 2, 2010, to May 28, 2011, three plays were staged: “A Love Affair at the Confucius Temple,” “A Child’s Tour of the Confucius Temple,” and “Universal Brotherhood” to fulfill the double goals of passing on cultural education and reinvigorating the local economy.

6. Guidance and Voice Service: Bilingual Confucian Ambassadors, Multiple Choices of Guidance Service

Starting from July 23, 2010, to July 31, 2011, students, professional guides, and locals who were excelled at certain foreign languages were recruited and trained to become “Confucian Ambassadors.” The plan offers guided tours in English, Japanese, Korean, and French on Wednesdays, Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays to foreign tourists. During the service hours, Confucian Ambassadors walk around the temple as representatives of Confucian culture. By the end of November, more than 100,000 foreigners had been recruited for the service which allows them to understand the historical changes of the Confucius Temple in Taipei, its architectural features, and Confucian culture. Currently 20 Confucian Ambassadors had vowed that they would serve as volunteer cultural workers for the Taipei Confucius Temple for life to continue to infuse energy into the guidance service of the temple and promote the service quality for international tourists visiting the Taipei Confucius Temple.

“The Audio-Tour-Devic” offers tourists diverse and detailed tourist information from specially designed software, touring content, and hardware installation. The touring content includes places in the vicinity of the temple, such as Bao An Temple, Forty-Four Ancient Stores, Talung Elementary School, Talung Night Market, and other tourist attractions of the Talungtung area; it provides information on history, the humanities, the arts, architecture, beliefs, tourism, and local development. The voice navigation system



began operating in April 2011. Features of the system include: portable navigation facility, group navigation system, floor navigation facility and hanging navigation facility. The system offers tourists a high-quality multi-dimensional touring service.

7. Development and Promotion of the Feature Industry: Confucian Dishes are Served, Creative Commodity Is An Attention-getter.

The two parts include: “Research and Development of Dishes with Confucian Features” and “Development and Production of Souvenirs and Cultural Relics.”

“Research and Development of Dishes with Confucian Features” combines history with traditional cuisine and thirteen courses such as “Deceive the Scholar Fish” “Wen TianXiang Chicken,” “Yang huo Pork” were created according to recipes derived from the sages and Confucian scholars who worshipped in the Taipei Confucius Temple. Moreover, local restaurants provided assistance to promote Taipei Confucius cuisine. Currently, visitors can get a taste of Confucian cuisine at 15 different restaurants and the Talung Nightmarket Business Circle.

“Development and Production of Souvenirs and Cultural Relics” offers nine souvenirs of the Confucius Temple according to the style and atmosphere of the historic site of the Confucius Temple. These souvenirs include the following: glass bell-shaped jars, a set of blue china cups, glass work USB, The Analects scarves, Confucius Said satchels, Four Books notepads, Eight Notes coasters, Five Scholar bookmarks, and Etiquette magnets/postcards, and, starting from October 2011, they are being sold at the Sales Center of Publications and Souvenirs by the Taipei City Government, the Gift Shop at the Taipei Confucius Temple, the Huashan Cultural and Creative Industry Park, and the Hsimen Red House. Among these souvenirs, the Confucius Said satchels have attracted much attention and started a craze the minute they hit the market.

8. Promotion and Marketing: In Motion or Not, the Beauty of the Confucius Temple Give-away

This is a marketing project promoted through multi-media activities both dynamic and static/stationary in nature.

The stationary activities include the 3D advertisements at MRT stations, advertisements on the sides of public buses, the production of tourism leaflets in various languages (Chinese, English, Japanese, Korean, Spanish, French, German) and available at the Yuanshan Tourist Information Center, the Confucius Temple, and the Tourism Fair for distribution.

The dynamic part incorporates media like TV and movies to create a lively and youthful atmosphere at the Confucius Temple. For example, the movie, Confucius, had its premiere showing at the Confucius Temple. The popular TV series, “In Time With You,” filmed at the Confucius Temple, allowed the viewing public to get to know more about the temple and discover its beauty. In addition, a CIS identifying system was installed and the film “P. S., Who are you?” a love story, is broadcast through the internet in Chinese, English, and Japanese.

9. Sustainable Management: Yuanshan Tourist Information Center

The construction and management of the Yuanshan Tourist Information Center, which began operating in September 2010, offers visitors a more complete and convenient tourist information consultation service.



Passing on Confucianism, Sustainable Development Creating a Bright Spot for International Confucianism

Through the efforts and support of different parties, the project of the “Tourism Renovation Plan for the Historic Site of the Confucian Temple in Taipei City” was promoted smoothly, bringing innovation to the Confucius Temple and the Talungtun area and attracting more and more tourists both local and from abroad. According to statistics, between January and November 2011, 330,780 people visited the Confucius Temple, 179,992 were local tourists, and 150,788 (including mainland Chinese) were foreign tourists. On average, 970 people visited the Confucius Temple, a 22.4% increase compared to the 270,155 visitors between January and November 2010. This shows that the renovation of the Confucius Temple has gained approval and applause from all parties and the temple has become a hot spot for cultural tourism among both local and foreign visitors.

To continue to increase the rate of tourism, based on the principle of sustainable development, the Taipei Confucius Temple has tried hard to promote and develop Chinese culture and Confucian ideas through performance and experiencing activities and its hardware and software facilities. In terms of performances and experiences related to Confucianism, the Ya Music Dance Performance Volunteer Group was formed, having recruited 85 members so far to promote Confucian culture.

In addition, in coordination with those who have been working to promote Confucian culture for a long period of time, such as China's Classical Culture Education Association, the Taiwan Ocean Society Poetry Association, the Book Society of the Republic of China, the Calligraphy Teaching and Research Association of the Republic of China, the Poetry, Music and Dance Creative Group, and the Confucius Temple itself, the Taipei City Government has organized workshops on Confucianism, and held activities such as camps devoted to the experience of Confucianism in order to spread awareness and understanding of Confucian culture among the general public and to meet the goals of cultural education.

In response to the trend of developing the cultural creative industry, the Taipei City Government will continue to cooperate with the cultural education theater group to produce plays and dance performances related to Confucianism and stage them at the temple. Moreover, other promotional activities will be integrated in coordination with the themes of the memorial ceremonies held in the spring and fall to form an essential part of the cultural activities at the Confucius Temple. With the voice navigation facilities, experiencing the Six Arts, and the creative service and management of the 4D Theater, the Confucius Temple and the surrounding area will be transformed into a bright new spot in Taipei City that attracts international tourism and promotes Confucian heritage as an essential part of its cultural and economic development.

Now, when tourists come to the renovated Confucius Temple, not only can they feel a sense of nostalgia; they can also experience Confucian culture with the benefit of a wide range of new hardware and software, the operation of digital technical facilities, and overall planning and situational experience. There's no denying that Confucianism is a trend that transcends time and it has become a popular hot spot on Taipei cultural tours.