Nature-Based Tourism in Asia and Australia during the COVID-19 pandemic.
How the sector is responding.

Steve Noakes
• Chair: Pacific Asia Tourism
• Chair: Binna Burra Lodge, Lamington National Park, Australia
• Director: Ecolodges Indonesia & EcoSafari Indonesia
Nature-Based Tourism in Asia and Australia during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Examples from Australia (short) & Indonesia (longer)

Lamington National Park
Queensland, Australia

Tanjung Puting National Park
Kalimantan, Indonesia
Established 1933.

- We started during the Great Depression.
- During WWII we survived and trained tens of thousands of soldiers in bush survival skills.
- We’re recovering from the 2019 bushfires.
- In 2020, we’ll get through COVID-19.

✓ Planning to reopen September 2020

‘We’re in it for the long term!’
Steve Noakes, Chair, Board of Directors.
Gondwana Rainforests contains outstanding examples of major stages in the Earth’s evolutionary history as well as ongoing evolutionary processes.

180 million years in the making

Rainforests covered most of Australia for 40 million years after its separation from Gondwana.

We’re halfway through a small journey in time...

172 years of Binna Burra Lodge, Lamington National Park, Queensland, Australia

1933 - 2019

The first 86 years

2019 - bushfire
Reset. Reimagine. Recreate. BRING BACK BINNA BURRA

The next 86 years

2019 - 2105

BINNA BURRA LODGE
LAMINGTON NATIONAL PARK
Our PALs.

Griffith University - the ‘Lead University Partner’ for a new era of the iconic Binna Burra Lodge, which was devastated by bushfires in September 2019.

news.griffith.edu.au/2020/02/05/griffith-partners-with-binna-burra-on-bushfire-recovery/

TOURISM - READY FOR RECOVERY

Course objectives:
• Describe key factors that could inform ways to restart tourism activity and explore opportunities for accelerating recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Effort required and overview:
• Four modules to complete plus assessment.

Assessment:
• Short answer and multiple-choice questions in each module to determine engagement with the core content.

Tourism - Ready for Recover Digital Badge:
• Complete a short quiz at the end of the course and achieve 50% or more across the four modules of the course – can be completed multiple times to reach this goal.

www.griffith.edu.au/engage/professional-learning/tourism-recovery
Brief introduction to Ecolodges Indonesia.
Wildlife conservation is the focus.

ecolodgesindonesia.com/conservation/

Because …

Wilderness is a necessity of the human spirit!
Orangutan visitor to the lodge today
Tuesday 27 August 2019
Terima kasih Yulidar!
Camp Leakey is the heart of Tanjung Puting’s orangutan program.

Established in 1971

The park is home to one of the world’s largest wild orangutan populations (some 30,000 to 40,000).

230 species of birds
We assist Way Kambas National Park protect the endangered Sumatran Elephant + the rare Sumatran Rhino & Tiger.

Our conservation projects make regular contributions to protecting the wildlife.
“People must feel that the natural world is important and valuable and beautiful and wonderful and an amazement and a pleasure.”

David Attenborough
The Flores hawk-eagle is estimated to have a population of only 10 individuals remaining in Kelimutu National Park, Flores Island. (Kompas.com/Samuel Rabenak, Jakarta Post, 14 April 2019)
15kW Selectronic 3 Phase SP PRO Inverter, 20kW Selectsun Grid Tie Inverter, 22.2kWp Seraphin Monocrystalline PV Solar Modules, 24kWh Narada LiFePO4 Lithium Battery Bank & 30kVA Perkin Silent Generator

We’re at Mbelling Forest Reserve, the largest forest in Flores, Indonesia

- Easy to access from Labuan Bajo
- Set on the steep shoulders of Mbelling Mountain
- Stunning views west over to the Komodo Islands
- Habitat of a wide range of endemic plant species and birds
- A wonderful trekking destination
- In-house restaurant

ecolodgesindonesia.com
Video intro.
ECOLODGES INDONESIA - Empowering Local Community Through Ecotourism

Two minute extract – start at 6 minute, 20 seconds

"The Four Endemic birds found at Mbeliling are:"

Sam Rabanak
Lodge Birding Guide for Nusa Tenggara Timur

Full 8+ minute video is at: www.youtube.com/watch?v=JzK2Cq8tTw4
Dealing with COVID as a nature-based tourism operator.

- **Late February 2020:** Ecolodges Indonesia changed from a going business concern with bookings for 2020 in all lodges to a company looking bankruptcy in the face within six months at current expenditure levels.

- **Early March 2020:** The Board gave central office in Bali two main options, either lay off around 50% of our staff of 87 persons or take large salary cuts.

- After consultations with all lodge managers and their staff, all employees agreed to keep together and take massive salary cuts (many up to 80% cuts) and part time employment to enable the company to survive at least for another eighteen months.

- Apart from financial disadvantage, the seven staff in our Bali HQ had to cope with two other problems (i) the rapid expansion of COVID 19 positives on the island of Bali and (ii) managing a diverse group of staff in four lodges.

- Some help came from a few key investors globally, the development of Zoom as a communication tool, total commitment to the company and its ideals giving them a strong sense of purpose, and possible food sources from their home villages.

- Ongoing attempts to obtain funds to increase the poor salaries of all our lodge staff.

