

Sustainable Tourism Guideline

Lao PDR



TRAFFIC
the wildlife trade monitoring network



Foreword

"Sustainable tourism", initially put forward by the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), refers to a green travel method that is in line with sustainable development, including protecting wildlife during travel, reducing plastic pollution and food waste, and maintaining ecological and environmental balance.

China is the world's largest country of outbound tourism, with the number of outbound tourists ranking first in the world each year between 2013 and 2019. The civilized behavior of Chinese tourists in carrying out responsible travel will play an important role in protecting biodiversity and achieving sustainable ecological development.

Southeast Asia is the most popular travel destination for Chinese tourists. As of 2018, China has become the largest tourist source country in Southeast Asia. However, Southeast Asia is not only a tourist mecca, but also one of the distribution centers for illegal wildlife trade.

According to a recent TRAFFIC report, approximately 225,000 kilograms of African ivory were seized from Southeast Asian countries including Laos between 2008 and 2019; Laos was the largest tiger-bone importer in Southeast Asia from 2007 to 2016; from 2010 to 2015, more than 5,600 pangolins were seized in Laos. These illegal trades not only lead to endangered or even extinction of wild species globally, but also have an irreversible impact on ecological balance.

Under such circumstances, this guide is dedicated to calling on Chinese tourists heading to Southeast Asian countries such as Laos to practice sustainable tourism, refusing to buy illegal wildlife products such as ivory, protecting wildlife reducing plastic pollution and food waste, and protect the ecological system that is vital to our survivals!

Manual Instructions

This guide briefly introduces domestic and international backgrounds, as well as laws and regulations, for protecting wildlife and rejecting illegal wildlife trade for tourists and tourism practitioners. It focuses on introducing the case of illegal wildlife trade in Laos, calling for tourists and travel industry to take sustainable trips!

The guide aims to encourage Chinese outbound travelers to practice sustainable tourism, civilized travel, reject purchasing wildlife products such as ivory, as so to protect wildlife; meanwhile, mitigate the risk of tourists involved in illegal wildlife trade in Laos and other Southeast Asian countries.

Due to the limited space, our guides cannot cover all responsible travel behaviors. We'd appreciate it if you could give us valuable suggestions and sincerely thank you for your support!

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1. Background of Sustainable Tourism

In 2005, the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) stated: sustainable tourism can be defined as "tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment, and host communities" (UNEP & UNWTO, 2005). In order to implement the concept of sustainable tourism, the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) has proposed standards for sustainable tourism, starting from the three directions of operators, destinations and the hotel industry to achieve the following four goals: (1) planning for effective and sustainable development; (2) maximizing the economic and social benefits of local communities; (3) enhancing cultural heritage benefits; (4) mitigating negative environmental impacts.

In 2018, the World Tourism and Travel Council (WTTC) issued the Buenos Aires Declaration at the Buenos Aires Summit, stating that it would adopt a zero-tolerance approach to illegal wildlife trade, raise conservation awareness of customer staff, and tourists, who will hence actively promote sustainable tourism; meanwhile, companies that have made efforts in sustainable tourism are integrated into the same category to encourage more sustainable practices and increase the recognition of these practices by the entire tourism industry, and cooperate with government and tourists to jointly affirm the progress made in this regard.

In recent years, China's biodiversity conservation work has been increasingly recognized by the international community. In October 2020, the fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the UN Convention on Biological Diversity will be held in Kunming, China, during which the direct and indirect driving factors that lead to the loss of biodiversity will be discussed, thus contributing to the Future for All Life on Earth.

In order to achieve the United Nations sustainable development goals, promote China's ecological civilization, protect the world's biodiversity, and ensure the sustainable use of renewable natural resources, WWF and TRAFFIC jointly launched a sustainable tourism guide to enhance the sustainable tourism awareness of Chinese outbound tourists, advocate sustainable consumption, resolutely resist illegal wildlife trade and smuggling activities, and advocate reducing plastic and food waste. We hereby express our thanks to the British Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) for their strong support for this manual.

2. Current situation of illegal wildlife trade in Laos

The illegal wildlife trade is the fourth largest illegal trade in the world, second only to drugs, arms, and human smuggling, with annual transactions of more than 23 billion U.S. dollars. It is a low-risk, high-profit, organized crime, and demand in Asia is its main driving force. According to statistics from relevant departments, in the smuggling channels, those carried via passengers account for as much as 50%. Laos is located in the Greater Mekong Basin. Its long borders with China, Vietnam, Thailand and other countries give Laos a prominent geographical advantage in the black chain of illegal wildlife trade. According to the data collection and investigation of wildlife trade in the border areas between China and Laos, the top four wildlife species with the highest frequency of illegal wildlife trade in China and Laos are

pangolin, bears, tigers and elephants. Pangolin mainly traded in the form of living body, dead body, scales and the meat; The bear, tiger and elephant mainly traded in the form of products, such as bear paw, bear bile and bear oil; tiger bone, tiger skin, tiger claw and tiger glue; ivory, elephant skin and elephant bone.

