

# Khammouane Eco Guide Service



## Who are we and what do we do?

The Khammouane Eco Guide Service operates locally guided ecotours to Khammouane's attractions. Tours are led by trained villagers who provide information in English, Lao and Thai on the area's wildlife, history, culture and other attractions. The Service opened in early 2005 after training 20 guides from Thakek town and 15 guides from villages in Khammouane.

All tours benefit the local community and help conserve natural resources. In addition to employing local guides, we purchase food from surrounding villages and travelers stay in a community guesthouse or home stay. A portion of each tour's fees are contributed to community development funds. We also support conservation of Khammouane's natural heritage through donations to the Phou Hin Poun National Protected Area conservation fund, and encourage villagers to protect forests and wildlife through discussions, training, and employment of villagers as wildlife guides. We manage the treks using a roster of rotating guides to ensure that all get equal opportunity to work.

Established in 2004 with assistance from the Asian Development Bank, the Dutch non-governmental organization SNV, and the Khammouane Provincial Tourism Office, our project employs guides from 8 different villages. Their income is an important source of cash for their families, and they also develop English language skills and confidence which makes them role models in their villages.

The Khammouane Eco Guide Service has two offices: in Thakek and in Na Hin village. Tours can be booked through the Provincial Information Center in Thakek, the tourist information centre in Na Hin village, the Traveler's Lodge in Thakek or through Green Discovery, a tour operator with offices throughout Laos.



## What can you experience?

Visitors can choose from four exclusive eco-tours:

- **Konglor Cave** – Visit the famous 7 km long cave of stalactites and other rock formations located inside the Phou Hin Poun National Protected Area. The tour also includes a visit to the 70 m high Nam Sanam Waterfall and a village homestay in either Konglor or Natan villages.
- **Pristine Phou Hin Poun** – Explore the beauty of the Phou Hin Poun National Protected Area which includes rugged limestone mountains, pristine monsoon-fed lakes, caves and traditional villages.
- **Nong Paa Fa (Buddha Cave)** – Visit one of the most important religious sites in Khammouane Province, a cave containing over 200 ancient Buddha images that laid forgotten for hundreds of years.
- **Caves, Cool Breezes and Culture** – Combine a trek to some of the most interesting caves in the area with other natural attractions and the opportunity to learn about Lao culture and traditions. The tour includes a traditional baci ceremony which is performed to ensure that peoples' guardian spirits remain with them, particularly when taking a long journey.

