Nature Trails in Hin Nam No

Eco-Tourism Adventures in Hin Nam No National Protected Area
Khammouane Province

Hin Nam No National Protected Area:
As its name suggests, Hin Nam No (shiny rock sprouts) is an area of jagged limestone karst landscape where the Central Indochina Limestone belt meets the Annamite mountain chain. The Hin Nam No National Protected Area lies in Boualaoxay District, Khammouane Province. It is roughly 270km east of Thakhek and covers an area of 62,000ha. For most of the Hin Nam No, the habitat is characterized by vertical limestone cliffs, deep jungle gorges and a mosaic of caves.

Wildlife:
The rugged limestone country has served as a refuge for several key species of primates, in particular, the endangered black langur and red-shanked douc langur. Other primates are present such as Southern white-cheeked crested gibbons, and multiple species of macaque making this area a priority primate protection site. Other notable species contributing to the conservation value of the area are the hornbill birds among these, the great hornbill and the wreathed hornbill as well as many other birds. Traditionally, villagers surrounding the protected area have hunted some of these animals but are now protecting wildlife and invite you to visit to experience the habitats, detect signs of these rare creatures and even see and hear the animals themselves.

Selected Hin Nam No Community-based Tourism Sites:

Tham Nam Or Khue:
The resurgence of the Houay Hiek stream. This large chamber is kept clean by seasonal inundation. The cave is reached by a 6km walk up stream from Ban Thongkham village. Otter tracks are often seen at the mouth of this cave, and a strange four-legged creature can be investigated inside the cave. Keep quite as you walk to this cave because you may be fortunate enough to encounter a family of black langurs or other amazing species on a cliff face overlooking the walking track. This cave can be explored in the 1 day Houay Hiek Long Trail (3:2km; 7:00hrs) trekking program organized by villagers at Ban Thongkham.

Tham Noi Khue:
The Houay Hiek stream passes under a cliff for about 60m. There is a beach for most of the way through and a constant flow of water at a depth of about 3.5m allows for swimming for those willing to face the cold and dark. Bats and swallows nest in this cave as indicated by the name “Khue” (swallow). There are passages on the left hand side; one is said to have been inhabited by about 3000 North Vietnamese soldiers during the war. This cave can be visited as part of the 1 day Houay Hiek Long Trail (12:3km; 7:00hrs) or half-day Houay Hiek Short Trail (6.5km; 3:00hrs) from Ban Thongkham. Please preserve the historical value of this cave by not taking souvenirs.

Tham Pak Tham:
This cave is the third tunnel that the Houay Hiek cuts through. The mouth of the cave is located 2.7km upstream from Ban Thongkham village. It's not known how deep the water is at the start of the trail; it is said to be about 300m deep. Bats and swallows nest in this cave as indicated by the name “Khue” (swallow). Visit this cave as part of the 2-day or half-day trek from Ban Thongkham.

Tad Songou:
A 20m waterfall with a deep pool at its base located 2.3km from Ban Nongbou. During the dry season there is usually still some water flow and is suitable for swimming. A half-day trek to the waterfall with village guides from Ban Nongbou enables you to enjoy this site at your leisure.

Pha Nao Macaques:
Assamese macaques live only around 800m from Ban Nongbou. These primates live in caves on Pha Nao cliff. A short walk to the cliff from the village in the early evening or evening. Bats are visible for viewing macaque. It's possible to arrange an extended trek around the base of Pha Nao with village guides, for an extra fee.

Operational months:
Dry season Only.

Homestays:
Ban Thongkham village is the launch village for the Houay Hiek stream trekking. Look out for a homestay option in this yao ethnic village.

Travel in Laos:
For those who would prefer a guided accommodation Langkhang offers a variety of options.

Getting there:
• Langkhang is about 128km from Thakhek or from Vietnam, 12km from Naphah Border checkpoint. To get to Langkhang travel East from Thakhek along Route 12 for 55km, then turn right at Gnomxihan and continue along route 12 for 7km.
• To get to the suggested villages from Langkhang, just travel 2-3km East and then turning left.
• Distances from Langkhang: Ban Nongbou = 6.4 km; Ban Nongseang = 10km; Ban Thongkham = 15.6km (6.6km to Ban Dou, then left for 3km).

[Map and images related to the text]