

## Program: 3 days / 2 nights: *Mae Hong Son Mountain Life Insight*

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### Highlights:

- Experience the rhythm of local life in traditional Black Lahu and Shan villages,
- Stay with local families in beautiful rice terrace valleys, surrounded by limestone mountains;
- Hike through the village rice fields and into the mountains to explore the secret coffin cave;
- Touch the most stunning, pristine forest areas... the beauty is varied throughout the year;
- Fully participate in the way of life and local wisdom of Black Lahu and Shan people.

### Overview of trip:

This is a unique opportunity for visitors to have a deep insight into the life of two distinct hill communities, the Black Lahu and Shan peoples, who live side by side in an area of mountains, verdant forests and fertile rice valleys. Local people in both communities live according to ancient traditions. Various activities are offered while staying in the communities, including seeing how local crafts and musical instruments are hand-crafted from bamboo, hiking through the mountains to visit prehistoric caves, exploring local forest conservation areas, having a go at rice farming and enjoying cooking and eating local ethnic foods. Activities are lead by local community guides, which gives guests an unequaled opportunity to appreciate the beauty of nature, as well as to learn about the harmonious relationship between local people and their environment.

**Area:** Pang Mapha District / Mae Hong Son Province

**Village:** Ban Jabo & Ban Mae Lana

### Background of the area and communities

#### Ban Mae Lana (Shan Village)

Ban Mae Lana was originally called "Mae Lad Na," describing the river flowing through the village rice fields and community. The word and tone has changed overtime and the village name has become "Mae Lana".

This Shan farming community was established over 100 years ago. It is situated on a plain, in hilly terrain, near a river. Most community members are related, so people help and support each other. Shan people observe Buddhism as a belief system and a way of life. Their beliefs and traditional practices have been strictly preserved and their culture remains alive. People in the community still go to the temple on every Buddhist holy day, which falls on the 8<sup>th</sup> and the 15<sup>th</sup> days of the full or waning moon. On these days, people do not work, or do any activity that takes life of others; e.g. clearing land or burning forest.

The population of Mae Lana is approximately 550. The total area of the village is 11,950 rai including 350 rai of rice field and 437 rai of crop field. The village is 18 kilometers from the district town of Pang Mapha.

#### Ban Ja Bo (Black Lahu Village)

Ja Bo is a Lahu village sitting on a mountain ridge, accessed by a small mountain road. Behind the village, a limestone cliff soars into the sky, containing many caves, which are recognized as important prehistoric, archeological sites. These caves contain mysterious, prehistoric coffins, which are considered by local people to be the home of "*Pee Men*," or powerful village spirits. The Lahu people of Ja Bo are colourful, flamboyant and welcoming. Village life is invested with a special energy which visitors will not fail to notice. Guests who are lucky enough to visit during the Lahu new year, or other important festival times will have the chance to learn traditional dances from community members, in the '*Raan Jakhu*' sacred dancing circle.

Baan Ja Bo Community-Based Tourism Group was formed in 2001 to create better understanding of Lahu people's livelihoods, traditions, and culture. In particular, Ja Bo community wanted to show that the Lahu people are able to live harmoniously with the forest. At that time, many communities were being relocated from national park areas. The villagers wanted to prove that they did not use destructive farming practices.

## Program: Exploring the authentic Black Lahu and Shan communities

### Activities for day 1 to Ban Jabo: (L,D, Homestay)

- Enjoy a morning drive along the beautiful mountain highway to Baan Jabo, a Black Lahu village.
- Upon arrival, a warm welcome by the community and prepare for hiking to explore the area.
- Hike up the mountain to visit local Coffin and Coral caves, considered to be sacred sites by the Lahu people. Local guides also show us their fields, rotational rice farming system, and how local people live in harmony with the forest. Enjoy a jungle lunch en route in the bamboo forest.

### Activities for day 2 to Ban Mae Lana: (B,L,D, Homestay)

- Breakfast with your host family, a local guide leads a trek down the valley to Ban Mae Lana.
- Trek into beautiful untouched forest areas; enjoy exploring the delicate Coral Cave, bird watching and a jungle lunch. Observe how local people use bamboo for cooking.
- Late afternoon takes a trail that cut through the most beautiful paddy rice field in Ban Mae Lana.
- Meet host family, be a part of the family, local lifestyle, enjoy a traditional Shan style dinner.

### Activities for day 3 to Observe local activities-Mae Hong Son (B,L)

- Wake up for a fresh start in the early morning and the opportunity to join in a timeless tradition of Buddhist life - making 'merit' to the community's monks. Return to home-stays for breakfast.
- Observing local lifestyle and local activities around the village; see traditional sesame oil making, hand weaving cloth, traditional medicine center and traditional sauna. After lunch, pack up and say good bye to our host families, return to hotel or resort.

**Remark:** Local communities live according to the seasons and cycles of nature, not a strictly-timed schedule. Sometimes, guests may be invited to join interesting local events which are not described in the itinerary above. Occasionally, a specific activity may not be possible, due to the weather, local cultural or agricultural calendars'.

The tour operator will make every effort to ensure that the program runs as described. However, guests are requested to be flexible and to understand that there may be minor changes to the tour program. Often, such changes actually enhance the program, as guests get a more authentic insight into the rhythms of local life. Similarly, weather, road conditions, or other prevailing safety factors may influence a change in the published route & itinerary. However, the content of the tour will remain similar. The final decision of the actual itinerary will be made by the tour operator's staff, after consultation with community members on the day of the tour.

**Transportation:** 4wd (pick up type, service up to 6 pax)

**Meals:** 2 breakfast, 3 lunch, 2 dinners, drinking water

**Accommodation style:** Local bamboo hut (some are wooden houses in Mae La Na) mattress, pillow warm blanket and mosquito nets are supplied, Simple Asian style toilet, solar cell power supply (enough for 2 light bulbs for the night)

### Please note:

- Program starts and ends in Mae Hong Son
- Transfer from Mae Hong Son Airport, Bus Station and hotel in Mae Hong Son municipality area also available for free of charge (must be informed prior to your arrival)
- Transfer from Pai or Chiang Mai also available please see pricing section for transfer rate.
- Reservation for room on the post night can also be arranged at your own expenses.

### Travel advice

Guests are able to take public transport from Chiang Mai bus station to Pai or Mae Hong Son.

There are also flights available daily from Chiang Mai to Mae Hong Son with Thai Airways and SGA airlines.