

Private Sector Tourism Investment Opportunities

Phoun Hin Poun National Park

Investment Highlights 2025

- Nam Non Cave
- Tham Kong Lor Zipline
- Wild Gibbon Trek



Issued: September 2025

Site Visit: Contact laosnationalparks@gmail.com for a site visit

Notification of Intent Due: First-come, first-served

Proposals Due: According to the MOU after receiving initial approval to move forward



Phou Hin Poun National Protected Area
Lao PDR
laosnationalparks@gmail.com
www.laoparks.la



Nature does not hurry, yet everything is accomplished.

Lao Tzu



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PHOTOS: GREENDISCOVERY / S. SCHIPANI



Lao Landscapes and Livelihoods



The Lao People's Democratic Republic (PDR) is developing sustainable, private-sector driven nature-based tourism (NBT) as one of the pillars of its 5-Year National Socio-Economic Plan and 2030 National Green Growth Strategy (NGGS). With an impressive diversity of natural capital, Lao PDR's comparative advantage in NBT is a reflection of its expansive national protected area (NPA) network, which covers roughly 20% of the country's total land mass. The Lao protected area system plays an essential role in protecting endangered wildlife species, including endemic species of the Annamite Mountain range--a global biodiversity hotspot. It is also home to a diverse group of ethnic minority peoples, whose history, culture and religious traditions are intertwined with nature.

Laos has been making a name for itself as an international and regional destination for NBT, adventure tourism, ecotourism, and community-based tourism. Tourism has the potential to become Laos' top export and revenue earner, but this will require sustainable private sector investment and proactive public-private partnerships (PPP). With the right planned investments, tourism in protected areas has the potential to be positive force for lasting economic growth, local employment, and sustainable conservation financing. The Lao Landscapes and Livelihoods Project (LLL) is working towards promoting inclusive private sector investment to leverage the natural assets of Lao PDR for sustainable tourism growth that benefits investors, local people, and conservation.

Phou Hin Poun National Park, which means "Limestone Mountain", covers 238,820 hectares of natural habitat in the heart of Khammouane Province and is renowned for its many caves, including the famous Tham Kong Lor, a 7km-long river cave. Many of the attractions along "The Loop" are located in or around Phou Hin Poun, a vast other-worldly landscape of jagged karst limestone peaks. The park is seeking investors interested in working together with ethnic minority communities to develop, market and manage the park's caves and wildlife-based tourism attractions. Entrepreneurs with a love of nature, a long-term vision for sustainable ecotourism development and an eye for an investment opportunity should apply.



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 Associate Professor Dr. Somvang Phimmavong
 Director General, Department of Forestry, Lao PDR

PHOTO GREEN DISCOVERY



The Rock

PHOTO PAUL ESHOO





TAPPING INTO THE TOURISM POTENTIAL

“The Loop” to Phou Hin Poun

- **Phou Hin Poun NP** is at the center of “The Loop”, a motorbike adventure route in Khammouane Province that starts and ends in Thakek town and links various protected areas, caves, waterfalls and other natural and cultural attractions.
- Most visitors following “The Loop” stay overnight at different locations around Phou Hin Poun, including Kong Lor village and Khoun Kham (Nahin), as well as visiting other sites around the park, including Vang Nam Yen (Cool Pool), Tham Pha Chan, and Tham Pa Fa (Buddha Cave).
- The community Kong Lor-Natane Ecotourism Association at Tham Kong Lor Cave has been managing the cave for more than two decades, and basic and mid-range accommodation options and restaurant services are available in the nearby villages. However, there remains great untapped potential for developing more activities around Kong Lor-Natan villages and other areas of the park.
- Many of the park’s attractions remain undeveloped, including gibbon viewing, bird watching, wildlife safaris, and multi-day expeditions to the interior of the park.



Karst landscape on the road to Kong Lor Cave



KEY ATTRACTIONS

Phou Hin Poun National Park – Cave Capital of Lao PDR

- Globally renowned caves, including the 7km river passage through Tham Kong Lor Cave.
- Expansive area of limestone karst peaks.
- Turquoise blue lagoons fed by limestone mountain rivers and waterfalls.
- Endemic Annamite mammal species, including white-cheeked gibbons, the Laotian rock rat (kha-nyou), Lao langur, and other iconic species including wild Asian elephants.
- Rare and endemic bird species that include red-collared woodpecker, sooty babbler and bald-headed bulbul.
- Kayaking and boating opportunities along the Hin Poun River.
- Ethnic minority communities including the Makong.
- Spiritual and historic attractions including many hidden Buddhist forest caves.
- The park is slated to become Laos' first UNESCO Geopark and is at the center of a series of protected areas in the Annamite Mountains in Central Laos, with Nakai-Nam Theun National Park to its east and Nam Kading National Protected Area to its north.



