



THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE INTERPRETIVE DIMENSIONS OF THE VAT PHOU SITE AND CHAMPASAK LANDSCAPE, LAO PDR



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Prepared by:
Asian Center for Tourism Planning and
Poverty Reduction (ACTPPR)

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About the Center



*Asian Center for Tourism Planning and Poverty Reduction
(ACTPPR) Is a collaborative effort between*



*Faculty of Social Administration, Thammasat University
and*



University of Hawaii at Manoa

Contact: Asian Center for Tourism Planning and Poverty Reduction

Rm. 213, Fl. 2 Faculty of Social Administration, Thammasat University Rangsit Campus

Klong Luang, Pathum Thani 12121 Tel: (66 2) 696-5508 Fax: (66 2) 986-8322

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PART
1

BACKGROUND INFORMATION





1. INTRODUCTION

It is clear that the public understanding of the existence and significance of the archaeology of the Champasak area is crucial for the preservation of the site. Without the understanding and support of the local community, tourists and public officials, efforts to conserve the area will not be successful. At present most people are only aware of the Vat Phou temple complex and other standing ruins; they are largely unaware of the significance and extent of the below-ground archaeology and of the integrity and value of the cultural landscape. Thus, an effective interpretive plan and program for Vat Phou and Champasak cultural landscape is essential to raise public awareness of the entire area and its historical significance, as well as to provide visitors with a better understanding of its history significance and a full appreciation of its cultural importance and religious significance.

Currently there is no overall interpretive strategy in place for the Champasak cultural landscape. There is some directional signage and panels with limited information. Under the 'UNESCO-Laotian International Project', which is now in Phase 3 of the project, to provide technical assistance to the World Heritage Site 'Vat Phou and Associated Ancient Settlements with the Champasak Cultural Landscape' in Lao PDR in order to develop an interpretive plan. This plan has been developed with major stakeholders and within the overall strategic framework as stated in the Champasak Heritage Management Plan prepared by UNESCO in 1999.



2. SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS

Vat Phou and Champasak cultural landscape is located in Champasak district, Champasak province.



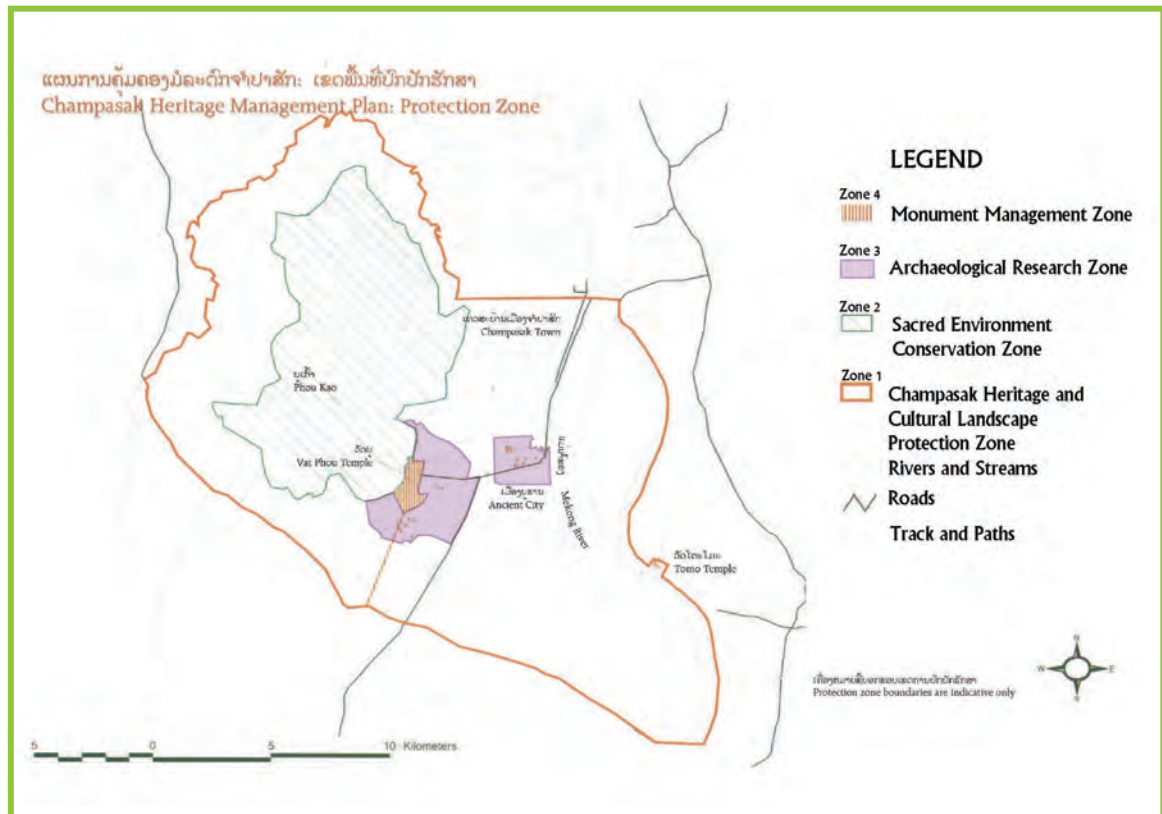
Source: Tourism Authority of Thailand

Figure 1: Map of Champasak Province

Since it was declared a World Heritage Site in 2001 tourism has increased significantly in Champasak district and province. Having an interpretation plan in place can help to raise the understanding of the importance of the cultural resources of the area and the economic opportunities that the conservation of these resources can bring to the sustainable development of Champasak.

