

From Cultural Meanings to Verifiable Judgments

Attributes, Evidence and Change
at West Lake

Niu Yanan

Peking University · WHITR-AP Beijing

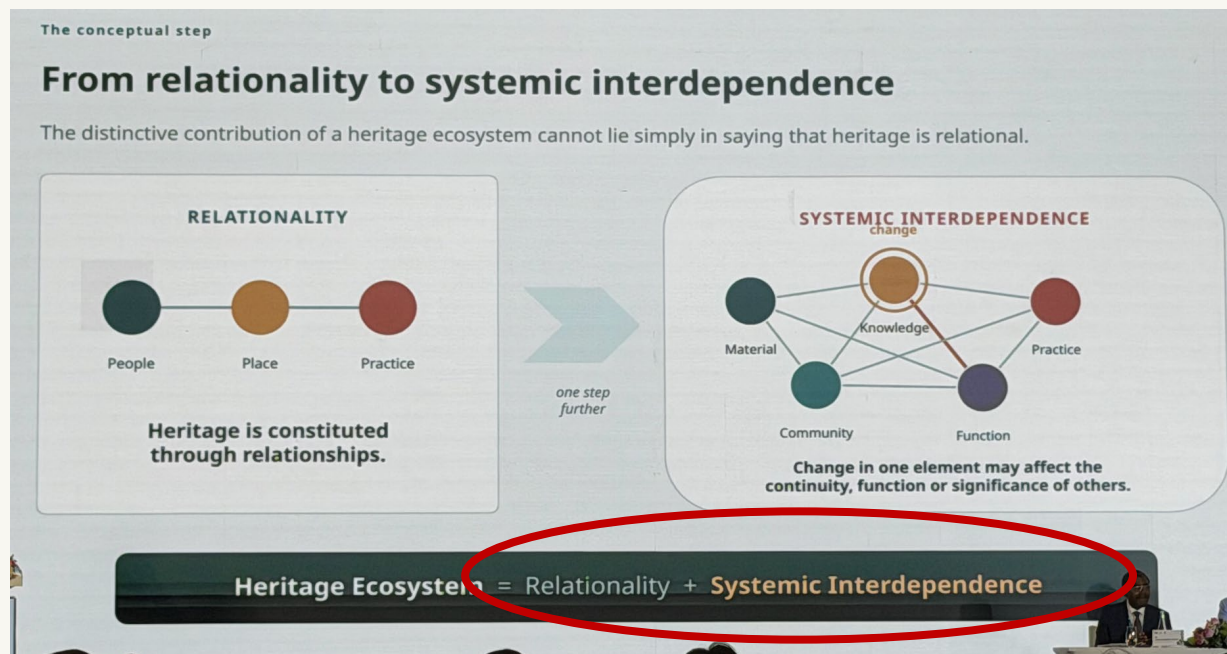
Theme 5: From regional experience to World Heritage practice
Asia-Pacific Dialogue on Heritage and Authenticity