Key Markets

- Independent travelers and FIT travelers touring “The Loop” by motorbike, bicycle or car.
- Adventure tours by motorbike, minivan or bicycle.
- Thai weekend visitors entering from Nakhon Phanom.
- Visitors to Tham Kong Lor Cave, the Rock Viewpoint, Green Climbers and other nearby attractions.
- Travelers en route to popular destinations in Southern Laos like Savannakhet, Pakse, Champasak and Si Phan Done.

Visitor Statistics

Year	Kong Lor-Natane Area
2018	11,300
2019	6820
2020	2780
2021	745
2022	9850
2023	10,470

Accessibility

Getting to Kong Lor village:

- **Thakek, Laos:** 3.5-hour drive (180km).
- **Vientiane, Laos:** 6-hour drive (312km).
- **Nakhon Phanom Airport, Thailand:** Fly from Bangkok (1 hour) + 3.5 hours (200km) by road.
- **Savannakhet Airport:** 5 hours (310km). Daily flights from Vientiane to Savannakhet (1 hour).



Lao Langur



Kong Lor Cave entrance



Boating to Kong Lor

PHOTOS PAUL ESHOO/STEVEN SCHIPANI



INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Highlighted Opportunities

There are three featured tourism investment opportunities based on park management and stakeholder input:

- **Nam Non Cave**
- **Tham Kong Lor Cave Ziplining and Other Activities**
- **Gibbon Trekking**

Other Opportunities:

Investors are free to propose other activities or areas inside or around the protected area that have high potential and follow park regulations and guidelines.

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Tham Nam Non Cave

Nam Non Village Area, Khoun Kham District, Khammouane Province
Controlled Use Zone of Phou Hin Poun NP

The Opportunity

Tham Nam Non Cave is one of the larger caves in Phou Hin Poun NP, after Tham Kong Lor, and is located 10km outside Kong Lor village. Although the cave is one of the most impressive in the area, the tourism potential has not really been fully tapped yet and there is the possibility to encourage more visitors to the area. The village is looking for a private sector partner to invest in developing cave and rock climbing tours and other services to welcome and accommodate visitors.

Unique Selling Points

- One of the largest and most impressive caves to have been explored in the Phou Hin Poun and the Kong Lor area;
- Just a short distance from existing visitor facilities at Kong Lor village;
- Proven interest from experienced rock climbers, who periodically visit the cave and camp around the entrance;
- An ethnic minority Kaleung village with unique cultural traditions;
- Homestay available for immersive cultural experience;
- Black langurs and gibbons can be viewed nearby.

Investment Needs

- Rock climbing infrastructure, equipment and training;
- Training for local guides to lead professional cave tours;
- Zipline infrastructure, equipment and training;
- High-end, low-impact ecolodge or tented camp to serve both Tham Nam Non cave and Tham Kong Lor Cave visitors.

Accessibility

- Nam Non village is easily accessible from the main (paved) road and is located 10km before Kong Lor village;
- Access to the cave requires just a short walk through fields.

