

Nam Ha Eco Guide Service



Who are we and what do we do?

The Nam Ha Eco Guide Service, set up in 2000 in Luang Namtha Province with assistance from UNESCO and the Lao National Tourism Administration, offers community-based eco-tours that include forest trekking, river trips and village homestays.

All our tours are led by certified guides from Luang Namtha. This provides employment and alternative livelihoods for local people and encourages them to protect their cultural heritage and environmental assets. The tours also raise funds for environmental conservation. Our guides are local men and women with knowledge of and respect for the natural environment and the cultural traditions of the area. Our roster of rotating guides allows a large number of people to work as guides, but also time off to work at traditional activities such as rice farming.

Tours are in small groups of usually not more than 10 people. Participants eat fresh local food (some of which they gather themselves from the forest), sleep in clean but simple traditional lodges, and bathe in a river or mountain spring. One of the most rewarding experiences for guests is making friends with their village hosts while sharing meals, tramping through forests and learning about each others' lives.

The project has had a significant impact on the local economy through fees paid directly to the villagers for food, accommodation and a range of other services and products. In addition to creating work for guides, opportunities have also increased for tuk-tuk drivers, food producers and sellers, and other businesses such as guesthouses. Along with the cash they earn, guides have benefited from learning English and more about cultural issues and conservation principles.



The project has received a number of awards, including the UN Development Award for Poverty Alleviation in Lao PDR in 2001, and for its contribution to natural heritage protection, British Airways acknowledged the Nam Ha Project in the 2002 Tourism for Tomorrow Awards under the National Parks and Protected Areas Category.



What can you experience?

- Enjoy a single or multi-day trek in the Nam Ha National Protected Area, which has a rich mosaic of tropical forest types, over 300 species of birds, 28 large mammal species and many ethnic minority villages.
- Village homestays are an integral part of the treks and provide you with opportunities to learn about rural life, to plant and harvest rice and to eat excellent home-cooked Lao food.
- Take a boat tour on the Nam Tha River and learn about traditional fishing techniques, visit remote ethnic minority villages, and enjoy a picnic lunch beside the river.
- Specialized tours can be arranged for you that focus on tracking wildlife, identifying butterflies and birds, finding medicinal plants, and seeing how traditional handicrafts and textiles are made.
- We are open every day and welcome bookings on a walk-in basis, through advance reservations, or through Lao travel agents.