Laos acceded to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) in 2004. In 2018, Laotian Prime Minister Thong Lun issued Prime Minister's Order No. 05/PM titled *Regulations on Strictly Strengthening the Management and Inspection of Protected Wild Fauna and Flora*.

The Prime Minister's Order states that hunting species listed in CITES Appendix I is strictly prohibited, severely cracking down on smuggling, transporting, importing and exporting wild animals and plants; severely cracking down on illegal wildlife trade, strictly prohibiting wildlife farms, existing farms shall be converted into zoos or used for scientific research purposes; meanwhile, illegal hunting tools are confiscated and destroyed, and unauthorized production and sale of hunting tools are strictly prohibited; strict border patrol, once found, no leniency shall be shown in punishment.

With the continuous improvement of Laos law and the strengthening of law enforcement, tourists should not defy the law as to buy illegal wild products locally for shoestring margin, but should strictly abide by Laos and Chinese laws and regulations, reject all illegal wildlife products, and choose crafts that are beneficial to the local environment and community development. It is everyone's responsibility to practice sustainable tourism to protect the precious natural resources of Laos.

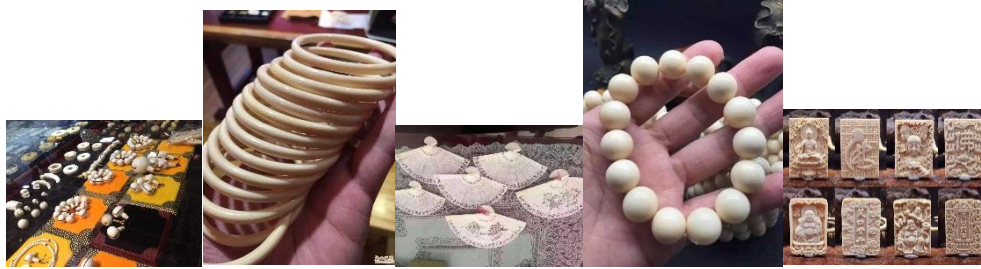
3. Common Endangered Species and Their Products In Illegal Trade

Regarding the illegal wildlife trade, you may not know:

- In order to obtain ivory, more than 20,000 elephants are poached every year;
- Since 2016, more than 500,000 pangolins have been illegally trafficked worldwide;
- In the past decade, nearly 10,000 African rhinos have been poached, which is equivalent to about 3 illegal hunts per day;
- In the past 16 years, an average of 2 tigers have been hunted every week, and there are only about 3,900 wild tigers worldwide;
- A total of eight species of bears are threatened by human hunting in the world, of which seven species are threatened by the bear bile trade.

3.1 Examples of Common Illegal Wildlife Products

Ivory products:



Rhino horn products:



Pangolin products:



Tiger-related products:



Bear-related products:



Helmet Hornbill Products:



3.2 International Conventions on Wildlife Trade regulation

In order to ensure that the wildlife trade will not endanger the survival of its wild population, in 1973, organized by the World Conservation Union (IUCN), countries participated in signing the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), also known as the Washington Convention. The species in Appendix I of the CITES Convention are strictly prohibited from commercial international trade, including Asian elephant and African elephant ¹, tiger, rhinoceros ², pangolin and bear, etc.; the trade of species in Appendix II is strictly restricted and managed, and CITES import and export certificate is required, involving the species of Dalbergia such as Laotian red sour branch, etc. Each country will also revise its own species trade management policy according to the appendix adjustment of the Convention.

3.3 China-Laos Illegal Wildlife Trade Case

According to the investigation, it is found that the tourists in Laos often carry illegal wildlife products when they return to China. This behavior is definitely illegal in Chinese laws and regulations. According to article 151 of the Criminal Law of the People's Republic of China and other provisions: Those who smuggle precious animals and their products that are prohibited from being imported or exported by the state shall be sentenced to fixed-term imprisonment of more than five years and less than ten years, and a fine; If the circumstances are especially serious, the offender shall be sentenced to fixed-term imprisonment of not less than 10 years or life imprisonment and shall also be sentenced to confiscation of property.

Here are some typical illegal cases in 2019 when tourists brought wildlife products such as ivory into China.

- At around 18:00 on March 16th, the on-site customs officer of the Kunming Changshui Airport Customs seized ivory bracelets and pendants from one female passengers during the inspection of the flight from Laos to Kunming. At the scene, the net weight of the ornaments was 60 grams, and the net weight of this bracelet was 50 grams, a total of 114.1 grams.



- On May 4, Nanning customs under the jurisdiction of Dongxing customs found the case of smuggling by human body using straps at the entry inspection channel of Dongxing port. Different from the usual case, this time, the one who seized 49 pieces of ivory products into China was a 13-year-old adolescent girl

13岁少女腰缠49件象牙制品入境被海关截获

法制网
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- On September 18, in the Hangzhou Xiaoshan Airport Customs, when customs officials were carrying out the task of supervising flights from Laos to Hangzhou, an image of a Chinese passenger's baggage check-in caught their attention. Through unpacking inspection, it was found that three creamy-white and yellowish items, polished and smooth, were suspected as 1 ivory bracelet and 2 ivory pendants via initial judgement. The traveler was detained immediately, whose carryings were sent to relevant departments for evaluation. The final evaluation results confirmed the customer official's judgment. On September 27, it was identified by the Hangzhou Customs Technical Center as an ivory product that weighed 115.24 grams.