Historical representation of Su Causeway

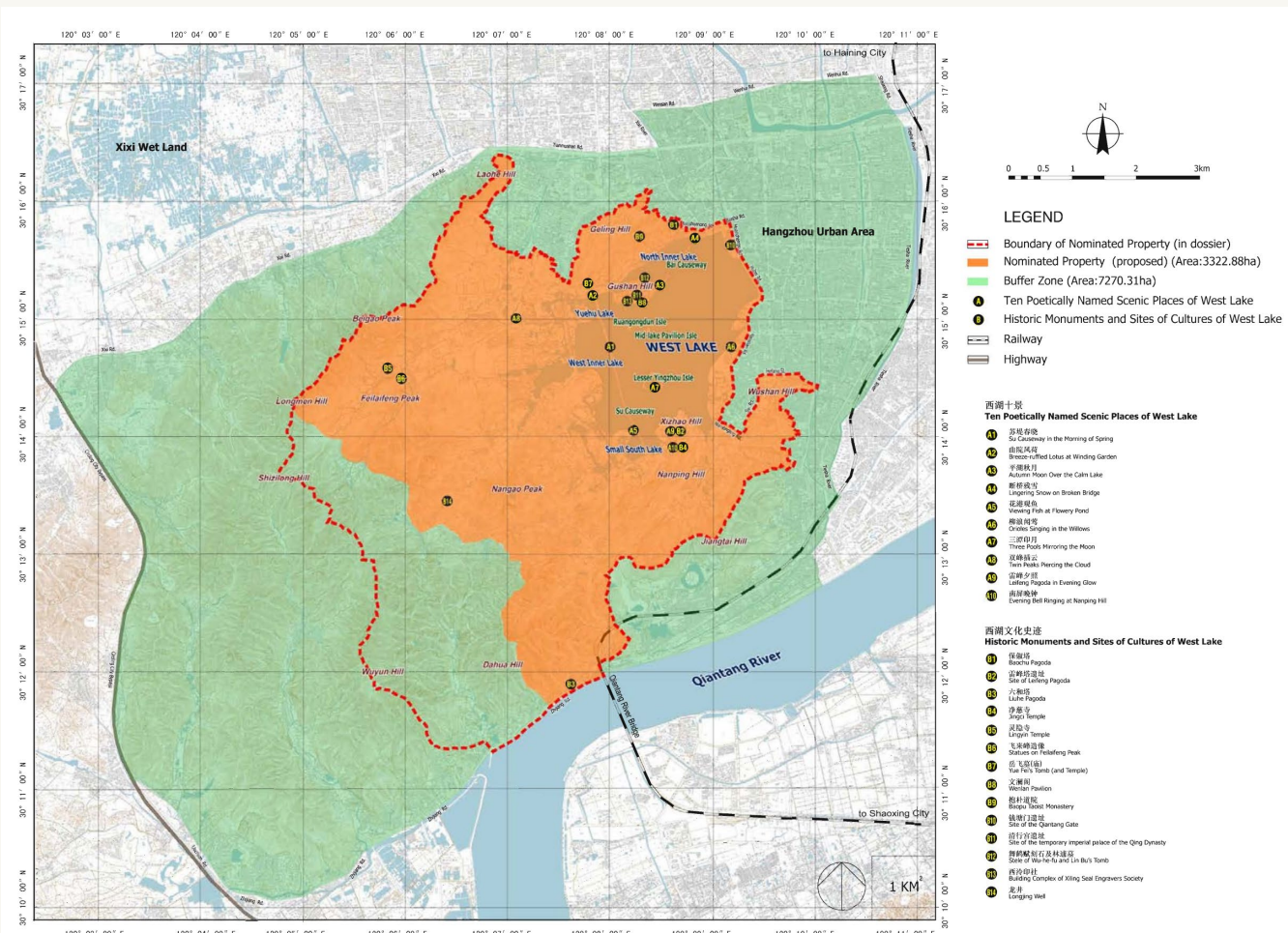
Heritage ecosystems: why do we need a new approach?

— Prof. Toshiyuki Kono, Honorary President, ICOMOS



West Lake: description and attributes

Inscribed property and buffer zone (2011)



Orange: property. Green: buffer zone.

UNESCO Description

A landscape shaped to express harmony between people and nature

“idealised fusion between humans and nature”

