

Tan Hoa: adaptive tourism's floating future

Tan Hoa Village, Kim Phu Commune, Quang Tri Province, Viet Nam

Are communities in disaster-prone areas destined to be left behind? Not if they follow the example of Tan Hoa Village in Quang Tri Province, Viet Nam. Once known as the “flood hub” of the region, the village has emerged as a model of resilience by embracing the rhythms of nature and responding with innovation. Today, it stands at the forefront of climate-adaptive tourism, offering lessons not only in survival, but in sustainable development.

Net Zero Work conditions Employment Resilience

Initiative	A climate-resilient tourism model that transforms flood-prone conditions into a unique visitor experience while improving local livelihoods. By embracing natural challenges, the initiative showcases how disaster-prone communities can lead in sustainable tourism development.
Actors	Oxalis Adventure, Tan Hoa villagers
URL	https://oxalisadventure.com/

A disadvantage becomes a defining characteristic

For generations, Tân Hoà has endured severe annual flooding, and severe events in 2010 and 2020 left the entire village submerged. The community's ingenious response was to create floating houses. These homes are supported by drums fixed beneath the structure, allowing them to rise with floodwater. Anchored by poles at each corner, the houses remain securely in place and resist drifting. This practical solution not only ensures safety during floods but has become a defining feature of Tân Hoà.

Inspired by the community's inherent adaptability—and moved by the devastating impact of flooding on his hometown— Nguyễn Châu Á returned to Tan Hoa in 2011 to establish Oxalis Adventure. He launched world-class trekking and caving tours to Phong Nha-Ke Bang National Park and nearby Tu Lan Cave System, but his broader vision was to harness local resilience in the service of sustainable tourism. He introduced the pioneering concept of “weather-adaptive tourism”, enabling tourism to continue year-round, even during the flood season. On high-water days, visitors can paddle through the village and witness the calm rhythm of daily life.

Tu Lan Lodge, Oxalis's main accommodation in Tân Hoa, is elevated above historical flood levels, ensuring guest safety and comfort in all weather conditions.



Photo: Oxalis Adventure

Building resilience, fostering community: the Oxalis partnership

“Safety, conservation, and community involvement are our core values,” says H’Anetta Buôn Ya, Operation Manager of Tan Hoa Office, Oxalis Adventure. “Acting on these values, we have been helping local people, and also helping guests understand the significance of what we offer.” The company recognized that for tourism to bring meaningful benefits to the village, it needed to involve the community directly. This sparked a fundamental shift: local families became active business partners, not just employees.

One cornerstone of this partnership is Floating Homestays. Oxalis invested in renovating 10 floating houses into comfortable guest accommodation, each house equipped with modern facilities. The company manages marketing, reservations, and tax payments, ensuring that homeowners receive a stable income without needing sales or administrative expertise.

Complementing this, Local Culinary Experiences are offered through a network of 10 households. Local women receive professional training from Oxalis to prepare traditional dishes to a consistent standard for tourists. A rotation system ensures that economic benefits are fairly distributed among participating families. This arrangement allows guests to enjoy meals in a local home, deepening cultural connection.



Photo: Oxalis Adventure

Beyond accommodation and dining, Tân Hoá offers Diversified Activities, which are designed to enrich the visitor experience and encourage longer stays. The activities include countryside cycling tours to local farms, exploration walks in the ancient Lim forest, and the renowned caving and trekking adventures.

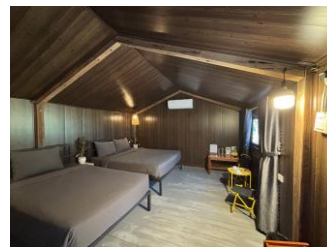


Photo: Oxalis Adventure

Empowering livelihoods: a paradigm shift

The impact on Tân Hoá's community has been transformative. Tourism has created over 130 permanent jobs, including porters, chefs, safety assistants, housekeepers, and tour guides. The village's poverty rate has plummeted from a staggering 85.7% in 2010 to just 2.6% in 2024.

Oxalis is strongly committed to career development for its local staff. Many porters with limited formal education have gone on to study tourism and become professional tour guides. Villagers' livelihoods have been transformed from illegal jungle hunting to jungle protection.

One notable initiative is the Tu Lan Adventure Race, a triathlon organised by Oxalis since 2015. This non-profit event raises funds through participant fees and sponsorships, primarily to build floating houses for disadvantaged families. Over six years, nearly 200 floating houses have been sponsored through this race.



Photo: Oxalis Adventure

Sustainable practices from construction to cuisine

The Oxalis commitment goes beyond economic development to include cultural preservation and environmental sustainability. All operations are guided by principles of safety and conservation, with careful attention to minimising environmental impact.

Cultural heritage is actively protected and revitalised. One example is the traditional folk song *Hò Thuốc Cá*, which has been brought back into community life and is now performed for visitors. Says Trương Thị Hương, a business partner and chef with a gift for singing, "I'm glad to introduce our local culture, including food and folk song, to visitors from around the world".

The long-term goal is not simply to attract more visitors, but to foster a resilient, thriving community. Oxalis is committed to preserving Tân Hoá's rustic beauty and traditional charm, ensuring that growth never comes at the cost of authenticity.



Photo: Oxalis Adventure

Interview

