

# Don Det, the small island that creates a great impression

Patithin Phetmeuangphan

If you are looking for a place to relax, why not head for the tranquil island of Don Det where it's very quiet, the scenery is stunning and the Mekong River snakes lazily by.

Don Det is just one of the 4,000 or so islands in Laos (in the area known as Si Phan Don) located in Khong district, Champassak province. The island is a perennial favourite among visitors, with the number growing year by year.

There is a 7.2-km footpath around the island which takes about two hours to walk but it would be better to rent a bicycle for 24 hours for 10,000 kip from a guesthouse or restaurant.

While you're there it's best if you don't stay up too late because in the morning you should get up early and sit on the old French railway bridge to observe the sunrise. At the same time you can watch the locals going about their daily activities by the river, such as watering their vegetables on the riverbank and fishing.

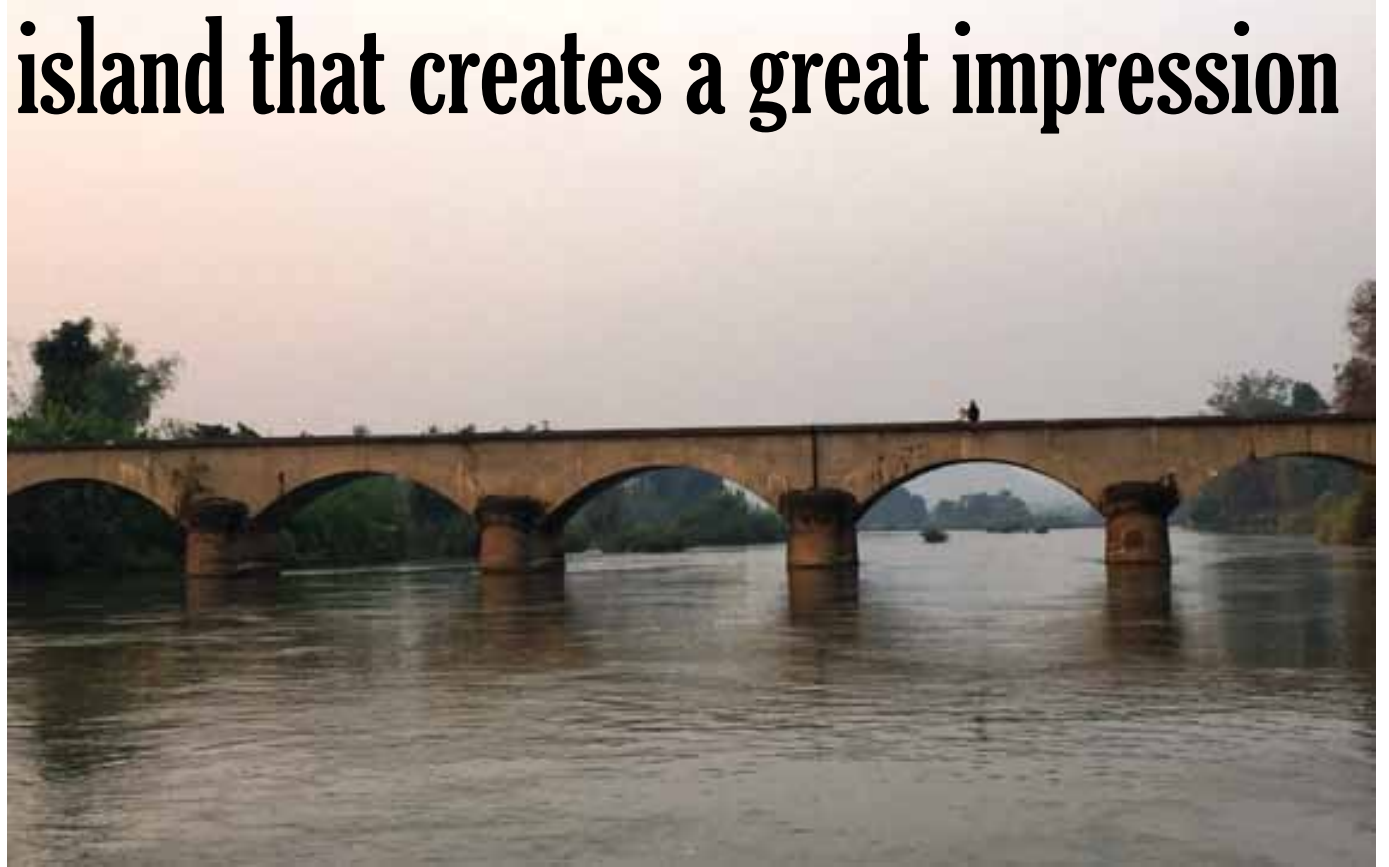
The bridge was built by

the French when they were exploring the area a hundred years ago trying to find a way to transport goods along the Mekong from Ho Chi Minh City in Vietnam up to China. But the waterfalls in the river made this difficult so they built a small railway and unloaded the ships below Don Khone, to take them up to Don Det. There they were reloaded again for further transport. But all this proved to be unprofitable and now all that remains of the scheme are two rusting locomotives and the bridge.

After you've been mesmerised by the sunrise, you can begin your cycle ride around the island because after 10am it will start to get hot. As you ride, you will be greeted by smiling locals and sometimes hear a 'hello' or 'sabaidee'.

In the afternoon it can get quite hot, but it's easy to find a good restaurant with shade and a lovely breeze somewhere near the river for a cool drink or a nap in a hammock.

There is a little beach where boats drop people off and it's possible to swim in the water in front of some of the guesthouses. There are



The disused railway bridge that links Don Det and Don Khone islands in Champassak province.

even little fish in the water that nibble off the dead skin on your feet if you can keep still for long enough.

There are many cheap guesthouses near the river where you can enjoy seeing the sunset in the evening or watching the boats passing by.



A view of the Mekong River from the bridge.



Sunset and sunrise over Don Det.

You may find that this is all you need to do to pass the day but you should not spend all your time in a hammock outside your bungalow. There are some other enjoyable things

