



Local-style huts at Kiet Ngong

Where to Sleep in Kiet Ngong village

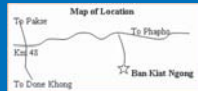
Accommodation is in keeping with the simplicity of Lao village life. The choice is between sleeping huts or a home-stay. There are five small, local-style huts about 250m south of the last house in the village (1 km from the village temple). A single hut sleeps two sharing. This is the place to stay if you want to wake up to a view of the wetland. Alternatively, a home-stay offers the opportunity to interact with a local family. An alternative to village accommodation is in a privately owned ecolodge located just outside the village.

Food and Drink

Like the accommodation, food is simple and local: sticky rice with a choice of locally caught fish or chicken. Food can take some time to prepare, so try to order an hour in advance and be patient. Bottled water, soft drinks and beer are available, but rarely cold. Handicrafts and souvenirs made by Kiet Ngong villagers are sold in the village exhibition hut near the entrance to the village.

Booking

Villagers request that you book ahead to arrange for elephants, guides and accommodation (call 020-573 1207 Lao speakers only). For booking or for more information, visit the Visitor Information Centre in Pakse (031-212 021) or the Visitor Information Centre in Champassak District. You may also book in advance with a major tour company or at the privately owned Kingfisher Ecolodge.



How To Get There

The easiest way is to book a taxi through a travel agent or hotel in Pakse. Several local buses (song thaew) run daily between Pakse's southern bus station (8 km east of town) and Kiet Ngong. You can also catch one of the many buses which travel down Route 13 to Khong District, and get off at the junction with Route 18 at Km 48 (si-sip-paet), in Thangbeng Village. The Xe Pian NPA Headquarters are here, and you can ask for information and help on how to get to Kiet Ngong by bus, car, tuk-tuk or perhaps on the back of a motorbike. You must follow Route 18 for 7 km eastwards, then turn right at the large signboards for the last 1½ km along a dirt road to Kiet Ngong.

Do's and Don'ts



THESE REQUESTS COME DIRECTLY FROM THE VILLAGERS

Do's and Don'ts on the Trek

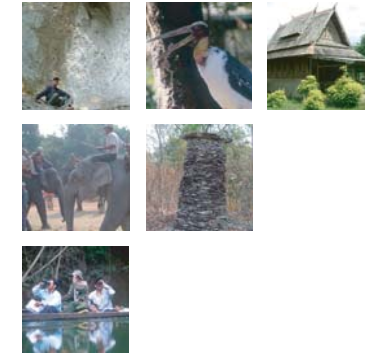
- **Dress Modestly**
Please wear shirts that cover shoulders and pants or skirts that cover your knees. Shirts with a low neckline are not appropriate.
- **Public Bathing:**
Please do not bathe nude in public. Women should cover up with a sarong when bathing in public.
- **Photographs**
Please ask before taking close-ups or portraits. Respect those who choose not to be photographed.
- **Gifts**
Please do not give anything to children as this practice encourages begging. Also, do not give medicine to anyone but a doctor or nurse.
- **Body Language**
In Laos, your head is 'high' and your feet 'low' - don't gesture with your feet, and don't put your feet on furniture. Also, do not touch someone else's head. Kissing and hugging in public is impolite - please be discreet.
- **Respect Local Traditions**
Please do not touch anything that may be of religious significance, such as Buddha statues, altars, and burial grounds. Please take off hats and shoes when entering temples.
- **Environment**
Do not litter on land or in water; take your garbage with you. Do not buy wildlife or wildlife products.
- **Purchasing Local Crafts**
Please support local producers by purchasing newly made quality handicrafts. Do not purchase unique items such as antiques or family heirlooms that are irreplaceable.
- **Drugs**
Please do not do drugs in Laos. Drug tourism does damage and sets a very bad example for Lao youth.



www.ecotourismlaos.com/mtdp



Xe Pian National Protected Area



■ Eco and Cultural Tourism

KIET NGONG VILLAGE & PHOU ASA MOUNTAIN

■ Champassak Province, Lao PDR



www.ecotourismlaos.com

Kiet Ngong Village

Kiet Ngong Village lies within the enchanting natural scenery of the 2,400 km² Xe Pian National Protected Area (Xe Pian NPA). This mainly Lao Loum (lowland Lao) community of approximately 150 households is located at the edge of the Kiet Ngong wetlands, one of the largest and least altered in the region, and at the foot of Phou Asa, a large rock outcrop renowned for its intriguing ruins and superb views of the dense semi-evergreen forests below. Isolated from the bustle of the main roads but within an hour's drive from Pakse, Kiet Ngong's traditional houses, temple and working elephants offer an accessible window into authentic Lao rural life.



