



CREATIVE
TOURISM
DISTRICT
THAILAND
Nani

Food

*More Travel,
More Fun,
Lasting Friendships*

Food

In the era when money and material possessions are more important than anything else, a life that relies only on components around you sought from nature is a simple but rather free and sustainable happiness. Crops, vegetable, fruit, and herbs that can be harvested throughout the year with any purchases, and meat of small and large animals sourced from private farm, make each and every meal full of new and fresh flavors of the season, safe and contaminant-free, whose source is 100% retraceable.

With the coordinate being of a verdant forest surrounded by mountains adjacent to the border of Lao People's Democratic Republic of Muap River, this Tambon in the highland of Amphoe Wiang Sa can be considered to be a land with plentiful food sources, with fish in the water, mushrooms in the forest, crops available for harvest everywhere. The introduction to Nam Muap will begin Chao Pho Chang Nga Daeng, a sacred place that houses the spirit and faith of the entire locality, which we will pay respect for luck and fortune first. But don't come on a Buddhist holy day since the shrine will be closed. After we've left your fortune under its care, we will head towards the forest right away. It's this hardcore because Nam Muab is the most abundant of food sources as previously said. The most important food sources



"Chao Pho Chang Nga Daeng shrine"



"Khun Boy, The local master"



"Trekking and Mushroom Hunting"



of both humans and animals are the forest, so after we've arrived, Nam Muap locals will take us to the forest to forage for mushrooms, which are to be cooked and eaten later. Since it was during the rainy season, mushrooms were even more plentiful than mosquitos. 'Daeng' mushrooms, 'kha' mushrooms, 'na paeng na moi' mushrooms, and 'than' mushrooms could all be picked along the way your hands may get sore. These mushrooms can be simply steamed and eaten along with plain chili paste, which is unbelievably irresistibly delicious. After a bit of short walk, Mr. Boy, the president of Nam Muap Lovers Group, the guide, pointed out 'yang' or 'takrai' mushrooms, which could be simply roasted and dipped in salt to get the best flavors out of them. Other than those, there were also be 'lom' mushrooms and 'rangok' mushrooms the are normally cooked with 'phlu nok' or 'chaphlu din' leaves. Whoever lucky enough to come during heavy rainfall or hailfall, which happens twice each year, will find the ultimate delicacy like 'pho' or 'thop' mushrooms, that will require trekking deeper but surely worth it. Even though I didn't get to taste 'thop mushrooms this time, but I was considered to be quite lucky, because I got to find bamboo shoot, all of which were so young and sweet. Normally bamboo shoots could be found in this area long after the rain parted or before arrival of rains, Mr. Boy said I had to return next time during the drought season from March to May, and he would take me harvesting for red ant eggs with wicker basket without fear of getting ant stings because there would be sticky rice flour to apply on your body that the ants would just slip off. Red ant eggs were so versatile they could be cooked into so many dishes, from fried egg, soup, chili dip, and could also be cooked into soups with 'phak wan' and 'dok kan.' I made a promise with myself I would definitely come to Nam Muap again next draught season.



Besides foraging for wild ingredients, fish are also plentiful in Nam Muap, so we will change our role from a forager into a fisherman for a moment, by following the villages to 'yok yo,' which is a fishing technique done by lifting a square net stretched on four corners onto bamboo rods, catching plenty of fish every time it's lifted. If you see this, you will realize how living a life not always tied up with money could be so free. Being so abundant with food, there's no need to buy, all you have to do is seek after them. Once you get all the raw ingredients, we will proceed to cook at Mr. Boy's home. Even if you don't have the



"You will learn fishing technique from the local people"



"Lab Mu Mi"

talent of a chef, that's fine, since Nam Muap people will be willing to teach you every last step as if you were their kin. The title of the unmissable local signature dish has to be given to 'lab mu mi.' What make it so good are the fresh, clean, and safe ingredients. The pork used was home raised. Vegetable was gathered from nearby forest, free of contamination. The dish is made by deep frying, which is 'mi' in the Northern dialect. Roasted chili mixed with 'makhwaen' a northern herb with unique lasting aroma, garlic, shallot, lemongrass, kaffir lime leaf, offal like intestine and liver, everything has to be deep fried. As for the pork skin, some recipe requires it to be deep fried into pork rind, some prefer it boiled, but all are as delicious.



