

Les Artisans Lao



Who are we and what do we do?

Les Artisans Lao provides apprenticeships in the production of original handicrafts made from recycled wood or non-timber forest products such as coconut, bamboo etc. Our goals are to promote contemporary handicraft design using materials and technologies appropriate for the local context, and to promote recycling and use of renewable materials.

Established in 2004, our project offers on-the-job training and employment opportunities for disadvantaged, uneducated and often marginalized people, with a particular focus on women. Through all our activities, we hope to create sustainable employment opportunities for marginalized young Laotians, help them re-integrate into society and alleviate poverty.

Trainees are paid while completing an initial six-month training course. At the end of their apprenticeship, trainees are typically hired by our center, or return to their home villages to work with equipment we provide. In both cases,

trainees will be able to earn a living by selling their crafts through the retail outlets of Les Artisans Lao. We reinvest the profits made from retail sales to buy materials, equipment, and pay staff and operational costs. Donations also help to keep our operations running.

Using market-based approaches to fight poverty in Laos



Les Artisans Lao



What can you experience?

- You can buy the wide range of quality products produced in our training centers through our retail outlets and selected hotels, including T'Shop Lai Gallery and La Maison de Coco in Vientiane and Kōpnoï Gallery in Luang Prabang.
- You can visit our centers to see our trainees transforming recycled and renewable materials into quality crafts. Visitors and residents will be able to visit our new center from October 2007:
 - In our Paper House you will see trainees prepare and process bamboo, palm, mulberry and pineapple leaves into products as varied as computer printer paper, notebooks, stationery, wrapping paper and paper bags.
 - In our Wood House you will see trainees use wood and bamboo to make statues, ornaments, furniture and other original items. We use only wood reclaimed from old houses, tree stumps and rejected by mills because the size or shape is wrong.
 - In our Coconut Laboratory, trainees make a wide variety of products. Copra, the coconut flesh, is processed into high quality soaps, creams and oils (virgin coconut oil) for a variety of culinary, health and household uses. The shell of the coconut is used along with the fiber and wood of the tree to make toys, utensils, furniture, and design elements for decorating homes and business.
- Until October 2007 you can visit our current production facilities and learn about what we are doing.
- Make a donation to help purchase machinery, equipment, building supplies and expert technical assistance.
- Contribute by volunteering your time and expertise. We welcome advice on marketing, packaging and chemistry.