

**JULY
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**EDITION 7
VOLUME 1**

**WALK
WITH
US
TO**

**BOKEO
NATIONAL
PARK**

**TO
GIBBON
EXPERIENCE**



**TAKE CARE OF
YOUR PLANET!**

**YOU CAN MAKE THE
DIFFERENCE**

GIBBON EXPERIENCE

Laos has a fine example of ecotourism. The Gibbon Experience brings you straight in Bokeo National Park. While you are enjoying the many zip lines overlooking the

canopy of the forest; you are protecting this area at the same time. This company uses the money to keep the cultural diversity of tribal communities. Also guards are trained to catch poachers and illegal loggers. Only

a small amount is profit and invested. Although, forests are disappearing, Laos has kept most of its forests. The Gibbon Experience managed to protect Bokeo NP thanks to tourists who choose ecotourism.

ECOTOURISM (1)



WHAT IS ECOTOURISM

Ecotourism is "Responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the well-being of local people." (TIES, 1990) The main principles are: minimize impact, provide direct financial benefits for conservation, and provide financial benefits and empowerment for local people.

This news letter is the first part of a two serie edition about ecotourism. In this first edition the main focus is on what ecotourism is and how you can contribute. In August I will explain my contribution to two projects: The Bokeo Reserve and the Irriwaddy Dolphin conservation project.

Why choosing ecotourism?

Ecotourism is a good way to protect the environment with respect to the culture of local or tribal people. The impact of ecotourism is small and there are financial benefits for the protected area and its inhabitants.

How do you know if it is ecotourism?

Ecotourism is advertised everywhere nowadays. This "label" does not necessarily mean it is a genuine company. Speaking to a tour guide of the particular company is the best thing to do. Try to find out how the money is spend. This should include conservation, benefits for local communities, transport, profit, and investment. Also make sure that practices of the tour company have low impact. This means that the tour guide provides you with resources that are not detrimental to the area (e.g. use of fire wood, littering, number of visitors). Furthermore it is better to have a local guide who speaks the tribal language and

who knows the area.

Last but not least, just have a look in the office of the company. Do you see WWF posters?, Is there education material and do you see posters with endangered species listed? These are good indicators to determine if you are in the right place.

How to minimize your impact?

Joining an ecotour is one thing, but keeping it so is more important. Here are some tips to minimize your impact:

- Take all litter with you and dispose this in urban areas where they can deal with it. Villages usually lack these facilities.
- Use a petrol stove in stead of fire wood for cooking.
- Always follow designated trails.
- Never touch or harm animals & plants and never feed wild animals.
- Never buy crafts or products made from protected or endangered animals or plants.
- Use biodegradable soap, but stay at least 50 meters away from the water source.
- Raise awareness amongst locals, tourists, and children of how taking care of the environment.
- In case you see litter, please take it with you.
- Be respectful of local citizens' privacy and dress appropriately.
- Remember to leave only footprints.



**Be green,
help people,
choose
ecotourism**