

## Khone Phapheng Waterfall

Among the most spectacular rapids is the famous Khone Phapheng Waterfall, Asia's largest by volume, where the Mekong crashes over a rock-filled fault line.



The pure force of the millions of liters of water that crash over the rocks towards Cambodia every second is truly amazing. On a sunny day, you might see rainbows appear in the mist created by the thundering water.

Because of its magnificence, Lao people like to refer to the falls as the "Jewel of the Mekong".



## Somphamit Waterfall

Somphamit (or Liphit) Waterfall is another popular series of rapids, located west of Don Khone, around 700 meters from the Don Det-Don Khone bridge. Visitors are normally amazed by how wide and spectacular the falls are and are impressed by the beauty of its natural setting. Even during the dry season the water does not cease to rush down the rock formations, and during the wet season the force is truly awe inspiring.

A legend associated with the falls, set in the 14th Century CE, recounts the story of Khmer monk Maha Pasaman, sent to Lao by the King of Cambodia at the request of Lao King Chao Fa Ngum to help establish Buddhism in the Kingdom, who motivated local people to construct a meditation hall located to the north of Somphamit waterfall, believed to be at present day Don Khone Vat Phoun, a very peaceful place suitable for meditation. After the construction was completed, monk Maha Pasaman, together with his followers, went to Angkor Thom in Cambodia, to invite a sacred Buddha statue to be enshrined at the Khone meditation hall. The return trip with the statue was undertaken with three boats tied together. Unfortunately, an accident happened when the boat in which the Buddha statue was located was sucked into a whirlpool, separating the three boats and causing the statue to disappear into the river. It is since that time that people refer to the rapids as Somphamit Falls.

# .....Siphandon



**Spend some time in the Siphandon (4,000 Islands) area, and discover southern Champasak Province's natural, cultural, and historical attractions.**

**Admire the roaring rapids rushing around the rocky 4,000 Islands, marvel at how locals benefit from the turbulent waters, and see attempts by colonial traders to tame the torrent.**

View the famous Khone Phapheng Waterfalls, Asia's largest by volume, and Somphamit (Liphit) Waterfall, one of the most spectacular rapids along the fault line.

Discover how the French conquered the Mekong's most turbulent stretch by constructing a railway from Don Khone to Don Det's calmer upriver waters, beginning in the mid 1890s.

Behold the darling of the Mekong, the Irrawaddy dolphin, as they peek out of the river off Hang Khone's shores.

On Don Khong Island (the largest Siphandon island), visit the District Historical Museum, inspect the island's Buddhist temples, sacred stupas, and other religious sites, some dating to the 14<sup>th</sup> century.

Experience southern Laos' distinct traditions and culture, celebrated in the *Lam Siphandon*, a famous folk song praising the 4,000 Islands' splendor.



Or, simply soak in the laidback island atmosphere on a riverside stroll and meet the people, whose way of life is closely tied to the Mekong.



# LAOS

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## Invitation to visit the 4,000 Islands

Champasak Provincial Tourism Department  
Pakse, Champasak Province, Lao PDR

[www.tourismchampasack.org](http://www.tourismchampasack.org)

# Siphandon Tourist Information Centers

The Khong District Tourist Information Center, located in Kang Khong Village on Don Khong Island, provides information on tourist attractions, accommodation and restaurants on Don Khong Island and the rest of the 4,000 Islands. The center's staff welcomes visitors every day from 08.00-16.30.

Visitors to Don Det and Don Khone Islands can obtain a wealth of information on the two popular islands, including attractions, self-guided walks and organized community-based tourism programs, by visiting the Tourist information Center in Ban Nakasang, the gateway to the area, which includes Somphamit (Liphi) Waterfall and the colonial trans-island railway.



# Khong District Historical Museum

is located in Kang Village on Don Khong Island. It is housed in a well-preserved, two-story structure built by the French in 1935, which was restored in 2011 with support from the Asian Development Bank-funded Sustainable Tourism Development Project (STDP).

The museum provides visitors with an insight into the distinct history, livelihoods and way of life of the Khong island and its people and illuminates the history and atmosphere of the original use of the building as the home of former governor Kou Abhay.

# .....Ban Hinsiew

is famous for the production of palm sugar. This village, consisting of 245 households, is one of the tourism supply chain target villages of the Sustainable Tourism Development Project.

Here you can observe the production process, starting with locals climbing towering trees and ending in sweet treats, which you can sample and buy as a souvenir.



Don Det and Don Khone Islands are located in the south of the 4,000 Islands area, close to the Cambodian border. They can be reached from Don Khong by boat in about 2 hours. You will arrive at the French colonial port in Ban Don Det, which was the northern end of a transport system constructed to bypass the Khone Falls, consisting of a railway spanning the two islands and a concrete bridge built around 1910.



# Ban Houay

located on the southern tip of Don Khong Island, is becoming known for producing quality coconut shell handicrafts. Eight families are currently involved in this activity, which is also supported by the STDP.

The project has supplied the producers with equipment, allowing them to increase production and expand the range of products. This way the villagers can supplement their incomes.



# Ban Hang Khone

is located on the southern tip of Don Khone Island, overlooks the Cambodian mountains across the Mekong, which are best observed from the hill-side viewing platform. Take a boat from the pier to admire rare freshwater Irrawaddy dolphins lazily surfacing for air, and for those seeking a deeper insight into island life, sign up for a Hang Khone homestay and a 1, 2 or 3-day villager-led trek and boat trip.

# The Irrawaddy Dolphin

is a fresh water dolphin found in the Mekong. According to a recent WWF-led survey, less than 80 critically endangered freshwater Irrawaddy dolphins (*Orcaella brevirostris*) inhabit the Mekong. They live in groups of up to six along a 190-km stretch of the river between Don Khone Island and Kratie, Cambodia. Around 20 of them are regularly spotted south of Don Khone Island.

Their habitat – undisturbed shallow waters, abundant fish, and a clean river system – confines them to small areas, making the dolphins easy to spot from a non-encroaching 100-200 meters, when they lazily come up for air every 70-150 seconds, especially during the dry season when they prefer the deep pools in the center of the Mekong. The best time to watch them is just after dawn, though late arrivals can spot them until about 10:00, and, again between 15:00 and 17:00.