Kiet Ngong wetlands



Wooden temple in Kiet Ngong village

Xe Pian National Protected Area

Xe Pian NPA was established to conserve biodiversity and is considered to be one of the most important areas in Indochina, particularly for its many species of large mammals and waterbirds. Its waterbirds include the vanishingly rare Giant Ibis and White-winged Wood-Duck, and other globally threatened species, like White-shouldered Ibis, Sarus Crane, and Lesser Adjutant, which may still visit Kiet Ngong marsh. Although Rhinoceros, Kouprey, Eld's Deer, and Hog Deer have already disappeared from the area, Asian Elephant, Tiger, Gaur, Banteng, Leopard, Sun Bear, Black Bear and Dhole (Wild Dog) are still found in the NPA. These reclusive species are very difficult to see, but their sign can be observed in the interior, along with impressive and more visible species, such as Yellow-cheeked Gibbons and hornbills. Biological surveys in Xe Pian have produced a long list of species, including 62 mammals, 334 birds, 44 reptiles, 21 amphibians and 176 fish, but many groups are still little known.

Almost 10,000 people live within Xe Pian and close to 50,000 within 5 km of its boundary, many practicing traditional agriculture and collecting forest plants to support their diet. They benefit from the biodiversity of the area and are called upon to maintain it for future generations.



Elephant rides to Phou Asa and beyond



Ancient column atop Phou Asa



View from above Phou Asa



Mak Chong

Elephant Riding

Elephant rides to the top of Phou Asa and back are well-established and a popular activity. Book your ride the day before through the Visitor Information Centre in Pakse or Champassak District or with an official tour company. Elephant-back trips can also be arranged to other places; ask the Visitor Information Centre or your tour company to inquire for you.

Phou Asa Mountain

Phou Asa is reached by a short walk or elephant ride from the village along a forest trail. The summit opens out to provide a stunning view over large areas of southern Lao. The forests of Xe Pian and Dong Hua Sao NPAs appear to stretch out endlessly from the Kiet Ngong wetland. To the north is the Bolaven Plateau, and on a clear day waterfalls can be seen cascading from it. Ahead to the east is the Xe Khong floodplain in Attapeu, and lining the horizon is the Annamite Mountains on the Vietnamese border. At the top of the outcrop is a ring of stone pillars. Legends abound about these remains, but it is unknown if the structure was built for religious or military reasons.

Forest Walk

Village guides can take visitors on half- or full-day walks to Phou Asa and its surroundings, interpreting its many medicinal plants and non-timber forest products. The 7 km long eco-trail begins at the foot of Phou Asa and offers 3-4 hours of steady walking through tall semi-evergreen forest. Some trees along the trail are labeled, and there are good places to rest or observe birds. An important natural resource, which can be seen on the walk, is the Mak Chong (Malva Nut) tree. It only grows in original forest and reaches its greatest abundance in southern Lao. In some years, the Mak Chong harvest from Xe Pian alone may be sold for more than US\$ 1,000,000 in China. Local harvesters only receive a tiny fraction of that revenue, but it is still a significant source of income.

Walk Around the Wetland

During the dry season (November-April) there is a trail around the wetland to Donlay Island, which takes about two hours if walked slowly. Many waterbirds can be seen, so bring binoculars if you have them. On the way you will pass the Giant Rock (Hin Huoa Yak in Lao), a sacred place with a superb view. The trail continues to Phapho Village, but you will probably want to return the way you came.

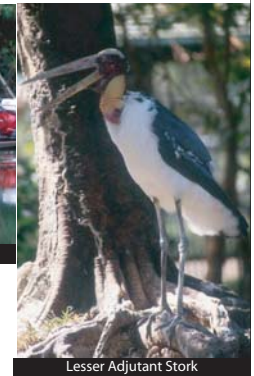
All treks and walks should be done with a village guide.

Canoeing

Donlay Island can also be reached by canoe. Your boatman will take you slowly around the edge of the wetland, where a passage through the thick mats of floating vegetation is kept open by boats and water buffaloes. A canoe trip offers a closer look at the birds and local fishing techniques than a walk around the wetland.



Canoe trip to Donlay Island



Lesser Adjutant Stork