Attributes in the 2011 statement

Lake and surrounding wooded hills

causeways

islands

bridges

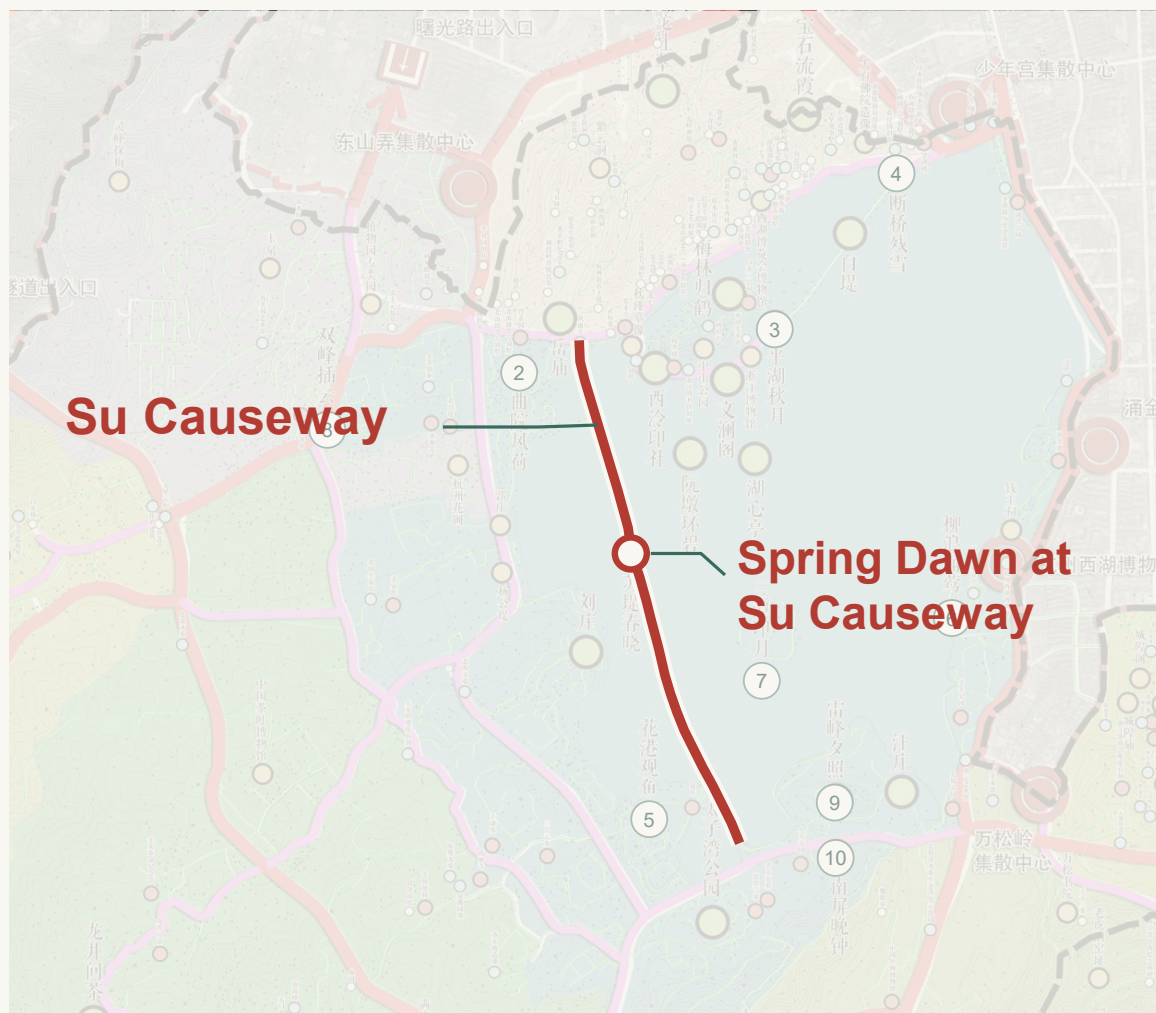
temples, pagodas

ornamental planting

ten, celebrated, poetic views

Ten Scenes of West Lake

Spring Dawn at Su Causeway is one of the Ten Scenes

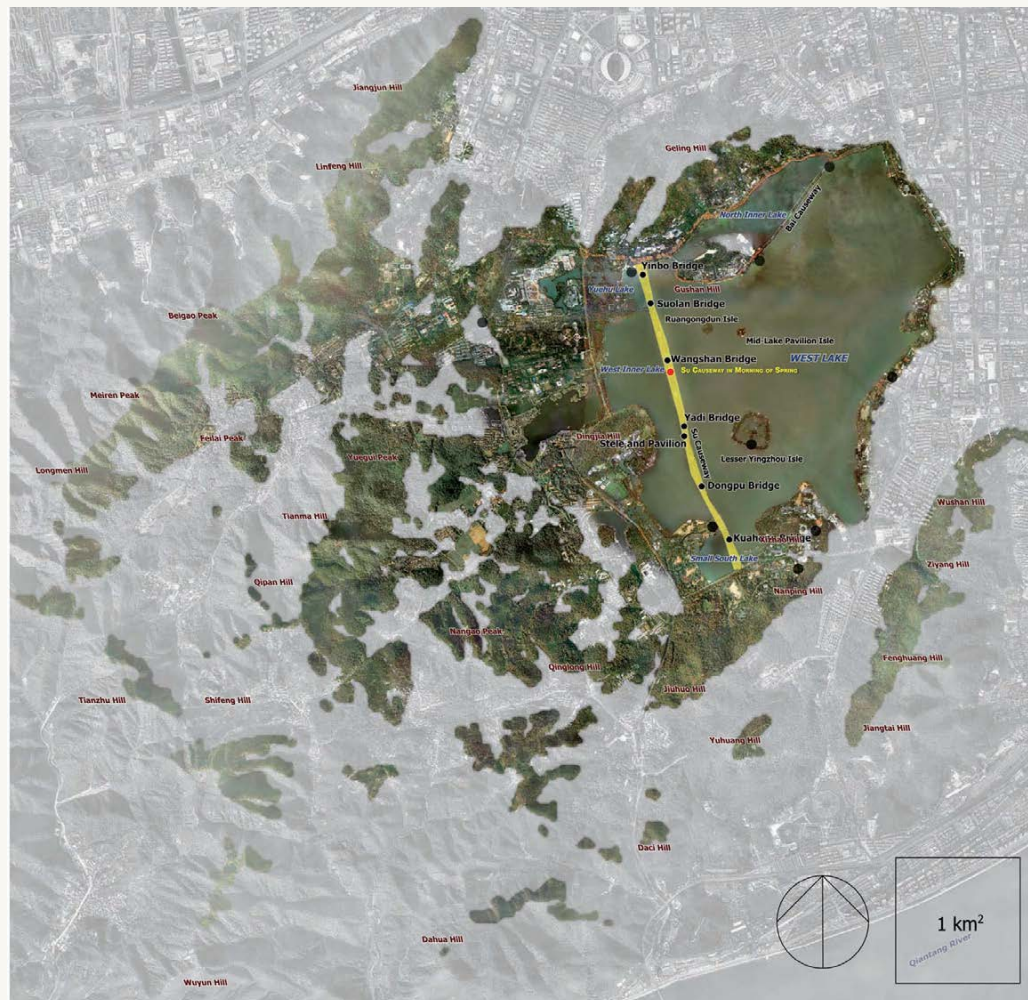


- 1 Spring Dawn at Su Causeway**
- 2 Breeze over the Lotus at Quyuan
- 3 Autumn Moon over the Calm Lake
- 4 Lingering Snow on Broken Bridge
- 5 Viewing Fish at Flower Harbour