The Champasak Heritage Management Plan defines that the World Heritage Site covers a wide area within the district which is categorized into 4 protection zones: Zone 1 Champasak Heritage and Cultural Landscape Protection Zone, Zone 2 Sacred Environment Conservation Zone, Zone 3 Archaeological Research Zone and Zone 4 Monument Management Zone as illustrated in Figure 2.





Source: UNESCO, 1999

Figure 2: Map of Protection Zones

Access

Visitors can travel to the Champasak district from Pakse by taking route number 13 (by local transportation, individual vehicles or tour bus) to Ban Muang (about 30-40 minutes) to the ferry across the Mekong River to Ban Phaphin in Champasak district. The ferry service is operated daily by local people. The cost depends on size of vehicles – pick-up truck 25,000 Kip (~ 3.10 USD), small buses 35,000 Kip (~ 4.40 USD) , 6-wheel vehicles 45,000 Kip (~ 5.60 USD). Presently large tour buses are unable to take the ferry and therefore visitors on tour buses take smaller vehicles crossing the Mekong River to Ban Phaphin which takes about 30 minutes.

The existing local 2-lane road is unpaved and is sufficient to accommodate the number of vehicles coming to Champasak district. The ferry can be seen as an unofficial control measure for the number and size of vehicles entering Champasak. However it is important to note that there is a plan to build a road directly from Pakse which will significantly increase access to the cultural landscape. There have been no definitive studies done to predict visitor numbers but it must be assumed that with the increased ease of access that visitor numbers could substantially increase thereby placing additional stress both on the community as well as the heritage resources. This road will also open up new opportunities for tourism development and entrepreneurship. It is strongly recommended that an overall tourism study be carried out to predict actual visitor numbers, their characteristics and their length of stay.



Champasak Town

Within Champasak town not far from the pier there is an area where the government is now building a sala, resting areas (Please see Figure 3) and local restaurants to serve tourists. There is also a design process underway to build a visitor center to provide necessary information about Champasak. It is anticipated that the center will be built in early 2005 using ADB funding.

The visitor center is designed to be the first place at which tourists would stop when they reach Champasak town. In collaboration with ADB, the visitor center interpretation concept has been developed and is discussed in this report.



Figure 3: Resting Areas

Tourism Facilities

Presently most visitors go directly to Vat Phou temple complex and do not enjoy the heritage and daily life of Champasak town. Few stay overnight and explore the area. Currently there are about 10 guesthouses and seven local restaurants in Champasak district. Most visitors who stay over night are westerners and usually spend 2-3 nights in the community. Tourist facilities (accommodation and services) are consequently limited. As yet there are no excessive pressures on the landscape except during the three-day Vat Phou Festival in February. To travel around Champasak visitors can rent bicycles for 10,000 Kip per day or motorcycles for 80,000-100,000 Kip (10-12.5 USD) per day.

The Local Community and Vat Phou Temple Complex

Even with the limited tourism activity, local people are beginning to realize an economic benefit from the tourism activity. Tourism activities at the Vat Phou temple complex help generate extra income to the local community where most elderly people sell flowers and incense for 5,000 Kip (0.60 USD) per set. The community decides among themselves for a group of 6 people to sell at the site for a week then for another group the following week. A small amount of the revenue from selling flowers and incense is given to a community fund for maintaining local temples in their community. No portion of the revenue is given to Vat Phou; however, these people contribute back to the site by cleaning up at the end of the day.



Photo 4: Local People selling Flowers and Incense

There is one local restaurant right at the Vat Phou temple complex. Vat Phou receives a monthly fee of 100,000 Kip (12.50 USD).