4. Sustainable Tourism Shall Start From “Everyone”

4.1 Practice Sustainable Tourism by Tourists

In order to practice Sustainable Tourism, we should not only master the relevant knowledge, but also make changes from specific actions. We hereby advocate:

1. Travelers should purchase and use supplies that are recyclable, less polluting, and less dissipative;
2. When purchasing, tourists should choose local souvenirs that are supported by fair trade standards or public organizations, such as Ma te Sai in ban aphai Luang Prabang and kopnoi Gallery in 3 kingkitsarat road Luang phraban, which sell fair trade goods. (the international fair trade certification stamp is an independent consumer stamp, which is printed on the product to represent that the producer gets a fair treatment in the trade of the product, and who buy products with this stamp also contribute to the fair trade;

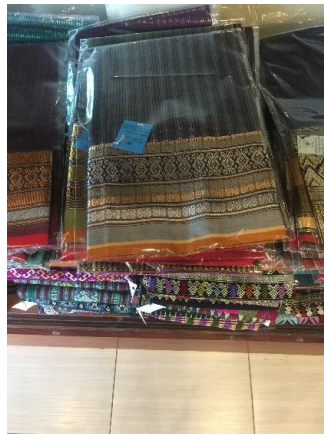


3. Tourists could buy local special foods in Laos: coffee, river laver, hot sauce, honey and beer;
4. Tourists could purchass local special handicrafts in Laos: amber, Lao gold, wood carving products, rice grain carving crafts, rice grain painting, wood paper, clay sculpture, bamboo products, rice grain products and tapestries, etc.;
5. Tourists could refer to the buyer's guide developed by WWF when purchasing souvenirs (www.worldwildlife.org/pages/buyer-beware);
6. Tourists should know the endangered species of wildlife and international conventions, laws and regulations on the protection of endangered wildlife before travelling;
7. While avoiding the purchase of wildlife products and choosing environmentally friendly souvenirs, we also call for:
8. Before any experiencing projects involving animals, tourists should grasp information related to it and understand the risks that this project may harm animals and damage the environment;
9. Tourists should bring their own water cups to reduce the use of plastic water bottles;

10. When the trash bin is clearly classified, tourists should discard it after sorting out the trash in order;
11. Tourists is encouraged to participate in garbage collection activities at the beach or scenic spot, traveling while protecting;
12. Hotels shall not actively provide disposable plastic products such as disposable toothbrushes, combs, shower caps, etc., but turn disposable bath products into reusable large bottles. Disposable slippers, capsule coffee, etc. shall not be offered.

Refuse

1. Buy ivory, coral and other decorations; tiger bone or bear bile medicine; and other wild animal fur products;
2. Eat bird's nest, shark fin and anything made from wild animal ingredients;
3. Take a close-up photo with wild animals such as tigers and elephants and participate in any activities that involves hugging wildlife;
4. Elephant riding and watching elephant performance;
5. Tease, feed, chase, provoke any wildlife;
6. Close to breeding sites, including nests and caves;
7. Use of disposable plastic products;
8. Waste food.



Sinh - Traditional costumes



Elephant tapestry



Bamboo products



Handicraft



Elephant dung notebook



River moss

4.2 Sustainable tourism practice in travel industry

Based on respect for local traditions, cultures and customs, and compliance with the law, advocating sustainable tourism requires the self-discipline of tourists and practitioners and the strong support of local governments. Relevant government

departments and non-profit organizations should promote sustainable tourism through education and law, and popularize relevant laws and regulations to enhance the protection of endangered wildlife. Closer ties and collaboration between tourism practitioners and regulators are also important measures to promote responsible tourism.

Practicing sustainable tourism needs the joint efforts of governments, businesses, tourists, and residents of tourist destinations!

Reference

[1] <https://www.wttc.org/priorities/sustainable-growth/sustainable-travel-tourism-partners/>

[2] Making Tourism More Sustainable - A Guide for Policy Makers, UNEP and UNWTO, 2005, p.11-12

[3] <https://www.cbd.int/doc/world/cn/cn-nbsap-v2-zh.pdf>

About WWF

The World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) is one of the world's most prestigious and independent non-governmental environmental protection organizations, with nearly 5.2 million supporters worldwide and an active network in more than 100 countries. WWF's mission is to curb the deterioration of the earth's natural environment and to create a beautiful future in which humans and nature live in harmony by protecting the world's biodiversity, ensuring the sustainable use of renewable natural resources, and promoting actions to reduce pollution and wasteful consumption. For more information, please visit: www.wwf.org.la ;

About TRAFFIC

The International Wildlife Trade Research Organization (TRAFFIC) is a non-governmental organization working globally on trade in wild animals and plants in the context of both biodiversity conservation and sustainable development. TRAFFIC's mission is to ensure that wildlife trade is not a threat to the conservation of nature. For more information, please visit www.traffic.org.