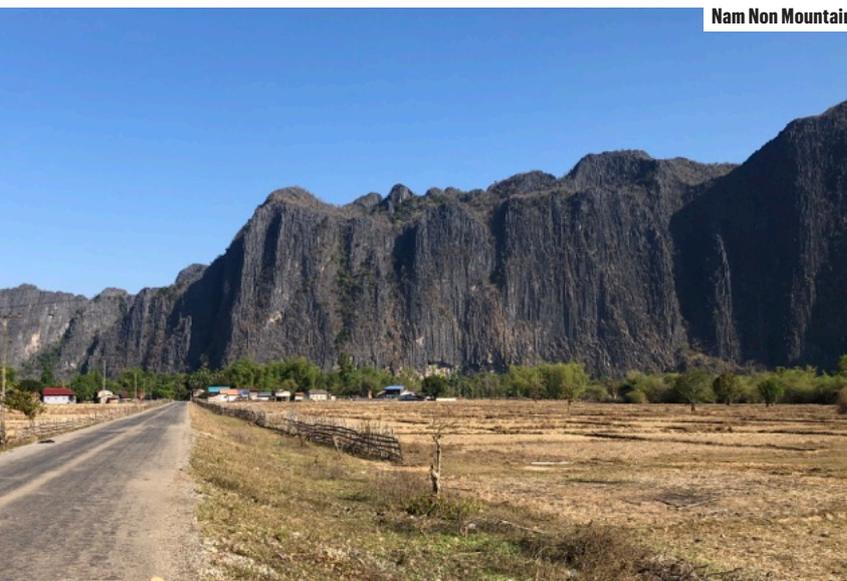
Partner Communities

- Kaleung village (Kaleung ethnicity)
- Nam Non village (Kaleung ethnicity)

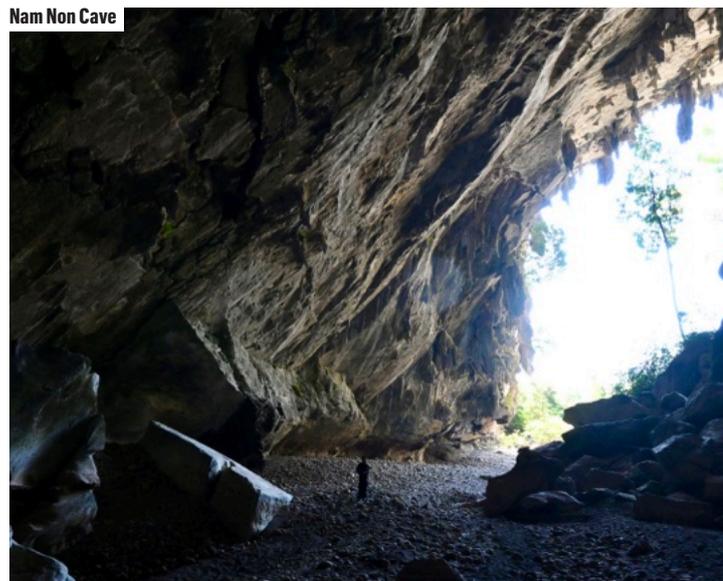


PHOTO PAUL ESHOO

Tham Nam Non Cave



Nam Non Mountain



Nam Non Cave



INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Tham Kong Lor Cave - Ziplining and Other Activities

Kong Lor Cave

Kong Lor Village, Khoun Kham District, Khammouane Province
Controlled Use & Buffer Zones of Phou Hin Poun

The Opportunity

Tham Kong Lor Cave is the main attraction of Phou Hin Poun NP and one of the most popular natural attractions in the country. Although the cave is well managed by the local boat association, services and accommodation are relatively basic given the cave's popularity and international significance. A private sector operator is sought to partner with the community and boat association to improve tours, including ziplining outside the cave.

Unique Selling Points

- Tham Kong Lor Cave is one of the most popular attractions in Laos and can generate greater value with better investments;
- The village Association Ecotourism Kong Lor-Natane, has experience, facilities and equipment to contribute;
- Many activities in and around the cave remain undeveloped, including adventure activities such as ziplining and interpretive guided tours through the cave.

Investment Needs

- Ziplining or rock climbing infrastructure and equipment, plus local training;
- Training and equipment (e.g., audio tour) for

- developing higher-end interpreted cave tours;
- Improved boats that reduce exhaust noise and emissions;
- Construction of a village dance and arts hall (refurbishment of an existing structure or new build);
- Development of high-quality ecolodge.

Accessibility

- Kong Lor village is accessed by a paved road;
- The Cave is accessed by hiring boats from the boat association.

Partner Communities

- Kong Lor village, (Lao Loum ethnicity);
- Natan village (Ae ethnicity).

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INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Wild Gibbon Trek - See rare primates in their natural habitat

Kong Lor Cave

Khoun Kham & Nakai Districts, Khammouane Province
Totally Protected Zone of Phou Hin Poun and **Buffer Zone** of Nakai Nam Theun

The Opportunity

Phou Hin Poun does not yet have any wildlife-specific tours, despite having rich biodiversity in one of the most important karst landscapes in the region. There is good potential to develop responsible tours to see gibbons and other species in the core area of the park located between Tham Kong Lor Cave and the park's corridor with Nakai-Nam Theun National Park. A private sector operator is sought to develop the park's first wildlife-focused tour to this area focusing on gibbon watching and conservation.