Photo 5: Restaurant at Vat Phou

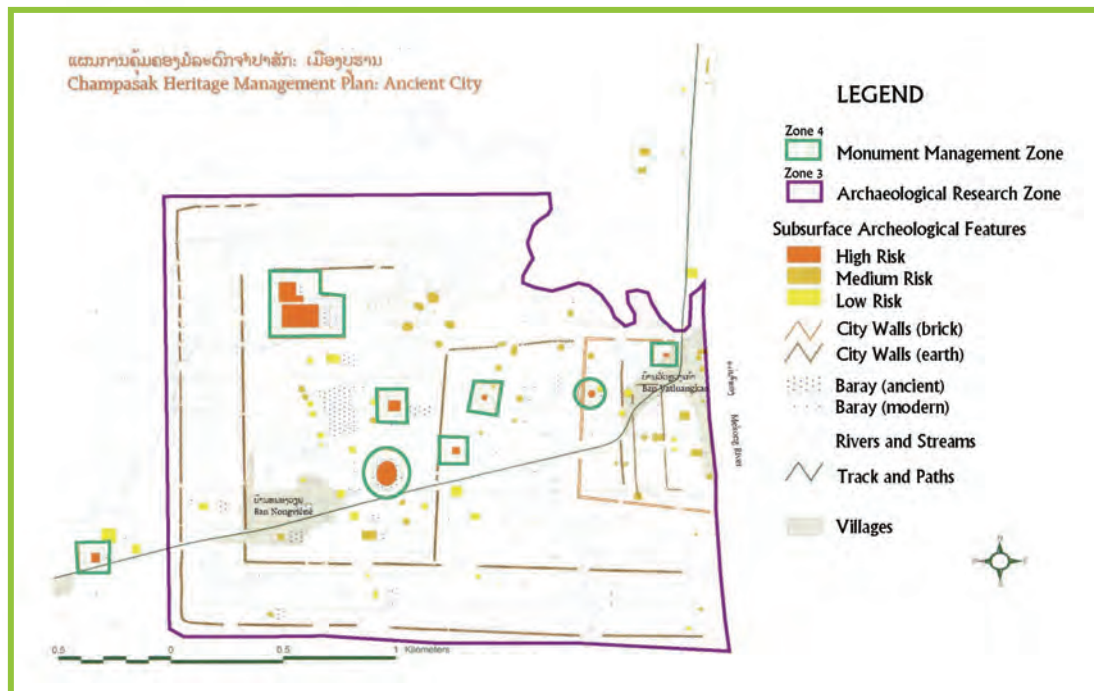


3. HERITAGE RESOURCES

The cultural landscape has a significant number of heritage resources and these are extensively discussed in the various planning and management documents prepared by UNESCO as well as the government. There is no intention here to repeat this information but a short summary of major components is included for purposes of ensuring completeness of the report.

Ancient City

Within the Champasak landscape the present road passes through the ancient city located 6.5 km. east of Vat Phou on the right bank of the Mekong River. The entire area is now mainly given to the cultivation of rice with small strips of secondary forest and bamboo bushes along the water courses. Most of the archaeological features are underground and are therefore inaccessible to the visitor. However there are remains on the surface which can be traced. Figure 6 illustrates the ancient city with identified archaeological features.



Source: UNESCO, 1999

Figure 6: Ancient City

Vat Phou Temple Complex

Vat Phou temple complex is the attraction that most visitors visit in Champasak district. Figure 7 illustrates the number of domestic and international visitors visiting Vat Phou during 1990-2004 (excluding those who come to the Vat Phou Festival in February). Presently the visitors to Vat Phou temple complex are 50% Laotian and 50% foreigners and they spend approximately 2 hours at the site then leave without spending much time or money in community. The low season which occurs during the rainy season from June-September presents a significant challenge from the point of view of tourism activity.



Foreign visitors are largely Thai and European. Thai people usually come on group tours while Europeans travel independently.

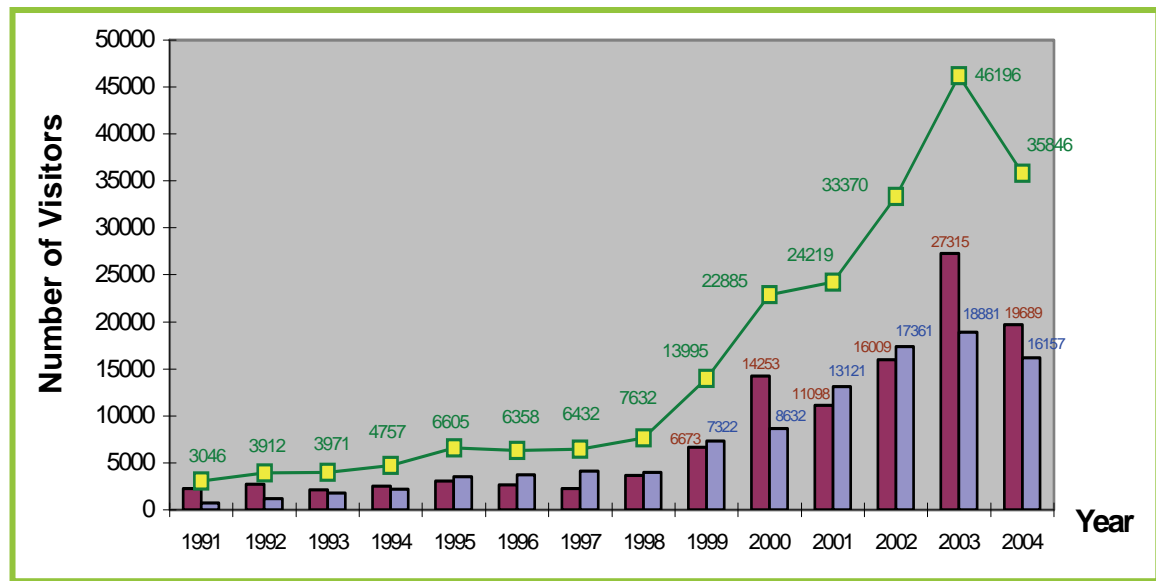


Figure 7: Number of Visitors to Vat Phou Temple Complex

In order to extend the length of stay of visitors and introduce them to other attractions within Champasak there will be a need for a comprehensive promotional program that takes into account carrying capacity realities and incorporates an effective interpretive program. The development of the promotional campaign is not part of the objectives of this report but the interpretive program is presented in later sections.

Currently the only direct revenue generated by the site is from entrance fees to the Vat Phou temple complex and exhibition hall – 30,000 Kip for foreigners and 3,000 Kip for Lao people. Fifty percent of the revenue goes to the central government and the other 50% is used for site management. The local government goal is to keep 90% for the site and 10% for the central government. Vat Phou also receives some donations from visitors which is used for site maintenance. There is a plan for the use of a Lao-style building located opposite the exhibition hall as a place for selling souvenirs and refreshments which would help generate extra income to the site.

In 2003, an exhibition hall, funded by JICA, was built at the main gate of the Vat Phou temple complex. The exhibition hall is used for displaying archaeological remains found within the World Heritage Site. Figure 8 and 9 illustrate the existing signage at the entry to Vat Phou temple and the exhibition hall.