We will be so stuffed after the meal so let's burn some calories by sightseeing around the area. We will start by touring Mr. Phon's farm to watch the extraction process of 'matao' or more commonly known as 'luk chit' peeled palm seeds in syrup. Mr. Phon is an expert in local fruits. He brought in and grow many fruits like 'pui fai' santol and dragon fruit successfully, which he picked fresh and peeled for us to taste. The natural sweet was not something available in a supermarket. Seeing him peel 'matao' reminded me of peeled palm seeds commonly sold along with shaved ice, but I didn't realize it required so much labor to peel ones, as I asked Mr. Phon for a try. It really wasn't easy. He said this kind of work required expertise since 'matao' fruits could be really itchy they could not be touched with bare hands. Afterwards, we moved on to calm our hearts by paying respect to the large Buddha image at Daen Thong Buddha's relics, where you can look down to take a look at the scenery, where I followed the sound of local music below and found young students rehearsing their dances with determination. Once I was done watching them for a while, I moved on to find a group of housewives weaving 'kratip,' baskets, and other basketworks with friendly smiles on their faces, who I talked with and eventually let them teach me the basketworks like a private workshop since I just couldn't resist. In the evening, the Nam Muap community will prepare us with 'Bai Si Su Khwan' ceremony to greet visitors with homely warmth, comprising of music played with 'salo,' 'so,' and 'pin,' played by the band of elderly to accompany the once again fulfilling 'khan tok' meal, concluded with the elderly binding our wrists with threads and give us blessing as if we were their kin, which was truly impressive. If you still have any energy left, you can join the nighttime activities that will challenge you with catching black crabs to make 'nam pu' at the rice field ridges just in front of the homestay, not anywhere far at all. The method is really easy since all you have to do is to snatch them when you see them, just like that. But for beginners like us, we should wear to layers of glove against any crab pinches. When you've got enough crabs we will keep them for making 'nam pu' by confining them in water to let them spit out all the mud and then wash and clean them again with water, then grind them up with clean water and ferment at least overnight. When ready, it's heated with salt, dried chili, lemongrass, kaffir lime leaves, galangal, garlic, 'ya nang' leaves, and pandan leaves that were all previously blended together. Simmer with the crab juice till viscous, and you will get the best 'nam pu' to add to chili paste, 'kaeng no mai' or 'yam som o' or to be enjoyed plain with sticky rice.



"Peeling Matao"



"Matao, commonly known as Luk Chit"



You will learn how to catch a crabs and make "Nam Pu"



"Very tempting banana fries"



We will wake up to another refreshing day, grab the bike and cycle to the morning market, then head to today's activity that is to watch the 'khao lam' grilling at Ms. Tae's place. You wouldn't be able to resist trying the different flavors of 'khao lam,' including taro, black bean, and sesame till full, so we will spend some of the energy by wearing our gloves and helping her fill rice into the bamboo tubes. The difference from normal 'khao lam' is the choice to use long aromatic 'khao lam' bamboo, which is more suitable for grilling than normal 'si suk' bamboo. When you pull it open, the bamboo membrane will coat around the rice nicely and not mush over your hands. From Ms. Tae's place, we continued to Banana Processing Cooperative Ban Moo 1 to watch and taste 'kluai brake taek,' which are essentially banana chips, available in sweet, natural, and barbecue flavors. Your 'brake' line will really be broken as not only will you get to try making it you will also get to taste it nonstop that will be compelled to sweep the shop to continue eating on the plane and at home. By the end of this trip, I can tell you if you become another member of Nam Muap community, you won't know what hunger is.



"warm grilling khoa lam. Bon appetit!"







Contacts for tourism:

Mr. Boy – Tel: 081 691 5962



Best time to travel:

All year round, but during rainy season mushrooms would be plenty and sweet bamboo shoots would be available. Drought season will be the time for 'phak wan,' 'dok khan,' and red ant eggs for those who like them. If you wish to see fogs of the late rainy season and early winter, you could see if it thick from just behind the homestay.



Preparations:

Trousers, sneakers, notebook to write down recipes



Values and impressions gained:

If you get to travel on Nam Muap food trip, you will learn how life and happiness do not need to be tied to money and material possessions only and that the value of each dish of food will increase if you know its background, search for its ingredient and cook it yourself.



After cooked "nam pu"

Directions:



From Amphoe Viang Sa, take the Rural Road Sa - Nam Muap for 37 kilometers

Target audience:



Tourists who like to appreciate new experiences, cultures, and lifestyles of each locality, to try foraging for ingredients to cook like a local, and most importantly to taste new flavors of local cuisine and experiment with new dishes.

Trivia:



Nam Muap is a highland area partially made up of plains with three rivers, Muap, Pi, and Sali, flowing through, making it a plentiful region through the entire year.

Activities with communities:



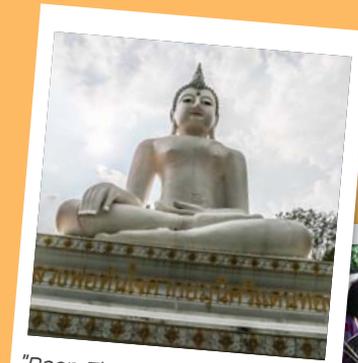
- Foraging for wild ingredients, picking mushrooms, and digging for bamboo shoots
- 'Yok yo'
- Cooking local signature dishes like 'lab mu mi' and 'lab pla'
- Making basketworks
- 'Bai Si Su Khwan'
- Catching crabs to make 'nam pu'
- Filling and grilling 'khao lam'
- Making 'brake taek' banana chips





Tourist attractions:

- Chao Pho Chang Nga Deang shrine: Sacred place that has been the center of the spirit of the local community since olden times, with 'khao cham' as the medium connecting the guardian spirit and the locals. The villagers believe it will grant any wish you ask for, by offering whole pigs. Closed on Buddhist holy days.
- Daen Thong Buddhist's relics: A must-go, since you don't only get to pay respect and enhance your fortune, you also get an aerial scenery, experience interesting cultures like dance rehearsal, basketworks, and also local spa where you can relax and purchase locally made quality herbal products.
- Fruit farm: You can try fresh fruits with natural sweetness, including 'pui fai' santol, rambutan, and dragon fruit, available in their respective seasons.