PHOTO GREEN DISCOVERY

Unique Selling Points

- One of the best chances of experiencing wildlife in Phou Hin Poun, especially hearing and potentially sighting rare gibbons;
- Remote camping experience;
- Give back to nature by protecting gibbons and other key species in the protected area;
- Hiking and remote camping from Tham Kong Lor Cave to Thalang;
- Forests, caves, waterfalls and other attractions make for a memorable 2-3-day itinerary.

Investment Needs

- Survey and impact assessment to minimize risks to gibbons;
- Campsite(s) and trail building;

- Training and equipment for trekking, camping, camera trapping, and wildlife viewing/bird watching;
- Safety and first aid training for local guides;
- Promote tours online via relevant websites and link booking with Tham Kong Lor Cave tours.

Accessibility

- This tour would start at the Kong Lor-Natan entrance and end near Thalang in Nakai;
- Both of these locations are accessible by road year-round.

Partner Communities

- Natan village (Ae ethnicity), Khoun Kham District;
- Thalang Village (multi-ethnic), Nakai District

Other Areas

There are many other areas with tourism potential in Phou Hin Poun NP, which investors may also consider:

- Natan Valley
- Vat Muang Leuang
- Ban Khuan
- Phagna Meuangvanh
- Nong Meuang
- Sao Ae Waterfall
- Tham Pha Chan cave and other caves in Phou Hin Poun NPA

Investors are also welcome to propose for investment and development other attractions in Phou Hin Poun not listed in this investment prospectus.



Forest Cave Temple in the Natan Valley

PHOTO: P. ESHOO

Environmental & Socially Responsible Investment



Kayaking on the Hin Poun River

Zoning

- For investments inside the **Totally Protected Zone (TPZ)**, no permanent infrastructure is allowed. Only campsites, toilets, trails, zip lines, boating, viewpoints & picnic spots are allowed.
- For investments inside the **Controlled Use Zone (CUZ)**, no large infrastructure such as hotels and resorts are allowed. Only low-impact infrastructure such as ecolodges, community guesthouses, and semi-permanent tented camps are permitted.
- For investments in the **buffer zone**, other tourism infrastructure types are allowed, including hotels and resorts.

Sustainable Capacity

- The capacity of any tour area will depend on the sensitivity of the area and zoning.
- For trekking and camping tours inside the totally protected zone groups should be limited (e.g.: one group per area per day with approximately 10 visitors per group plus guides). Actual limits will be mutually agreed with the investor based to an impact assessment and needs of the investor.
- Investment proposals should provide details on the capacity requirements of the tour, and proposed facilities, balancing impact management, tour experience, and sustainable benefit sharing for all partners.

Environmental Guidelines

- For tours inside the TPZ, strict waste management procedures are required. All waste must be carried out, and no burning or burying waste allowed. For



Handicrafts in Natan Village

facilities in the CUZ and buffer zone, waste must be managed according to district waste management regulations, with maximum effort to reduce overall waste and to promote responsible recycling.

- Investment proposals that do not propose large infrastructure are not required to conduct a full Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) but must pass an Initial Environmental Examination (IEE) according to MAE regulations. Proposals for lodging and larger infrastructure may be required to conduct an EIA.
- All investments must be designed to limit impacts on the environment, landscape, water resources, and biodiversity. Architectural and landscape designs should demonstrate that potential impacts have been addressed.
- Infrastructure and tours should also ensure no loud noises or disturbances in natural areas or villages and surrounding communities.
- All materials used for infrastructure inside the park must be reviewed by the park in advance to ensure that no prohibited wood or other materials are used.

Social Guidelines (Community Participation)

- Communities must be partners in developing and managing the investment.
- Communities must be consulted with at all stages of the proposal and negotiation process.
- Villagers must be trained and hired by the investor as local guides, cooks, camp managers, lodge or resort staff, and any other hospitality roles that are available.

