

Changing the landscape for tourism in Laos: Easia Travel

Easia Travel Laos, Luang Prabang, Lao PDR

Easia Travel, a B2B Destination Management Company operating in the Southeast Asia region, has long been a pioneer in sustainable tourism. With local offices in five key destinations, including Luang Prabang in Lao PDR, the company has consistently demonstrated a deep commitment to ethical practices and environmental responsibility. Through a number of innovative initiatives, Easia Travel has and continues to minimize negative impacts and maximize positive contributions to local communities.

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Initiative	Easia works to conserve, protect and ultimately enhance the living systems in destinations that support both its business and the broader economy. The company aims to minimize its environmental footprint, protect workers and others in its supply chain, and work with like-minded partners to develop solutions for a more sustainable world.
Actors	Easia Travel, local travel trade, local communities
URLs	https://www.easia-travel.com/ https://www.easia-travel.com/easia-sustainability/sustainability-policy/

Dedication to sustainability

Recognizing the long-term impact of tourism, Easia Travel integrates sustainability into all aspects of its business.

Sustainability managers appointed at each destination plays a vital role in designing and implementing sustainable practices, tracking progress, and collaborating with local communities to create positive change.

Guidelines are developed based on standards set by Travelife, a global organization for sustainable tourism. By meeting more than 200 criteria related to sustainability practices, Easia Travel has earned Travelife certification in all the destinations the company manages.



Photo: Easia Travel

Balancing Growth and Conservation in Luang Prabang

Balancing economic growth with the preservation of Luang Prabang’s rich heritage and vibrant community is a key challenge in Laos. As a UNESCO World Heritage City, Luang Prabang is particularly vulnerable to the negative impacts of mass tourism, including overcrowding, pollution, and cultural erosion.

PhetAnong PHONSAVATH, Country Director for Laos, says: “It is vital to mitigate risks while ensuring that tourism benefits the local community. Easia Travel has developed strategies that preserve local traditions, support livelihoods and reduce the negative impacts of tourism. These efforts have helped preserve the town’s unique character while ensuring that tourism remains a positive force.”



Key Initiatives

- **Child Safety:** Easia Travel places the utmost importance on child safety, especially in destinations where interactions with children can be sensitive. The company has developed the Child Welfare Code of Conduct for employees and suppliers, a comprehensive document that emphasizes responsible, respectful behavior. This includes a firm stance against activities that could potentially exploit or endanger children. As part of this policy, Easia Travel has removed all school visits from its programs. In addition, the company discourages unsupervised village visits, direct gift giving, and unauthorized photography of children. Instead, the company encourages travelers to support local communities through responsible donations. In 2023, Easia Travel became a 3-star ChildSafe partner.



Photo: Easia Travel

- **Elephant Welfare:** Laos is the “Land of a Million Elephants”. Easia Travel prioritizes elephant welfare and does not support exploitative activities, including elephant rides. Instead, the company partners with ethical sanctuaries that maintain high standards of animal care, where visitors can observe elephants in their natural environment and interact with them in a non-exploitative way. Supervised feeding of elephants and support of conservation efforts are encouraged.
- **“Refill, Not landfill”:** Easia Travel’s “Refill, Not Landfill” initiative was created to address the environmental impact of single-use plastic bottles. With more than one million travelers visiting Luang Prabang each year, the environmental impact of single-use water bottles was significant. In 2016, the company banned single-use plastic bottles and provided reusable alternatives to all travelers. Working with local businesses, Easia Travel installed more than 100 refill stations throughout the region, providing visitors with easy access to clean, filtered water. Easia Travel also promotes “bring your own bottle” guidelines. In 2023, the group saved 387,456 plastic bottles, including more than 30,360 bottles in Laos.



Photo: Easia Travel

A brighter future for Laos

PhetAnong PHONSAVATH notes that Easia Travel’s work is far from complete. “The company,” she says, “will increase its focus on waste management and carbon offset initiatives as it continues its efforts to minimize the environmental footprint of tourism.”

Easia Travel will also continue to work closely with local communities. For example, the company takes great care when introducing homestay programs. Hosting tourists in local homes can be a sensitive issue, so Easia Travel weighs the potential impact when deciding whether or not to teach local families how to host guests.



Photo: Easia Travel