- Concentrating on our conservation and agricultural activities initially in six areas.
Since 2006, a Conservation Fund has been in place, from donations of $10.00 per booking fee - no administration charges. During the COVID 19 pandemic, our conservation income has ceased.

Now: Concentrate on income earning projects to keep our staff partially employed with short and long term projects with start up loans from our company Conservation Fund.

The fund will initially support one program at each lodge.
✓ Fast-tracked due to COVID situation.
✓ Charitable Foundation legal status signed 14 May 2020 in Bali.

 Allows
• Donations by Bank Transfer or Pay Pal.
• Us to apply for suitable grants.

Our management team in Bali office
SHORT-TERM PROJECTS
- Short term crops and rice
- Fish farming
- Goat fattening

LONG TERM PROJECTS
- Tree crops - papaya, coffee, avocados, pepper cocoa.
- Goat farming.
- Bird guide training, on site and possibly on-line.
- Re-afforestation, both with the local Harapan Village group NGO and with Tanjung Puting Herbarium and Orangutan Foundation International.

ecolodgesindonesia.com/conservation/
Conservation & community livelihoods during COVID era.

- Short-term project ... might lead to a longer-term project.
- Conservation Fund has lent US$900 US to the SATWA SUMATRA ECOLODGE to buy “long eared” goats.
- Five families have signed to say they will repay the cost of the goat when it is sold, 50% of the profit will go to the family, with the balance going to the Lodge, and to the Bali Office administration.

➢ All have experience in cut-and-carry farming
➢ Disinfected the stalls where the precious goats will be kept.
➢ Have planted Cassava for the goats.
➢ Two larger male goats were the choice of Suratno and Dimin.
➢ Ibu Rumiatur, Ibu Nanik and Suradi chose two young females, one with a kid thrown in.
➢ Ibu Endang whose husband is an experienced goat farmer took four young goats, which is double the responsibility.
Villagers collect the seeds of forest trees used by the orangutans & other primates and raise the seedlings.

All the men on the staff of the Rimba Orangutan Ecolodge are planting the young trees, augmenting their COVID period low wages.

The Karang Taruna guarantee to replace trees which die in the first three months, and the cost includes a check at three months, with GPS positions, height and condition of the young trees.

Almost half of the cost raised by senior students of a group at ROBINA HIGH SCHOOL, Gold Coast, Australia, called the SUSTAINABULLS.
The COVID 19 experience has released talents in our Indonesian staff that will change the direction of the company for the good. They will make us stronger and more sustainable.

We will focus on key areas of our company:

SURVIVAL DURING THE COVID 19 PANDEMIC – what our staff are doing
. Animals sighted around our lodges
. News about our Conservation Foundation, called the INDONESIAN CONSERVATION FOUNDATION - OUR WORLD
. Tours planned for 2021

And also we will be publishing in two languages Indonesian and English.

- One of the greatest achievements of our company over the last 20 years has been the creation of a very loyal staff who are committed to conservation due to their sustainable jobs.
- The loyalty has shown itself in their determination to save the company by acting as a group of 87 employees working together with large salary cuts (up to 80%) due to cash flow shortage.
- All lodges have formed conservation groups, which have developed programs (described in our next report this week) to augment salaries and save cash in the bank.
- These programs will need some financial support to augment the funds they have already earned themselves.
COVID era inspired words from our HQ office team in Bali

SURVIVAL UNDER COVID
BAHASA INDONESIA AND COVID SAFETY MEASURES AT OUR LODGES

✓ ‘... deal with the use of the use of the Indonesian language, Bahasa Indonesia, and our response to safety at our lodges in this testing time.
✓ BAHASA INDONESIA was chosen by President Sukarno as the mother language for Indonesia; a wise choice as it was politically acceptable.
✓ Bahasa Indonesia is similar to Bahasa Malay and is thus one of the world’s great languages spoken from Southern Thailand to Papua.
✓ It has many words based on Sanskrit, Arabic, Dutch and English.
✓ Before COVID 19, less than 10% of our visitors were Indonesians with 90% international.
✓ We used only English in our social media and newsletters although our website had a translation available into many other languages.
✓ We now must concentrate on our local market and now have dual languages in all our publications.
Our company always had targeted the Indonesian market as a conservation aim of the company. Now that this has happened, this will be a permanent focus of the company in the hope that many Indonesians will support national parks with pride in their heritage.

COVID SAFETY MEASURES AT OUR LODGES and OFFICES.
Our priority has been the safety of our staff and families and, their communities. Also, as we slowly return to normality, we must ensure the safety of our guests; also protect our staff from possible infected guests. We have developed COVID safety measures in all our lodges and in our two offices in Denpasar, Bali and Kumai, Central Kalimantan. These are based on Indonesian and Australian Government recommendations.

Currently, we have had no cases of COVID 19 in any of our staff of 87 people and their families (over 500 persons) in six locations on four islands of Indonesia. By strict regulations, we hope to maintain this situation.

The Kelimutu Crater Lakes National Park in East Flores is now open, and some bookings have been received from local private and government organisations.

Regulations for incoming guests are just as important as internal regulations for our staff and these are now being integrated.'
‘Look deep into nature and then you will understand everything.

Albert Einstein

RIMBA

ORANGUTAN ECOLODGE BORNEO

cocolodgesindonesia.com