Nature-based Tourism Business Leveraging Facility

The Lao Landscapes & Livelihoods (LLL) Project supports the Nature-based Tourism Business Leveraging Facility (BLF), which has matching funds available to support investments in tourism and tour service management cooperative contracts. Prospective investors can apply for matching funds as needed. The facility has three types of financing available:

Planning and feasibility work:

This will have no minimum amount per selected application, no matching required and a maximum contribution of US\$2500 to support surveys, consultations with communities and other field work required for preparation of proposals. Such funds will account for no more than 10 percent of the total funds available through the BLF.

Challenge Funds:

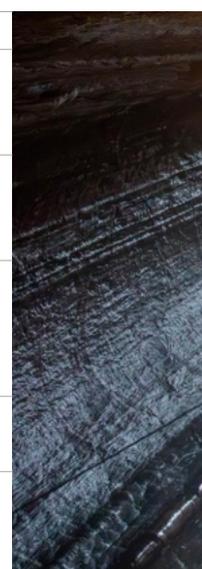
These will target investment in particular areas or for more specific investments, typically to attracting concession investments or public

private partnerships identified by the project as high priorities. Maximum contribution of US\$200,000 per challenge to support investments of US\$400,000 or more. Such funds will account for roughly 50 percent of the total matching grants (approximately nine challenge grants) available through the BLF.

Matching funds for MSMEs:

For product development and marketing work for businesses located in and around the project protected areas of up to US\$20,000 per application and a maximum of two applications per MSME (Micro, Small, Medium Enterprises). This type of funding will account for no more than 50 percent of the total matching grants (approximately 90 MSMEs). Businesses selected for challenge grants can recommend financing for its partner MSMEs in order to develop NBT value-chains. The following matching requirements can include in-kind contributions. Matching requirements will be as follows:

Type of work	Project funds up to:	Applicant will contribute:
Construction of new facilities/buildings	50%	50% (can include in-kind contributions of materials and labor)
Upgrade existing facilities and equipment	70%	30% (can include in-kind contributions of materials and labor)
Staff/Community Training	90%	10% (can include in-kind contributions of accommodation/food/travel for trainers and trainees)
Development of new or improved activities, attractions and tours (including upgrade to boats)	70%	30%
New or improved websites, brochures, marketing campaigns, marketing materials/advertising campaigns	90%	10% (can include in-kind contributions of accommodation, food and travel)



Agreement types

- For large investments that include significant infrastructure investments, concessions agreements are encouraged, which can be made for up to 30 years according to the Investment Promotion Law.
- For smaller investments that have only small-scale infrastructure, Cooperation Agreements with partner communities and the protected area authority are allowed, which can be made for up to 20 years.

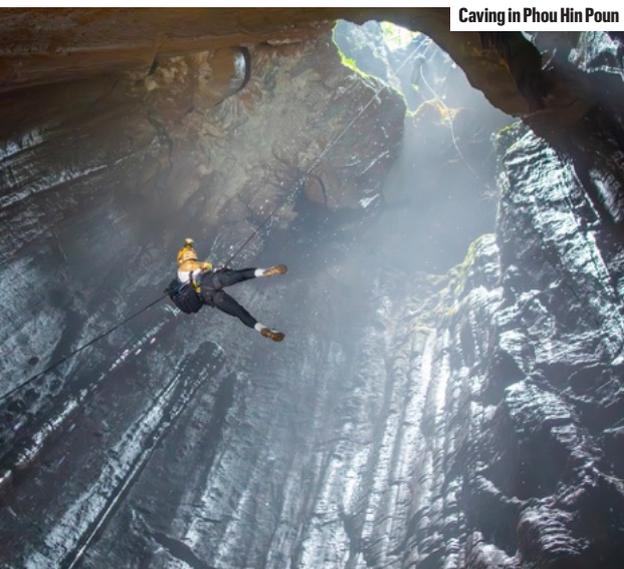
Maintenance & Conservation Fees

- The company is responsible for all maintenance costs of facilities, trails and other infrastructure or equipment used to manage and operate their tour services.
- Entry fees per visitor must be paid in addition to negotiated annual concession or cooperation agreement fees, unless otherwise specified in the agreement.

Taxes & Other Fees

- Relevant taxes including 10% VAT are required according to VAT and other tax laws.
- Labour Law must be followed, including the payment of Labor taxes and fees.
- Investments in remote areas (Zone 1) are entitled to a profit tax exemption for up to 10 years.