- 6 Orioles Singing in the Willows
- 7 Three Pools Mirroring the Moon
- 8 Twin Peaks Piercing the Clouds
- 9 Leifeng Pagoda in the Sunset
- 10 Evening Bell at Nanping Hill

Location marker, not a scene boundary

Su Causeway: landscape and views

Landscape analysis



Yellow: original fabric of the scenic place.
Muted areas: outside the sight field.

Landscape components

Green arrows: landscape viewing directions

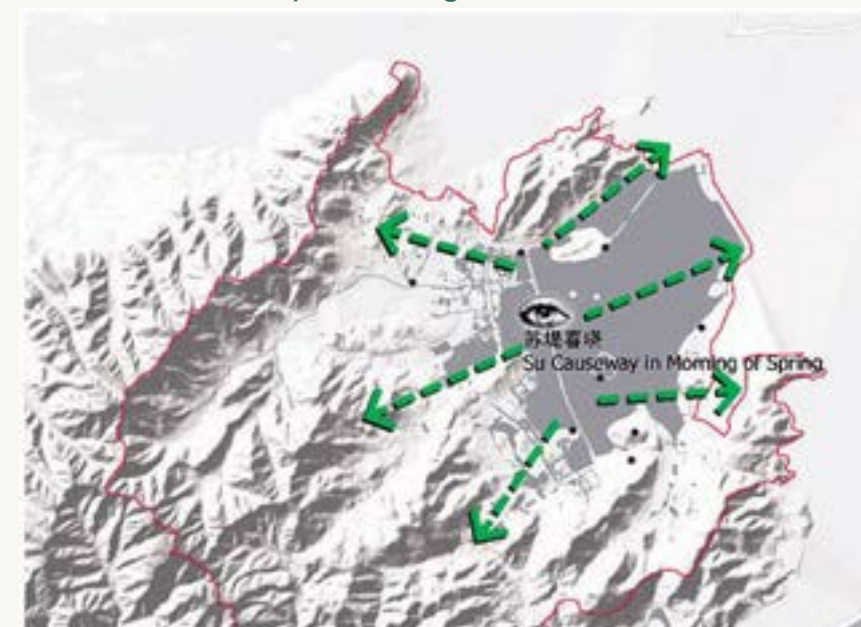
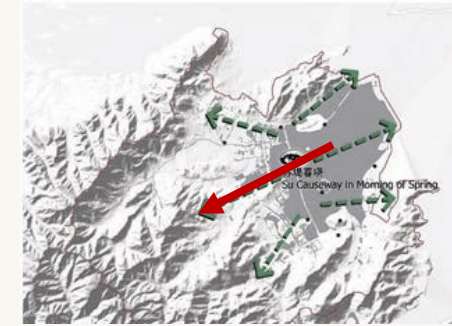


