



Disappearing Natural Tourist Attractions: A Case Study from an Indochina Country

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Abstract

Natural tourist attractions across Indochina are increasingly threatened by infrastructure development. This article presents a case study from Thailand, examining how construction projects such as bridges and reservoirs have contributed to the disappearance of important natural sites. Through examples like the Mekong riverbank in Nong Khai and the Bang Phra hot spring in Chonburi, the study highlights the environmental, cultural, and economic consequences of unmanaged development. It calls for a more balanced approach that integrates sustainability into national development strategies.

Keywords: Sustainable Development, Natural Tourism, Indochina.

Introduction: Development vs. Preservation

Countries in the Indochina region—including Thailand, Laos, Vietnam, and Cambodia—are experiencing rapid economic growth. However, this development often comes at the expense of natural environments, particularly tourist attractions that once defined local identity and ecological richness.

Importance of Natural Tourist Attractions

➤ Environmental Value

Natural sites play a crucial role in maintaining ecosystems, supporting biodiversity, and regulating climate.

➤ Cultural and Social Identity

Many natural attractions are deeply tied to local traditions and ways of life, forming part of a community's heritage.

➤ **Economic Contributions**

Eco-tourism provides sustainable income for local populations while encouraging environmental conservation.

Case Study 1: Mekong Riverbank, Nong Khai (Thailand)

➤ **Former Natural Attraction**

The riverside area along the Mekong River in Nong Khai—particularly near Chom Manee—was once known for its sandy banks and scenic views, attracting both locals and tourists.

➤ **Impact of Infrastructure Projects**

The construction of the Thai-Lao Friendship Bridge and riverbank modifications altered water flow and erosion patterns. Over time, sections of the natural riverbank collapsed, leading to the disappearance of the beach.

➤ **Local Consequences**

The loss of this natural attraction reduced tourism activity and affected small businesses that relied on visitors.

Case Study 2: Bang Phra Hot Spring, Chonburi (Thailand)

➤ **Natural Resource and Attraction**

The Bang Phra Hot Spring was once a locally valued natural site, known for its mineral-rich waters and relaxation benefits.

➤ **Effects of Reservoir Construction**

After the development of the Bang Phra Reservoir, changes in underground water systems caused the hot spring to disappear.

➤ **Broader Impact**

The loss represents both environmental degradation and missed opportunities for sustainable tourism development.

Key Issues Identified

➤ **Weak Environmental Planning**

Inadequate environmental impact assessments often fail to predict long-term consequences.

➤ **Limited Community Participation**

Local communities are frequently excluded from decision-making processes.

➤ **Irreversible Environmental Damage**

Once natural systems are disrupted, restoration is often difficult or impossible.

Toward Sustainable Development in Indochina

➤ **Integrating Conservation into Policy**

Governments should prioritize environmental protection alongside economic growth.

➤ **Promoting Eco-Tourism**

Sustainable tourism models can generate income without destroying natural resources.

➤ **Strengthening Regional Cooperation**

Indochina countries can collaborate on environmental protection, especially for shared resources like the Mekong River.

Conclusion

This case study from Thailand reflects a broader pattern across the Indochina region: natural tourist attractions are being lost due to poorly managed development. Protecting these environments requires careful planning, community involvement, and a commitment to sustainability. Without such efforts, the region risks losing not only its natural beauty but also its cultural and economic foundations.

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