Figure 8: Present Signage at the Main Gate



Figure 9: Vat Phou Exhibition Hall

Many visitors are not aware of the exhibition hall and proceed directly to the temple complex after paying the entrance fee at the ticket booth located at the main gate. In order to attract more visitors to the exhibition hall there is a need for effective signage at the ticket booth which would introduce and encourage people to visit both the exhibition hall and the temple complex.

Other Historic Standing Ruins – Tomo Temple, Nang Sida Temple, Thao Tao Temple

At present these sites are still unknown to most visitors and only a few visit the surrounding archaeological sites. In many cases this is fortunate since these sites are not yet prepared for visitation given the lack of management plans and strategies as well as site preparation work.

Tomo Temple

Visitors can get to Tomo Temple by taking a speed boat from Champasak district or by driving from Pakse. Taking a boat from Champasak to Tomo takes approximately 1 hour. There are many small brick temples that have collapsed inside the area. If Tomo temple were to be opened for visitation it needs to be cleaned up and the vegetation removed from the historic buildings and the surrounding area. As well a management and interpretation strategy must be prepared and put into place.

Nang Sida Temple

From the Vat Phou temple, visitors can drive to a certain point and then have to walk for about one 1 km. to Nang Sida temple. The area is surrounded by paddy fields and since there is no pathway visitors are forced to walk through the rice fields. Not surprisingly there are very few visitors to Nang Sida temple. The rear and top of the temple have collapsed but the foundations and side walls are in adequate condition. There is a need for stabilization, excavation and maintenance work to be carried out before the site is ready for any level of visitation. As with other cases a management and interpretation strategy must be prepared and put into place. Due to financial constraints there are no plans yet by the national or local governments for the heritage resource management of Nang Sida temple.

Thao Tao Temple

To visit Thao Tao temple visitors can drive to Ban Nongsano. From there they are required to walk half a kilometer to the Thao Tao temple. Parts of this site have collapsed and require restoration or stabilization work as well as a maintenance program before visitors should be allowed to use the site.

Local Guides

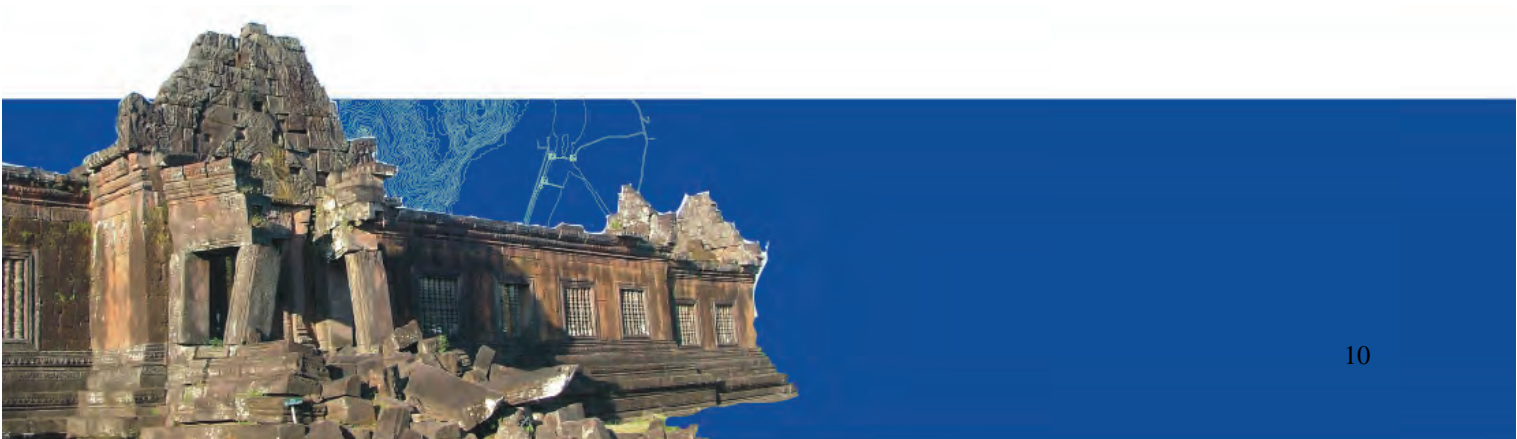
There are few local guides available and visitors on group tours usually bring their own guides. The Vat Phou Champasak Monument Office has trained 5 staff as guides mainly to serve Lao and Thai visitors. The fee for this service depends on the number of visitors in a group. There is still a need for well-trained English speaking local guides.

Carrying Capacity

Throughout the year carrying capacity is not seen as an issue for the Vat Phou temple complex except during the Vat Phou festival. The Vat Phou Festival takes place over three days in February and embodies the continued sacred and communal role of the site. During the three days of the festival, as many as 100,000 people visit the site with many staying only for the day and a smaller number staying overnight in the region. There are concerns over the safety of visitors as well as the safety of the monument itself which needs to be addressed. Problems occurring to the site during this festival are the increased amount of solid waste, vandalism and accidental damage to the site. An effective management strategy is required to deal with these problems. The interpretive plan can help raise awareness about the need to keep the site clean and to not damage this important heritage environment. As mentioned earlier carrying capacity will become ever more important as access to the site increases. It is highly recommended that a thorough carrying capacity study be carried out to ensure the protection of the site.