Photo on next slide

Bridge, water,
peach and willow trees

Photographed in 2006

Spring scenery in the nomination



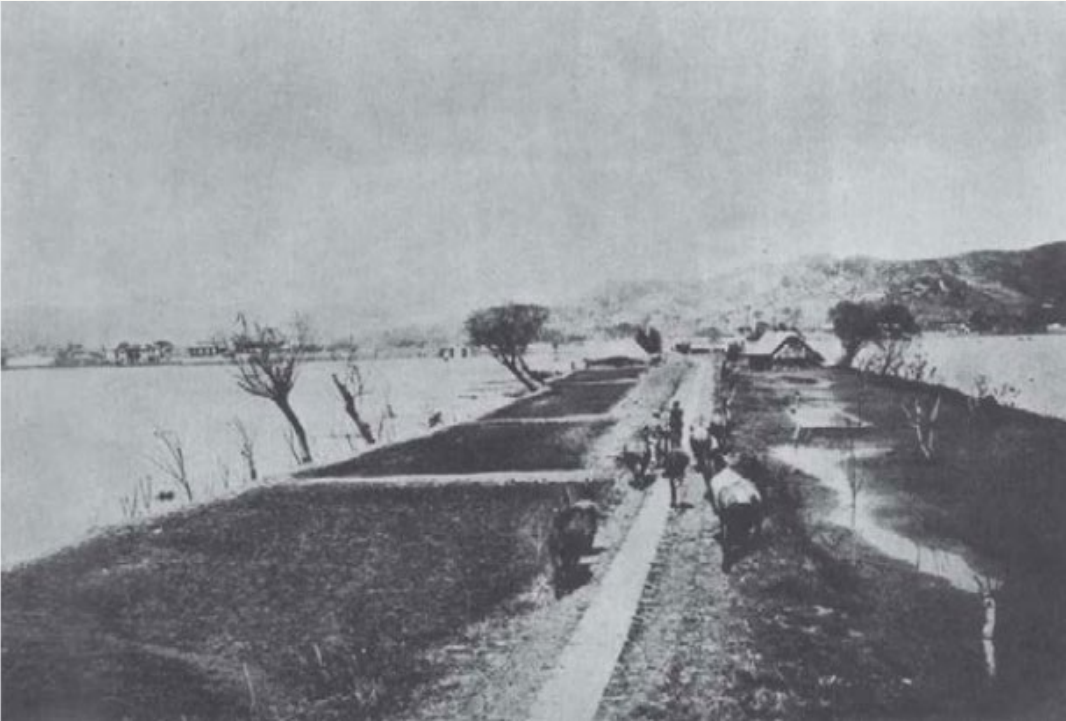
Peach and willow trees

Bridges across the water

Lake and surrounding hills

Photographed in 2006

Spring Dawn at Su Causeway



Historical photograph, 1912–1949



Kuahong Bridge, spring 2023

Causeway, bridges and planting within a lake-and-hills setting

Different viewpoints and seasons. The images guide inquiry into change.

