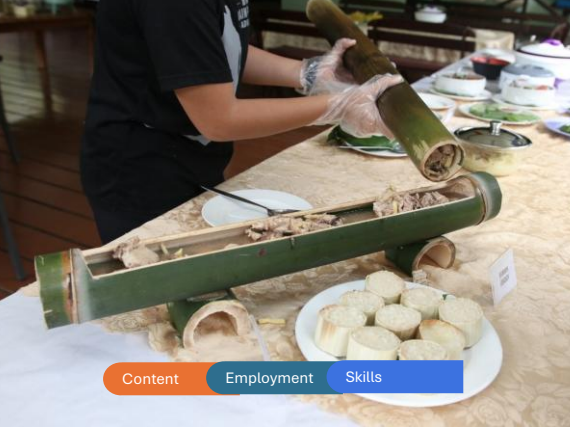


Culinary immersion : Brunei’s recipe for sustainable tourism

Temburong, Brunei



Content Employment Skills

Imagine a journey where every flavor tells a story and every cooking lesson contributes to a community’s future. In Brunei’s untouched Temburong district, the Freme Rainforest Eco Lodge’s “Experience Temburong Culinary” package isn’t just about food; it’s a living recipe for sustainable tourism. This unique initiative is a deep dive into the nation’s cultural heritage that also support local employment and preserves age-old traditions.

Initiative	This lodge offers an interactive culinary package showcasing authentic Bruneian cooking techniques. The programme aims to preserve culinary heritage, foster cultural appreciation, and create substantial local employment opportunities. 98% of staff and all the food sourced from the local community.
Actors	Freme Rainforest Lodge, the local community, local businesses, tourists/visitors
URL	https://freme.com/freme-rainforest-lodge/

A journey into Brunei’s culinary soul

Since its launch in 2021, the Experience Temburong Culinary package has offered an immersive journey into the authentic culinary techniques passed down through generations in Temburong. This hands-on experience aims to preserve and promote Temburong’s culinary heritage while fostering appreciation among visitors.

The experience begins at Freme Rainforest Lodge, where guests prepare Bamboo Chicken, a traditional dish of the indigenous Iban tribe. They then embark on an adventure, going upriver on a traditional Temuai longboat to collect wild “paku pakis” (fern shoots). Returning to the lodge, the guests assist in preparing lunch by chopping ingredients and learning local culinary techniques. Regenesis project does the exact opposite. By actively selecting degraded areas and using tourism to regenerate them, this innovative paradigm goes beyond ecotourism or sustainable tourism. It is truly regenerative.

After lunch comes another culinary experience that rounds off a day of discovery. Guests learn from local experts how to cook, wrap, and finally taste Wajid Temburong, a local example of the glutinous sweet called wajid.



Photo: Freme Travel



Photo: Freme Travel

Temburong: unique and authentic culinary heritage

This experience holds unique significance for Bruneians themselves. Historically, Temburong was mainly accessible from Bandar Seri Begawan by boat. As Mr.Sugumaran Nair, Inbound & MICE Division Manager at Freme, notes, “ Because of the isolated location of Temburong, its culture was unique. It remained distinct as there was no new cultural inflow.”

The recent construction of a bridge has made Temburong much easier to reach. This has created opportunities for city-dwellers to engage with parts of the country and aspects of culture that were once difficult to access. Many people from urban areas experience Temburong for the first time through such initiatives, highlighting the programme’s role in connecting Bruneians with their rich heritage and showcasing a way of life that was, until recently, very different from life in the city.



Photo: Freme Travel

Cultivating community and opportunity

The success of Experience Temburong Culinary stems from a collaborative approach. Freme Rainforest Lodge partners with the local community and businesses, ensuring authenticity and contributing directly to the local economy. Mr. Sugumaran Nair points out that nearly all the staff are from the surrounding Temburong area. By prioritizing local hires, the lodge directly supports livelihoods. Lodge food, too, is sourced from local caterers, which results in economic benefits circulating within the community.

The programme has increased awareness of Brunei's culinary heritage, enhanced visitor engagement, strengthened community involvement in tourism, and distributed economic benefits locally. It is a truly sustainable model. Freme Rainforest Lodge also actively minimizes its environmental footprint by avoiding single-use plastics, encouraging visitors to bring reusable bottles, and even saving rainwater for washing to reduce dependence on piped water. As Mr. Ahmad Hishamuddin DssHab, HSE (Operations) Supervisor, notes, "We are located in close proximity to such natural assets as the Brunei river, and so we strive to minimize negative impact."



Photo: Freme Travel

Looking ahead

Freme Rainforest Eco Lodge is planning further development while maintaining a sharp focus on sustainability. Having food delivered, particularly for smaller groups, raises questions about the carbon footprint of transportation, and the lodge is aiming to address this by building a dedicated kitchen on-site. This would not only minimize reliance on external catering and associated emissions but also enhance the overall visitor experience. The lodge sees this key initiative as a crucial investment for long-term sustainable operations and greater self-sufficiency.

Interview