PART
2

INTERPRETIVE STRATEGY





4. INTERPRETATION OBJECTIVES AND THEMES

Based on the goals of various stakeholders the interpretative strategy for the heritage value of Vat Phou and Champasak cultural landscape should have the following objectives:

- Enhance the understanding of the integrated value of the Champasak cultural landscape.
- Promote cultural tourism experiences for the Laotian community.
- Inform and stimulate visitors regarding the landscape's heritage values.
- Use the tourist activity to raise funds for conservation activities.
- Provide income enhancement opportunities for the local community through the creation of a series of locally owned micro tourism enterprises.

Understanding Present and Potential Visitors

In order to interpret the Champasak historic and cultural landscape it is important to understand who those visitors are and most importantly will be. Currently there is no data on the type of visitors at Vat Phou temple complex. Officials categorize the existing groups of visitors at Vat Phou in the following manner:

- Local day visitors from within Champasak province and from other provinces. Most of these visitors engage in a range of activities including walking, picnicking, paying respect to the Buddha as well as participating in educational tours.
- International visitors
 - Individuals
 - Group tours
- School groups within Champasak province and from other provinces

The interpretation plan provided below has been prepared using this data as well as the consultants' awareness and understanding of visitors at similar historic sites. There is no doubt that a comprehensive visitor profile must be prepared in order to guide future activities in the region both to ensure a sound management policy as well as to create a promotional approach that is conducive to the nature of the visitor that the site wishes to attract.

Developing Interpretive Dimensions

In order to develop interpretive dimensions that are appropriate to Vat Phou Champasak World Heritage Site, the study team has consulted with major stakeholders including the Tourism Authority of Lao PDR, Ministry of Culture and Information, Provincial Government, Vat Phou and Champasak Monument Office and UNESCO. Given that the interpretation program is concerned with introducing visitors to the entire area of the World Heritage Site, not just the Vat Phou temple complex, the following six subject areas have been developed to structure the interpretive information.

Subject Area 1: Understand the Champasak Cultural Landscape

This subject area will provide an overview of the Champasak area and introduce the visitor to the dimension of the entire Champasak landscape with a focus on not only the Vat Phou temple complex but on the entire landscape. It is concerned with introducing the natural topographic elements of Phou Kao Mountain and the Mekong River which are the basic



building blocks around which the Khmer expressed, in physical terms, their spiritual understanding of the world. Information to be considered under this area will cover:

- Phou Kao, Phou Luang and Phou Pasak
- Vat Phou Temple Complex
- Other historic sites –Nang Sida temple, Thao Tao temple, Tomo temple
- Champasak Town
- The Ancient City
- Mekong River
- Don Deng Island

Subject Area 2: The Vat Phou Temple Complex Built Heritage

This subject area will focus on the built heritage of Vat Phou temple complex. Apart from the historical significance, there will be a consideration of Vat Phou as a part of the Angkor Empire and its linkages via the ancient road. The following information will be included in this area.

- Historical and architectural significance of the archaeological buildings in the Vat Phou temple complex
- The relationship of Vat Phou to Angkor Wat via the ancient Khmer road
- Ancient life and festivals

Subject Area 3: Built Heritage in the Ancient City

Given its historical significance and high level of authenticity, it is important to stress that the ancient city is a unique example of the development of urban settlement in the region. This subject area will focus on what it was in the past – how the Khmer people planned, engineered and utilized the landscape according to their symbolic beliefs and also to provide the agricultural surplus necessary to support the urban population, religious institutions and royal elites. Since most archaeological features in the ancient city have not been excavated, interpretation describing the archaeological features is essential for the visitor to understand the full significance of this dimension of the overall cultural landscape. The following information will be included in this area:

- History and characteristics of the ancient city
- A development and explanation of the historic remains in the ancient city
- Legends and stories

Subject Area 4: Natural Heritage of the Cultural Landscape

Subject area 4 seeks to provide information on the natural beauty and the significance of the Zone 2 – Sacred Environmental Conservation Zone. There will be a focus on a natural linga at the Phou Kao Mountain peak – the principal embodiment and symbol of the natural sanctity of the site and the source of inspiration for Vat Phou and the ancient use of the landscape. The boundary of zone 2 covers Phou Kao, Phou Pasak and Phou Louang mountains.

Information to be presented under this subject area includes the following:

- Natural linga and its significance
- Importance of ecological systems
- Bio diversity
- The change of flora and fauna of the area over time from natural causes and human intervention.



Subject Area 5: The Living Cultural Landscape

This subject area will stress the living cultural landscape of the World Heritage Site which includes local customs, traditional ways of life, festivals and tourism attractions and facilities around Champasak. Exploring this issue would allow visitors to better understand that living culture, the landscape of agriculture and settlement around the site, land use patterns and agricultural engineering techniques. The following information will be included in this area.

- Traditional knowledge and customs
- Local community and authentic daily life
- Present day facilities

Subject Area 6: Conservation and Management Plans and Policies

It is important to provide information on the conservation and management plan for Vat Phou World Heritage Site that was developed by UNESCO in 1999 and what are the plans for its implementation. This should include the process and plans supported by aid agencies and how tourism can be managed to support economic development and the conservation of the site. The following information will be included in this area.

- UNESCO management plan and protection zones
- Excavation activities at Vat Phou and the involvement of aid agencies and the local community
- Managing tourism activities within the landscape
- Managing the environmental conservation zone.





5. INTERPRETIVE METHODS AND MEDIA

A number of different ways to present the site were considered by the consulting team. Selecting the appropriate methods and media was a result of considering the interpretive objectives, site characteristics, audience, themes, budget realities and staffing levels.