What each source can support



Su Causeway, c. 1908–1910

Fieldwork and consultation remain to be undertaken

Historical images

Past conditions and representation

Field observation

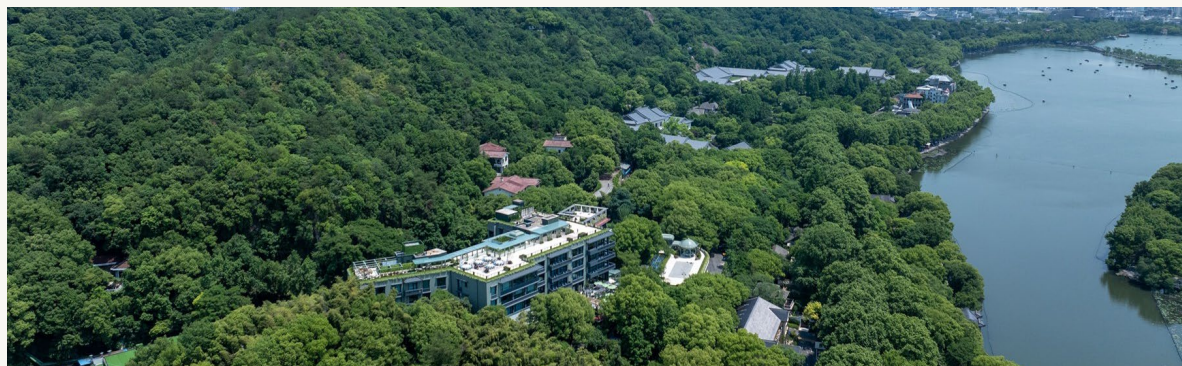
Present conditions and spatial relationships

Maintainers and users

Practices, meanings and changes in use

The hotel and its landscape setting

Assess how the building relates to the lake, tree cover and hills.



Daylight: the building and lakeside setting



Dusk: the building and wooded hills



Location sketch · approximate positions

Scene marker: reference location

A Classic Philosophical Thought Experiment



Theseus' Ship Paradox

A question for West Lake

When parts change, which relationships and cultural meanings continue?

The analogy raises the question.
Evidence must support the judgment.



Lake and hills viewed from Su Causeway

A case record others can examine

Values and their attributes

Effects of change and alternatives

Evidence and interpretation

Conditions for revising judgments

To be tested with local knowledge holders and specialists from different cultural backgrounds



Thank you

EAST RENNELL

Heritage Value, Tourism, and Management Challenges

East Rennell World Heritage Site • Solomon Islands

2026: Presentation by: Ms. Sophie Liligeto,
UNESCO NATCOM – Solomon Islands to the Asia –
Pacific Dialogue on Heritage and Authenticity.
Hanoi, Socialist Republic of Vietnam.



Solomon Islands - East Renell



East Rennell at a Glance

Why the site matters nationally, regionally and globally

World Heritage status

Inscribed in 1998 under natural criterion (ix). East Rennell remains Solomon Islands' only World Heritage property.

Outstanding landscape

The property covers about 37,000 ha and includes Lake Tegano and a marine area extending offshore.

Customary ownership

The property is under customary land ownership and management — a landmark feature of its World Heritage status.

Living landscape

Communities live within the property and depend on subsistence gardening, hunting and fishing, linking conservation directly with livelihoods.

Pacific significance

Rennell is the world's largest raised coral atoll; Lake Tegano is the largest lake in the insular Pacific.

A site under pressure

East Rennell has been on the List of World Heritage in Danger since 2013, with continuing conservation and governance challenges



Heritage value: nature as the foundation

37,000 ha

World Heritage property

15,000 ha

Lake Tegano

86 × 15 km

Rennell Island dimensions

- Largest raised coral atoll in the world.
- Lake Tegano is brackish and contains rugged limestone islets and endemic species.
- Dense indigenous forest supports high biodiversity and endemic species.
- The site is important for island biogeography and the migration and evolution of species in the western Pacific.
- The landscape functions as a natural laboratory for scientific study.





Heritage value: culture, identity and customary knowledge



Living traditions

Traditional knowledge includes tattoos, weaving and the making of baskets and mats from pandanus leaves.

Genealogies & oral traditions

Genealogies are rooted in oral traditions and ancestral histories, forming part of community identity.

Language

The Rennellese language remains part of family, education, business and social life.

Crafts & cultural expression

Mats, fans, baskets, wristlets and other crafts demonstrate living skills and provide potential livelihood opportunities.



Tourism implication

Cultural tourism should strengthen — not commodify or displace — Indigenous traditional knowledge, community authority and local benefit.

Tourism potential: From remote heritage to responsible visitation



What responsible tourism could look like

Community-led guiding

Train local guides in interpretation, safety, biodiversity, culture and visitor management.