"Daen Thong Buddhist's relics"



Souvenirs and must-haves:

- 'Brake taek' banana chips
- 'Nam pu'
- 'Khao lam chaeng'
- Basketworks and bamboo cups
- Shampoos, herbal dabbers, balms, massage oils, Sao Nam Muap boxing oils



Accommodation:

- Ban Nam Muap Homestay



"Ban Nam Muap Homestay"



Food

Day 1

We will arrive Nam Muap in the morning, then pay respect to Daen Thong Buddha's relics for luck and fortune, and also at Chao Pho Chang Nga Deang, the center of faith for the local community. When we are ready, we will head into the forest to forage for ingredients like mushrooms, bamboo shoots, and vegetable to make lunch. In the afternoon, we will tour the fruit market to watch 'matao' or 'luk chit' production process and taste the fresh and sweet fruits right off their plants. Afterwards, we will fish by 'yok yo.' We will return to learn the Nam Muap's local specialty recipes like 'lap pla and lap mu mi.' Evening will be a good time to participate in 'Bai Si Su Khwan' organized by the local elderly. We will end our day by resting at Nam Muap Homestay.

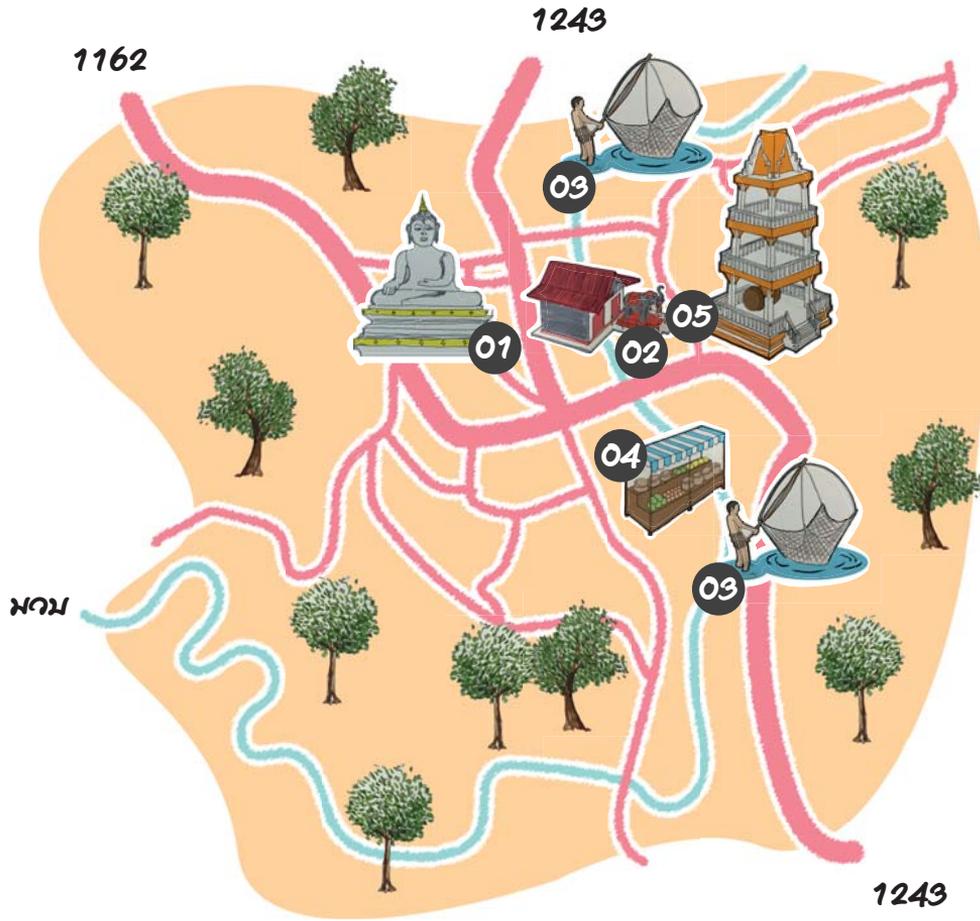
We will wake up early to cycle for the clean air towards the morning market to experience true Nam Muap lifestyle. We will return for breakfast at the homestay before heading to Ms. Tae's place to fill and grill 'khao lam.' We will take some time with lunch, and then make 'brake taek' banana chips before we finally bid farewell to Nan city and head to the airport.

Day 2



- 01 Daen Thong Buddha's relics
- 02 Chao Pho Chang Nga Deang
- 03 Yak yo
- 04 Market
- 05 Nam Muap Temple

Ban Nam Muap





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