The following interpretive media have been developed.

- Visitor brochure
- A visitor center
- An interpretive video
- An interpretive model
- A heritage trail
- A web site

Each of these is discussed separately in the following pages.



6. BROCHURE

A brochure is the easiest and least expensive way to provide basic visitor information to tourists. The brochure has been designed to provide basic information on what the tourists can do in the area as well as to provide a very brief introduction to the historical and archaeological elements of the cultural landscape. The brochure should not be confused with a booklet that would provide detailed archaeological and historical information.

The brochure would be funded by ADB in order that it can be provided free of charge. The brochure will be an essential element in helping to create economic development opportunities for the community and to orient the visitor to the various opportunities that the cultural landscape presents. The brochure has been designed in such a way that it can be sent to tour operators and individual tourists in order to provide them with an indication of the richness of the area and the activities that can be pursued. It will also be useful to tourists as they navigate their way through the cultural landscape.

Figure 10 illustrates the design of the brochure.



Figure 10: Brochure Design





7. VISITOR CENTER

The visitor center has been designed in large part by ADB with input from the consultant team. It will provide the tourists with an overall sense of the cultural landscape as well as the opportunities that it provides for various visitor experiences.

Please refer to Figure 11 and Figure 12 for an illustration of the exterior of the building and an overall floor plan. More images of the visitor center can be found in Annex A.



Figure 11: Exterior of the Building



Figure 12: An Overall Floor Plan

It is recommended that the visitor center be staffed by knowledgeable individuals who can provide both information on the historical and archaeological significance of the landscape as well as information on basic tourism facilities. The center would also be a place where guides are available to provide visitors with an in-depth introduction to the cultural



landscape. This would also be a place where local entrepreneurs could provide bicycle rentals or other forms of transportation especially for the independent visitor.

The architectural model as well as the video will be presented in the visitor center. Within the center there will be 13 panels covering the following areas:

Panel Number	Panel Description
#1	Welcome (big panel)
	▪ Aerial photo of Champasak
#2	Introduction to Champasak
	▪ Map of Protection Zones
#3-4	Champasak Cultural Landscape
	▪ History and Significance of Vat Phou Champasak World Heritage
#5	Heritage Trail in Champasak (big panel)
	▪ Map illustrated heritage trail
	▪ Attractions
#6	Vat Phou Temple Complex Built Heritage (big panel)
	▪ Historic and Architectural Significance of Vat Phou
	▪ Ancient Road connecting Vat Phou to Angkor Wat in Cambodia
	▪ Ancient Life and Festivals
#7	Champasak town
	▪ Map of Champasak town
	▪ Accommodation
	▪ Transportation
#8-9	Built Heritage of the Ancient City
	▪ History
	▪ Historic Remains
	▪ Legends and Stories
#10	Natural Heritage of Champasak
	▪ Ecological Systems and Bio Diversity
	▪ Natural Linga and its Significance
#11	Living Cultural Landscape
	▪ Living Heritage
	▪ Daily Life in Champasak (farming, fishing, religious customs)
#12	Do and Don't Guidelines
#13	Vat Phou Conservation and Management Plans and Policies
	▪ UNESCO Champasak Management Plan
	▪ Excavation Activities in Vat Phou
	▪ Control Guidelines



Each panel will contain information in both Lao as well as English. It is understood that the national and local historical and archaeological experts will create the text first in Lao. This text will then be translated into English. Please refer to the Annex B for an illustration of panels and their proposed locations within the landscape.

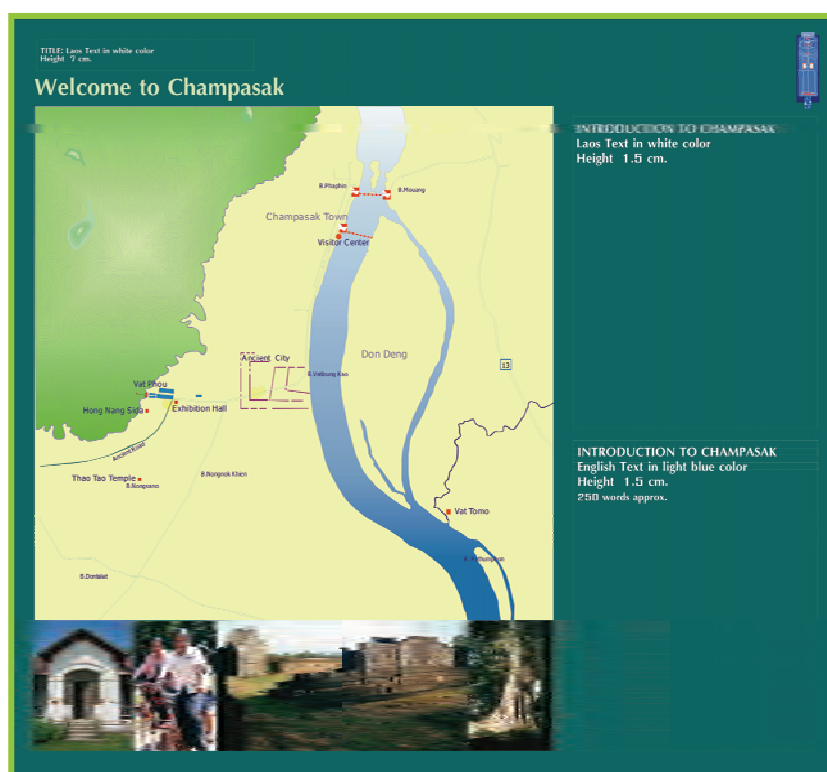


Figure 13: Design of the Larger Panel (1.85mx1.70m)

