

# Thai Hai Village: A Sustainable Community Rooted in Tradition

Thai Hai Village, Thai Ngyuen Province, Viet Nam

In Thai Ngyuen province in northern Viet Nam, a quiet but extraordinary transformation has taken root. Thai Hai Village is home to more than 150 residents who embody the living traditions of the Tay people, Viet Nam's second-largest ethnic group, comprising 1.9 percent of the national population. Founded by Ms. Nguyễn Thị Thanh Hải, Thai Hai was created as a response to cultural loss and social exclusion. Today, it offers visitors a rare opportunity to experience and authentic way of life. Many leave having felt the quiet strength of a community built and sustained by the power of love. Thai Hai's model aligns with several of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, and in 2022, the initiative was honored with the UN Tourism Best Tourism Village award. What began as one woman's mission to preserve her cultural heritage is now a thriving community that is recognized internationally.



Content Quality destinations Employment Skills

Initiative	This initiative preserves the traditional culture of the Tay people through a thriving model of community-based tourism. A once-barren landscape has been transformed into a living village where residents inhabit restored stilt houses, uphold ancestral customs, and pass on traditional knowledge relating to cultural and environmental stewardship.
Actors	The residents of Thai Hai Village and the surrounding local community
URL	Thai Hai Village <a href="https://www.instagram.com/thaihaivillage/">https://www.instagram.com/thaihaivillage/</a>

## A vision built from the ground up

The Thai Hai Village project began in 2022 with a clear mission: to protect the traditional culture of the Tày people. Ms. Hải used her personal savings and borrowed funds to purchase and relocate traditional stilt houses from her hometown, where they were being abandoned in favour of modern structures. Each house had to be dismantled, transported more than 50 kilometers, and carefully reassembled.



Photo: Thai Hai Village

The process took over a decade and laid the physical foundation for what would become a new community, animated and sustained by traditional values. Ms. Hải transformed the land by planting native species and creating a self-sufficient, chemical-free environment.

The Village's social foundations were built with equal care. Ms. Hải reached out to those in need: the sick, the elderly, people with disabilities, and others who had been marginalized or left behind by society. The new village offered meaningful work and a sense of belonging.

Today, Thai Hai is home to a multi-ethnic community, united by shared responsibility and mutual care.



Photo: Thai Hai Village

## Community as household

Thai Hai Village operates on a communal principle: "One meal we share, one purse we bear."

This is the foundation of its social and economic model. All residents contribute to daily life, taking on roles from tending gardens and preparing meals to welcoming guests and maintaining the stilt houses. Income from tourism and agricultural products is pooled into a shared fund, which covers food, housing, healthcare, and other living expenses for everyone.



Photo: Thai Hai Village

This system fosters a strong sense of unity and mutual support, turning work into a collective effort for the well-being of all. It ensures that even the most vulnerable are cared for, and that the village thrives as a single, interdependent household.

# Preserving culture through everyday practice

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Thai Hai Village maintains its cultural vitality through practical transmission of knowledge across generations. This intergenerational sharing takes place through the rhythms and customs of everyday life. Residents wear traditional clothing not for display but as part of their daily routine. Knowledge is passed down through cooking, herbal medicine, and even the practice of “Then” singing, a cultural expression unique to the Tày people.

This commitment to authenticity contributes to preserving the Tày people’s heritage, while offering an immersive and meaningful experience for guests.



Photo: Thai Hai Village

# Global recognition and lasting impact

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The benefits of Thai Hai’s holistic approach are clear. What began as an expanse of barren land has become a lush, 26-hectare ecological haven that provides stable employment and a secure living environment. The village’s success is driven by strong social cohesion. The multiple roles that residents perform foster a culture of mutual support in which people can readily help each other complete their tasks and responsibilities.

Reflecting, Ms. Hài says, “The greatest achievement is that the community is home to three generations, each understanding the power of love, each helping the other.” This statement underlines the success of the village’s mission: to preserve culture not as memory, but as a way of life that is shared, lived, and passed on.



Photo: Thai Hai Village

## Interview

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