to do such as exploring your surroundings, gazing at the sunset and observing the local people as they fish.

Another highlight is a boat ride on the Mekong to the marvellous Khonephapeng Waterfall. The boat trip goes from Don Det or Don Khone and takes just over an hour, passing many small islands. You will see trees that stand in the water, waterfowl, fishing boats, people on the riverbank, and children bathing. Then you are rewarded with the awe-inspiring view of the waterfall, which is considered to be the widest waterfall in the world.

You don't need to pay to cross the river from Don Det to Don Khone across the old

railway bridge any more, so you can go to Don Khone whenever you feel like it to see the old train and a small waterfall there. These days there are plenty of restaurants, so you can find lots of food including local and some Western dishes.

In the evening there are more boats on the river as the fishermen return to base and the boats come back from their visits to Khonephapeng waterfall.

But by about 7pm the island will be very quiet as there will be no boats running and all you can hear are the muted sounds of animals by the river, especially the chirruping frogs that will form the backdrop to your evening activities.



Visitors come to the bridge in the evening to take photos of the Mekong River and the sunset.

# SNV

SNV in Lao PDR is looking for an enthusiastic and qualified individual for the following positions:

## Management Assistant- part time position

The role: this is a support role for a very busy global function and requires a dynamic professional who is a self-starter with flexible attitude and who can work with little supervision. The position would well suit an experienced personal or executive assistant.

Key responsibilities: internal and external communication, diary management, coordination of meetings, international travel arrangements, Consular Liaison

### PROFILE

- Bachelor Degree
- Impeccable level of English written and spoken,
- Organisation, communication and coordination skills,
- Excellent interpersonal skills and cultural sensitivity,
- Experience working and liaising with the Government of Laos is an advantage
- Multiple task handling skills.

### DUTY STATION and TIME FRAME

This position will be based in Vientiane, flexible hours.  
Start date As soon as possible  
S/he will functionally report to Global Managing Director, SNV

### HOW TO APPLY?

Interested candidates should submit a letter of interest and CV to [vphonsavatdy@snvworld.org](mailto:vphonsavatdy@snvworld.org) before **11 March 2017**. Full job descriptions are available upon request.

Only shortlisted candidates will be contacted.