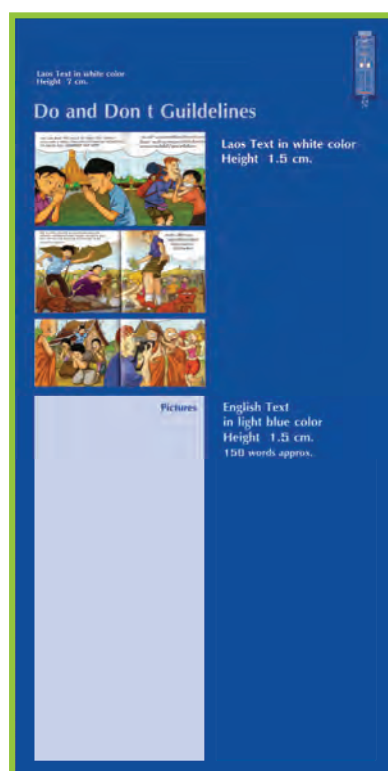


Figure 14: Design of the Smaller Panel (0.85mX1.70m)

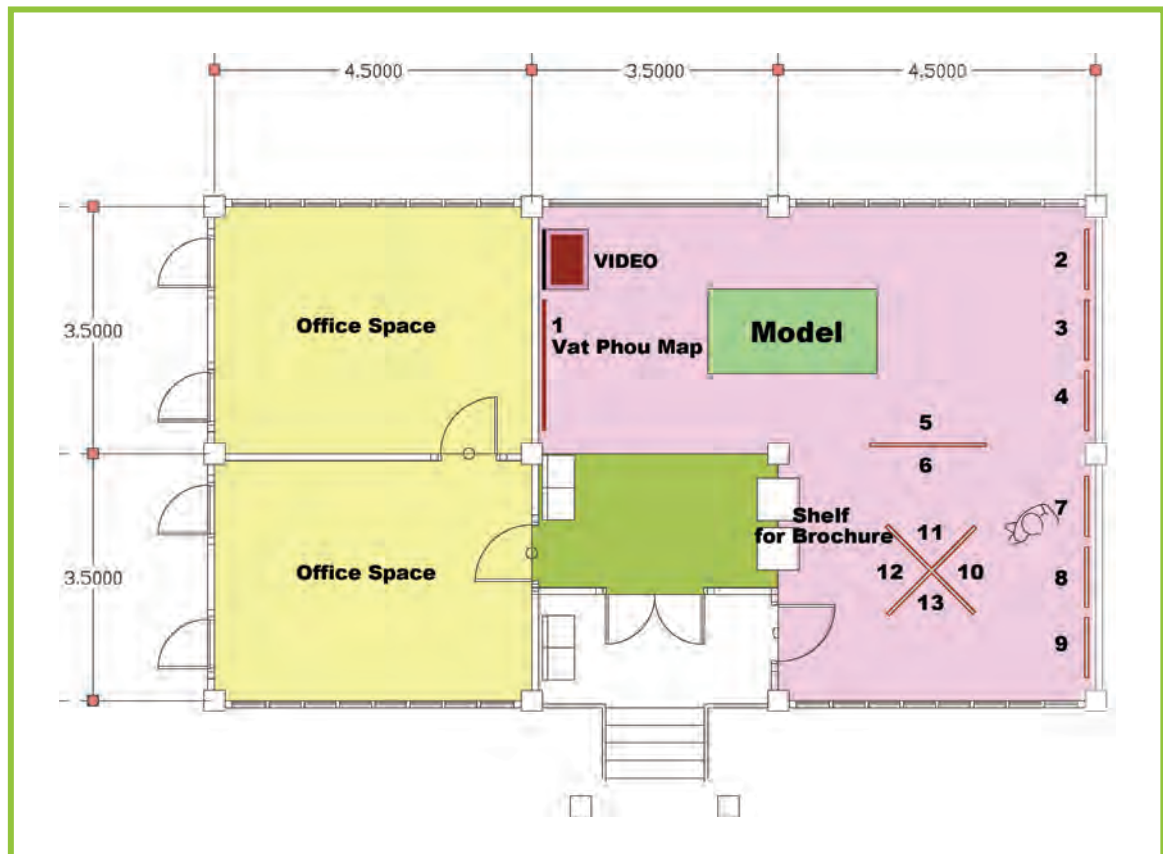


Figure 15: Proposed Locations of the Panels





8. INTERPRETIVE VIDEO

Experience has demonstrated that in many instances there is a need for the visitor, especially those accustomed to a visual means of communication, to be introduced to the significance of a site using audio visual techniques. It has been decided that an interpretive video that would provide the visitor with an overall sense of the cultural landscape using a digital flyover technique as well as use of a 3-D model for Vat Phou temple would provide for a high level of understanding of both the overall landscape as well as the temple. This interpretive video will be presented at the visitor center, exhibition hall, website, Champasak district office, museum and the offices of National Tourism Authority of Lao PDR and etc.

The text for the video is included in Annex C.



9. INTERPRETIVE MODEL

Given the complexity of the landscape and the need to understand the relationships of its various elements a physical architectural model has been developed. The model will be located in the visitor center. It will serve as a useful reference point for visitors and will provide interpreters at the visitor center with an excellent tool for describing the overall landscape and individual elements within it.

