

Hilltribe Homestay Handbook

By Thailand Hilltribe Holidays



Welcome

Welcome to La Oob village and to our Lawa hill tribe community homestay. We are glad to share with you, our Lawa culture and way of life, and hope that we can learn something from you too. We wish you a memorable stay, welcoming you as a guest, but hope that you will leave as a family friend.

About the Lawa

The Lawa hill tribe, are an ethnic group of Khmer origin. Some scholars believe the Lawa people are in fact the indigenous people of this area, as their existence in north-west Thailand can be traced back before mainland Thais.

Traditionally, the Lawa are animists with a belief in the spirit world. Many of the village elders are thought to have spiritual powers, and are able to connect with the spirit world. They are consulted upon on occasions for example, when somebody is sick.

A spirit festival is held, just before the start of rice planting season, to honour and ask the spirits for a good crop.

There are several 'spirit points' and spirit pillars in the village which are regarded as auspicious. You may notice spirit catchers made out of bamboo, at the front of each house. Please do not touch these as the Lawa believe they are sacred.

Alongside belief in the spirit world, many Lawa hill tribe also hold Christian or Buddhist faith. Approximately half of the villagers are Christian and half are Buddhist, both live peacefully together.

Sadly a lot of Lawa culture has been lost over history, as they have largely integrated into mainstream Thailand and Thai culture. The Lawa have their own spoken language, but do not have their own written script, using the Thai alphabet to phoneticise the Lawa sounds instead.

Village Life

Life in the village may seem like a very different world, and you might experience some culture shock when you first arrive. You will soon notice that village life is a very open way of living, with people dropping in and out of each other's houses and little sense of privacy. As a foreign visitor, the villagers will be just as curious about you, as you are about them, and may ask you a lot of questions.

The mornings start early, to the sounds of animals and children running around. During the daytime the village will be quiet as everybody is at work or on the farm. At dusk, villagers will start to come back, and everybody starts to prepare dinner together.

Traditionally, the Lawa hill tribe are farmers. Nowadays, all families grow rice and some members will have other occupations or work in town. The rice grown is mainly for their own consumption, and any surplus is sometimes sold. Other crops they cultivate such as; cabbage, passion fruit, corn, and coffee, are grown for commercial sale.

There are approximately 200 families in the village, half of which are Buddhist and half are Christian. Sunday is a day of rest for Christian families, and a morning mass is held in the village church.

All homes have a similar layout, built on wooden stilts, the bathroom is located underneath, and animals are kept under the house. Most kitchens still have a traditional fire for cooking, and more advanced homes have washing machines and hot showers.

Village Code of conduct

Please follow the following rules when you are in the village:

- Please take off your shoes before entering a house, temple or building
- Please dress modestly. Female attire should cover the knees, shoulders and chest. Please avoid low cut tops or above the knee shorts/skirts
- Please do not show strong affection in public
- Please do not touch people's heads and do not raise your legs and feet or point them at anybody. The head is considered the most sacred part of the body, and the feet are the lowest
- Please do not touch spirit catchers or religious symbols
- Please do not litter

Post trip

If you have enjoyed your stay in La Oob village, there are a number of ways to stay engaged after your trip;

- **Handicrafts**

Do you have connections or links at home with any shops, businesses or organisations, who would want to buy handicrafts from the village? Helping to connect the villagers to a buyer is a great and sustainable way to support their skills

- **Send pictures**

The villagers love seeing photos of themselves, so if you have taken any nice ones during your stay it's greatly appreciated if you could post copies back to them. The village has its own post office, and most of the time mail does arrive safely

- **Keep in touch**

Your hosts will be very happy if you keep in touch. Although there is limited internet access in the village, most families will be able to access messages via a family member or friend who has email. Please be patient if replies are slow

- **Leave feedback**

We are always looking for ways to improve the homestay experience for our guests, so please let us know your comments and feedback

- **Spread the word**

If our homestay has touched you in some way, please recommend it to your friends and family, so they can enjoy the same experience as you. You can leave a review on our [Homestay Tripadvisor page](#), blog or write about it on a travel forum. Please reference this link -

<http://www.thailandhilltribeholidays.com/homestay/>

.....We hope you have enjoyed your stay with us, and will visit again !