

Program: Community based tourism in Klong Noi and Leeled

(2 days, 1 night: start and end in Surat Thani)

Highlights:

- Experience the real Southern Thai way of life in Klong Noi and Leeled communities;
- Explore a mangrove forest with local guides, meet local fishers and learn how local community members use the mangroves for food, medicines, natural dyes and home materials;
- Enjoy a boat journey along cool waterways passing verdant orchards;
- Learn how the local community have replenished over 1000 hectares of mangrove forest;
- A great chance for cross cultural exchange with local families in the heart of the south.

Overview of Trip:

This program was designed for travelers who are fond of exploring nature and local culture in simple, natural ways. You will have a unique opportunity to touch and learn the way of life of Southern Thai people in Leeled & Klong Noi Villages. Local guides lead you on an exploration of the mangroves and rivers which make this area green and beautiful. You will also have the chance to meet local craftspeople, and try your hand making local crafts. Leeled won the Thai Tourism Award for an excellent ecotourism destination. Klong Noi is also a serene place to visit, full of orchards and cool waterways. This program is a great combination of nature and culture.

Background to communities:

Leeled is located in Surat Thani (Southern Thailand), only a few minutes drive from Surat Train Station. Leeled is blessed with pristine nature and abundant natural resources, with hundreds of canals in the area. It's home to one of the most fertile and largest mangrove forests in Thailand, a precious nursery for sea life which supports of hundreds of local fisher families.

Over the past three years, community members have regularly undertaken conservation activities, motivated by the natural & social awareness of the village leader and active villagers. As a result of this work, mangrove forest areas have naturally expanded by 3,000 rais. There was no need for reforestation. Surveillance was regularly undertaken to deter illegal fishing in the forest areas. As a result of the new mangrove forests, the population of aquatic life has increased, enabling villagers to catch more fish and earn more income for their families.

As well as conservation, local men and women of all ages also make good use of the mangrove forest. During the period of high tides, the villagers will harvest nipa palms, catch forceped fiddler crabs and mollusks, plant crab traps, and set up different types of fishing nets. When the tides are low, they will be busy fetching hard clams, propelling the plank on the mudbank to harvest mollusks, fishing with hook and line, and harvesting crabs. It's a busy local supermarket!

Villagers in the past traveled from one village to another through the river networks. The main livelihood of Leeled residents living in the marsh land is coconut palm plantation, while villagers residing in the areas near the sea engage in traditional fishing. At present, apart from these two main occupations, villagers also practice shrimp farming. Now, Leeled is more developed. The villagers travel by land more than by rivers and canals as they used to do in the past. Traveling to and from Leeled has now become much more convenient than in the past. However, local villagers still maintain rural livelihoods and rural way of life.

Klong Noi Community is a mixture of very diverse groups of people from older settlements and new migrants from other provinces, such as Petchburi, Ratchburi, Nakonpathom and Samut Songkram. Local villagers speak both central and Southern Thai dialects.

Klong Noi is located only 9 kms from the capital city of Surat Thani. There are numerous rivers, streams, and canals within and surrounding this area. The main livelihood of Klong Noi is integrated farming such as coconut, santol, mangosteen, guava rose apple, banana, etc. Coconut plantations are the original, and remain the most important crops.

Many traditional customs are still being observed and practiced today such as the 10th.Luna month for paying respect to grandparents, the 6th Luna month for the ceremony of respect and dedication to the spirit of the land and the orchards.

Nipa groves are abundant in Klong Noi. Almost every part of this plant can be used for different purposes – mature leaf is sown into sheets to make strips of palm roofing, flower is used in different recipes, meat of nipa fruit is consumed as fresh fruit, top young leaf is used as a cigarette paper, etc. It's one of the best places to watch fireflies at the night time as there are lots everywhere.

Program:

Day 1

Am

Arrival in Surat Thani by the morning flight from Bangkok. Meet and transfer by a local 2-row bus to Klong Noi. Store all luggage and relax for a while. Then, continue traveling to Leeled Village nearby.

- Arrive at the CBT Group Office in Leeled
- Briefing on community history, CBT Group, tour group rules, tour program.
- Boat trip to observe the mangrove forest eco-system (birds, crab-eating macaque, variety of trees in mangrove forests) and observe traditional fishing
- Return to CBT Group office and have homemade lunch with the villagers

Afternoon, transfer back to Klong Noi Village. At leisure at your hosts home and participate in activities with host family such as preparing supper. Get together in one house for a welcome dinner and meet the villagers.

Night

- Observe fireflies and their life cycle
- Overnight: at the host home
Meals: Lunch/Dinner

Optional

Visit the Monkey Training Center. Observe traditional monkey training and the extraordinary close friendship between man and monkey.(300 baht/group)

Day 2

Am

Breakfast at the host home.

- Sightseeing ride to observe local livelihoods around the community by boat with stops to see and visit some interesting places such as
 - A community temple (the relationship between the people and Buddhism);
 - Boat building, at a home factory that has been passed on to the youngsters for over 3 generation;
 - Nipa Leaf Product Group - Taste fresh Nipa Palm fruits and a special local desert made of Nipa Palm fruits, wrapped in Nipa leaves. Take a look or try your hand at Nipa leaf sewing to make a strip of nipa palm leaf roofing!

- Lunch with villagers at home

Afternoon - Visit Uncle Pan House. Enjoy watching “tiger fishes” (*Toxotes jaculator*) and their amazing skills catching food. Also, the chance to see spotted doves.

Return to the host house. Relax until time for the return trip to Surat Thani

End of service.

Meals: Breakfast/Lunch

Overnight: at the host home with basic accommodation

Meals: 4 meals as indicated

Accommodation Style: a basic and simple homestay

- 2. Tour prices included :** accommodation 1 night homestay in Klong Noi Community, all transfers and excursion by a 2-row bus and boat fee, 4 meals(1B, 2L, 1D), all activities mentioned in the program, a local English speaking guide and community guides on spots, a travel accident insurance (1 mil. Baht / person)
- 3. Tour fee excluded:** Transportation fee from Bangkok to Surat Thani and from Surat Thani to next destinations
- 4. Things to bring :** knee long pants, mosquito repellent, toiletries, personal medicine
- 5. Itinerary :** Due to the nature of the tour, the weather, road condition, local circumstance, prevailing safety factors, the route & itinerary may vary to those published but the content of the tour will remain similar. The final decision of the actual itinerary will be made by the tour guide.

Regarding the village visit, 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.