PHOTOS GREEN DISCOVERY



Caving in Phou Hin Poun



Private sector vision at The Rock

PROPOSAL INSTRUCTION AND PROCESS

According to the Agreement on Tourism in Forest Areas of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, No. 1926, 03/06/2025, steps for cooperative agreements are as follows:

1. Send Letter of Intent

Send a letter of intent to the National Protected Area Management Division (PAMD), Lao Department of Forestry.

E-mail: laosnationalparks@gmail.com

2. Forms to Complete:

Fill out application forms:

- Application form (Form #1) that includes technical and financial proposal

E-mail: laosnationalparks@gmail.com

- Business Registration and Tax ID
- Company description and CVs of owner, manager and experts
- Please submit the application to the National Protected Area Management Division (PAMD) in hard copy directly to the PAMD office. Your documents will be stamped and you will receive a receipt slip.

3. Evaluation of Proposals

- Proposals will reviewed by relevant departments and evaluated using the application Evaluation Form (Form #1).

- Within 10 working days, you will receive a response on the initial proposal evaluation.

4. Criteria for Proposal Evaluation

- Ecotourism experience (company profile & expert staff) **20%**
- Business vision, marketing strategy and itineraries/packages **20%**
- Involvement of local communities **20%**
- Benefits for conservation & environment **20%**
- Financial Plan & Terms & Conditions **20%**

5. Village Consultations, Site Visit and IEE

If the proposal is agreed to in principle, an MOU will be signed and a site visit, village consultations (Form #2), initial environmental examination (IEE), and feasibility study must be completed.

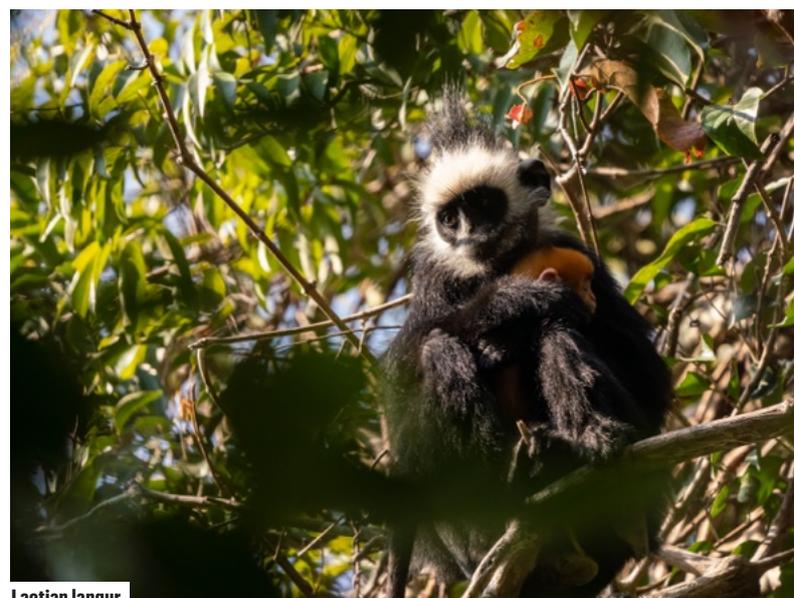
6. Final Approval & Contracting

- Final approval will be announced 10 working days after receiving the final proposal.
- Contracting will follow a standardized form (Form #3).

PHOTOS GREEN DISCOVERY



Ziplining in Phou Hin Poun



Laotian langur





Nature always wears the colors of the spirit.

Ralph Waldo Emerson

Contact us for further enquiries about private sector tourism investment opportunities

**Protected Area Management Division,
Department of Forestry, Ministry of Agriculture and Environment,
Khouvieng Road, Vientiane, Lao PDR**

✉ laosnationalparks@gmail.com

📘 [@parkslaos](#)

☎ +856-021-215000

🌐 laoparks.la

Phou Hin Poun National Park

Location: Central Laos

Province: Khammouane Province

“Phou Hin Poun National Park, which means “Limestone Mountain”, covers 238,820 hectares of natural habitat and is renowned for its many caves, including the famous Tham Kong Lor, a 7km-long river cave. Many of the attractions along “The Loop” are located in or around Phou Hin Poun, a vast other-worldly landscape of jagged karst limestone peaks. The park is seeking investors interested in working together with ethnic minority communities to develop, market and manage the park’s caves and wildlife-based tourism attractions.”



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