



WORLD TRAVEL & TOURISM COUNCIL

Tourism for Tomorrow

FINALIST 2015



Northeast and Yilan Coast Taiwan

Riding through the 2km long Coaling Tunnel is an exhilarating and slightly surreal experience in joined up thinking. As you enter a hole in the side of a steep and lushly green hill, beneath your wheels you'll see the image of a railway track painted along the original route. Your way is guided by lights hung where the old lantern fittings were when the original tunnel was built in 1924. And to add to the atmosphere, the sound of an old steam train is piped through loudspeakers along the way.



It's been a remarkable journey for a tunnel first built between 1921 and 1924, when Taiwan was still under Japanese occupation. Designed to connect North-South traffic on the island, it was a major thoroughfare until it closed in 1968, when the opening of a new road meant it became little used. It remained a part of folk memory, however, as the source of inspiration for the Taiwanese nursery rhyme "Diu Diu Tong", named for the sound of dripping water heard inside its walls.

As well as connecting people to Taiwan's past, today the Old Coaling tunnel is promoting the growth of sustainable tourism around it. As you exit the tunnel you are met by a view of paddy fields and palms below, stretching out to the Pacific coast. Here you can join the Northeast Coast Old Coaling Loop Line Bicycle Path, which tours through fishing villages and dramatic coastal scenery on a 20km round trip.

The reopening of Old Coaling in 2008 has stimulated local business too. Since then, 1.85 million people have



visited the tunnel, bringing almost NT\$300 million in benefits to the local economy each year. There are now over 30 bicycle rental schemes set up for people wanting to ride along the tunnel, whose entrance is close to Fulong railway station. With such an integrated approach to tourism design, the reopening of Coaling means this tunnel truly has light at its end.

