

Three destroyed by  
sweats from humans.  
moreover, dramatic



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Three years after the first cable car plan was rejected due to serious concerns among the nation and around the world, Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc announced that he and government agencies “agree in principle” with the cable car plan to Swallow Cave in Phong Nha – Ke Bang National Park at the meeting with Quang Binh authorities on 25th, August 2017.

The system is set to run 5.2 kilometers from a section of the Ho Chi Minh Highway to Swallow Cave, the third largest cave on earth. Only five meters away from it is the world’s largest Son Doong Cave. VALUES OF SWALLOW & SON DOONG CAVE

Located in the core zone of kingdom caves, both Swallow and Son Doong shot to international fame for their captivating beauty.

Beyond breathtaking sceneries, Swallow and Son Doong Cave possess prestigious values in geology, biology, and archeology. Especially, there are unique natural entities that could only be found in Son Doong but nowhere else in Vietnam. With 2 dolines allowing sunlight into the cave, Son Doong has its own weather phenomena, landscape and an ecosystem with jungles, waterfalls, underground rivers and hills.

Many rare flora and fauna species are found living here and some have not been discovered yet. Because of the two caves’ importance to science and humankind, they are to be strictly conserved and protected. ECONOMIC

POTENTIAL FROM CABLE CAR PLAN Up till now, Oxalis Adventure Tours is the sole provider for world-class adventure tours or camp tours in Quang Binh with about 1000 tourists per year to Swallow Cave and around 600 tourists to Son Doong. It costs one 330 USD to 3000 USD for a journey and may require health certifications to attend. Carefully designed by the British

Caving Research Association, these tours assure safety not only for tourists

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but also for the caves. According to the authorities of Quang Binh province, one of the poorest in Vietnam, this is considered a waste. With a vision to exploit fully economic potential from Swallow and Son Doong Cave, a cable car system is being planned to boost tourism up to 300 000 tourists per years.

More jobs are expected to be created, and revenues of local people to be increase. Clearly, a large number of tourists would bring the province high economic efficiency. Also, it is promised to offer chances for disable people to view the scenes. ITS RISKS However, a cable car system could become an incommensurate trade-off between a masterpiece of Mother Nature and a short-term financial benefit for a small province. Firstly, a boom in tourism would surely result in management difficulties. Issues about littering, vandalism, trespassing and so on are hard to avoid due to a huge number of tourists, especially Vietnamese, who are often encountered to behave unconsciously towards the environment. Loose tourist management would lead to serious damages to such delicate karst caves as Swallow and Son Doong, some formations of which could even be destroyed by sweats from humans.

Moreover, dramatic changes in the amount of light, noise, and CO<sub>2</sub> would have a direct impact on the sensitive ecosystems of the caves. While scientists have not discovered all of the biodiversity lying there yet, many unknown species could be killed as a result of mass tourism. Besides, cable car system would not only threaten Son Doong but also risk tourists' lives.

Once it is constructing and operating, violent shakes caused by machines could trigger the destruction of Son Doong Cave whose two dolines inside are created by the collapse of weak ceilings. Thanks to unique and prestige sceneries of the two caves, Quang Binh Province gains opportunities to operate world-class adventure tours with a long line of tourists. Since international tourism trend is searching for extraordinary sights, cable car system and modern infrastructures along with it might deprive the significant beauty. Definitely, cable car system would increase the number of domestic tourists, but a decrease in international tourists might come along. Finally, if cable car plan is not considered thoroughly and prepared well, there would be no karst caves or no natural heritage in Vietnam for the next generation. Phong Nha – Ke Bang could be put on the edge of UNESCO withdrawing the title and funds. Also, it could ruin Vietnam's international reputation on conservation and maintenance the World Natural Heritage Site. Although the profit of cable car plan is huge, it is pale when compared with several risks and drawbacks.

The prestigious values of Swallow and Son Doong Cave are beyond the economic benefit from tourism, after all. Clearly, cable car system is not a good way for Quang Binh to sustainably develop. PROBLEMS AND KEY SOLUTIONS TO SUSTAINABLE TOURISM The key to fully exploit Quang Binh's potential tourism actually does not lay in how to attract new tourists but how to make them come back. This is also the problems of tourism in Vietnam, however, Quang Binh seems to be among the weakest. According to Nguyen Van Ky, deputy director of the Quang Binh tourism department, only around

25. 8 percent of the province's tourism professionals are trained; meanwhile, restaurants there have the least-trained employees.

Lack of skills and technology, as well as poor services, are what keep tourism in Quang Binh back. Also, pollution, for example, the incident of Formosa's illegal discharge in 2016, or annual storms are other factors that have negative impacts on tourism development of the province. Therefore, instead of focusing on building a cable car system with terrible risks, it will be better for Quang Binh authorities to pay more attention to improve quality of products and services there. Management should be tightened to decrease illegal activities and assure a higher protection for Phong Nha - Ke Bang National Park. Also, raising awareness among local people and tourists about conservation is essential.

Actions to solve pollution problems are to be taken to create a better image in the eye of the international community. If Quang Binh authorities have a smart strategy, Swallow and Son Doong Cave could trigger a thrive in tourism to the province without building any cable car system or causing damages to the caves. Virtual reality projects from Save Son Doong seems to be a good idea to introduce this spectacular cave to everyone with a much lower price and no negative effects. No matter what Quang Binh authorities are going to do, they should remember that the mission of the province is not only to develop the economy but also to conserve the World Heritage Site which is also the pride of this country Vietnam.