

# MOTAC considers volcano tourism

By PAUL MU NST 30.10.17 3

**TAWAU:** The Ministry of Tourism and Culture Malaysia (MOTAC) Sabah office is mulling the idea of promoting volcano tourism in Sabah.

They have seen the potential after exploring the Tawau Hills National Park recently under its Sabah Sustainability Volunsharing Programme (SSVP) in collaboration with Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS)

Volcano tourism is not a new global phenomenon, but something new in Malaysia.

During the expedition, volunteers inspected the dormant Bombalai volcano which last erupted thousands of years ago. What remains of it is an ancient crater. Its cinder cone is only a half-an-hour's jungle walk from the entrance of the park.

The exploration involved 10 students and staff of UMS and MOTAC Sabah with the guidance of the park's authority. The entourage was welcomed by the park's assistant senior manager Jufri Nasri.

There are two volcanic attractions within the park - the sulphurous springs with warm turquoise water and white sulphur substance deposits, and the ancient crater at Mount Lucia, one of the three large mountains inside the park.

Outside the park, there are other volcanic attractions such as Columnar Joints along the Balung River and Conical Sprouts at Anrassy.

Both sites are accessible from Tawau town.



Ag Ahmad Zaki (7th left) and Jufri (6th left) with the participants at the entrance of the Tawau Hills National Park.



The sulphurous springs with its warm turquoise-coloured water.

UMS Faculty of Business, Economics and Accountancy, senior lecturer in tourism Dr Awangku Hassanah Bahar Pengiran Bagul said volcano tourism usually integrates with recreational activities such as sightseeing, hiking, climbing, camping or even mountaineering.

If the volcano tourism site is highly popular, it can be recognised as an independent tourism sector or as a value added adventure experience

under the umbrella of geo-tourism, he said.

"We were excited to learn more about Sabah's volcanic geo heritage and I believe the identification of the different aspects of geo heritage site values is part of a holistic concept of protection, education and sustainable development of Tawau Hills Park and the surroundings area," said Dr Hassanah.

MOTAC Sabah director Ag Ahmad Zaki Abu Bakar said: "We are happy with this programme (SSVP) and wish to continue this in the near future. We had been collaborating since 2015 and won few recognitions".

Both bodies have been running the SSVP focusing on the sustainability issues in the tourism industry with previous theme of heritage trail and tagal ecotourism.

The SSVP is the winner for IKON Award (High Impact University-Community Engagement Award) from UMS in 2016.

Ag Ahmad Zaki (left) and participants trekking to the sulphurous springs inside the Tawau Hills National Park.