Small-scale accommodation

Support appropriate village-based stays rather than large infrastructure that could pressure the site.

Local products

Link crafts, food, cultural performances and services to visitor spending while retaining local control.

Nature & learning

Position East Rennell for specialist nature, research, educational and cultural learning visits.

Visitor code

Use clear rules for waste, wildlife, sacred/customary places, photography, fishing and resource use.

Tourism monitoring

Track visitor numbers, income, impacts, complaints, waste and community satisfaction.

Management reality: conservation and livelihoods are interconnected

The central management question

How can the heritage values of East Rennell be protected while customary owners and communities have viable, resilient livelihoods?

- Customary ownership requires meaningful consent and participation.
- Conservation measures must connect with food security and livelihood needs.
- Tourism can diversify income, but can also create new pressures if unmanaged.
- Management needs clear institutional roles, stable financing and continuity.
- Traditional knowledge and customary resource-management practices are part of the solution.



Key management challenges

Environmental

Invasive species • biodiversity pressures • climate change • sea-level rise

Resource use

Over-exploitation of marine and other natural resources • pressure on livelihoods

External pressures

Logging/mining impacts and ecological links between West and East Rennell

Food security

Climate-related changes affecting taro, coconut and other livelihood resources

Governance

Limited capacity • leadership changes • coordination and consent challenges

Finance

Limited national resources and dependence on development-partner support

Management challenge = environmental protection + customary governance + livelihoods + institutional capacity

Current management response and partnerships

Desired State of Conservation

The DSOCR process has been used to assess progress and identify remaining gaps for removal from the Danger List.

Netherlands Funds-in-Trust

Supported dialogue within East Rennell and among stakeholders to build common understanding of challenges and opportunities.

Japan Funds-in-Trust

Supported livelihood projects, technical assistance and capacity-building, including collaboration with the Kastom Garden Association.

BirdLife International

Support for invasive-species control and biosecurity; the source presentation notes approval of the Rennell and Bellona Biosecurity Plan in 2025.

Kiwa / EREPA / Live & Learn

Initiatives include nature-based invasive-species management, livelihood projects and carbon-trade work.

Strategic planning

The source presentation identifies a draft three-year strategy focused on sustainable management, livelihoods, capacity and partnerships.

Proposed Governance Framework: customary ownership at the centre

CUSTOMARY OWNERS & TRIBAL GROUPS

Consent • customary rules • resource decisions

COMMUNITY / LTWHSA

Local coordination • monitoring • community engagement

PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT

Provincial planning • services • local regulatory support

NATIONAL GOVERNMENT

UNESCO obligations • legislation • technical support • financing

PARTNERS

Technical expertise • capacity • finance • conservation and livelihood support

Proposed Tourism–Management Framework

1. Protect

Define sensitive areas, visitor limits, biosecurity, waste rules and cultural protocols.

2. Prepare

Train guides, hosts and managers; establish basic visitor information, safety and monitoring.

3. Pilot

Start with small community-led experiences and learn before expanding visitor numbers.

4. Benefit

Track who earns income and ensure benefits support households, community priorities and conservation.

5. Monitor

Measure ecological, cultural, social and economic impacts and adjust tourism activity accordingly.

6. Scale carefully

Expand only where infrastructure, governance, finance and conservation capacity can support it.

Discussion Framework: Suggested priorities for the next phase

- Complete and operationalize the management planning framework, with clear responsibilities, timelines and budgets.
- Strengthen customary-owner consent, community participation and the capacity of local management institutions.
- Develop a small-scale, community-led tourism model linked to conservation and cultural interpretation.
- Invest in local guiding, hospitality, biodiversity monitoring, cultural documentation and visitor safety.
- Strengthen biosecurity and invasive-species management, alongside climate adaptation and food-security measures.
- Create a sustainable financing mix: national budget, development partners, tourism income and other appropriate conservation finance.
- Establish a simple annual monitoring dashboard covering heritage condition, tourism, livelihoods, governance and partnerships.

Key message;

East Rennell is more than a World Heritage site.

It is a living customary landscape where biodiversity, Lake Tegano, cultural identity, livelihoods and governance are inseparable

The challenge is not simply to attract visitors. It is to build a form of visitation and livelihood development that helps sustain the heritage values on which East Rennell's global significance depend on.

Aue!