Please refer to Figure 16 which provides a view of the model. Annex D contains several images of the model.



Figure 16: Architectural Model



10. HERITAGE TRAIL

The development of a heritage trail that introduces the visitor to the entire cultural landscape was seen as an ideal way of guiding the visitor throughout the landscape in an organized manner. The design of the trail is centered on three distinct nodes and uses a hierarchy of signs to provide the visitor with varying levels of information and orientation. Within the nodes the trail is designed to be experienced on foot. Given distances there is a need to use some form of vehicle to move from node to node.

The Location of the Trail and Phasing

While an extensive trail system is envisaged a two-stage phasing process is recommended. This is based on the fact that the sites in the second phase do not have management or interpretation plans. In addition, the sites themselves require careful stabilization, rehabilitation and site preparation work carried out before visitors can be accommodated. This is both for the safety of visitors as well as the protection of the resources themselves.

The two recommended phases are:

- Phase 1: Champasak town – Ancient City – Vat Phou Temple Complex
- Phase 2: Other historic standing ruins (Hong Nang Sida – Thao Tao Temple) – Tomo Temple & Don Dang Island. It should be noted that individual sites could be added as they are prepared for visitation.

Phase 1

Champasak Town/Ancient City/Vat Phou Temple Complex (Figure 17)



Figure 17: Proposed Heritage Trail – Phase 1



Champasak Town

Once visitors arrive in the Champasak district there are several attractions which would be of interest including the following:

- The visitor center which has been designed and construction is expected to finish in September 2005.
- A resting area which is currently under construction.
- Vat Thong (Thong temple) and other temples in town.
- French colonial mansions and Chinese style shop houses.
- The tranquil and traditional character of the town.

Required actions:

- There is a need for special education and interpretation staff at the visitor center to operate the center and to maintain and renew displays on a regular basis.
- A management plan (operational and financial aspects) for the visitor center must be developed.
- Interpretation panels and signage providing information on local temples and buildings must be put in place.
- The development and implementation of conservation programs for local temples should be developed.
- A plan for the incentives that can be put in place to protect and conserve private traditional, French or Chinese-style houses and buildings must be determined. Without proper control and incentives there is a possibility that these buildings will disappear over a period of time or be changed to modern concrete buildings in the future and that the unique characteristics and authenticity of the town will be lost.

Ancient City

After obtaining information from the visitor center on the entire area and enjoying the traditional life along the way of Champasak town, the ancient city would be the second stop for the visitor. Since most of the archaeological remains are buried, interpretation is required in the proposed locations including:

- Luang Kao temple
- Christ Church
- Phra Non temple
- City Wall (brick)
- Nong Saphang noi and Nong Saphang yai
- Nong Duen



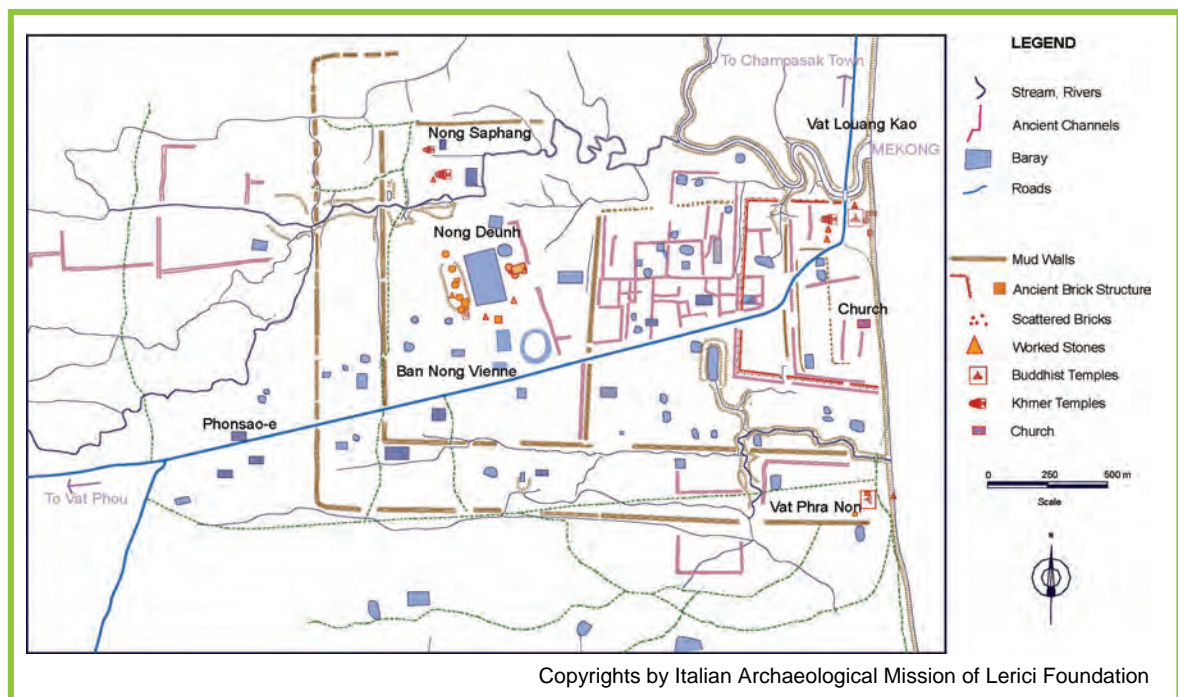


Figure 18: Possible Six Spots in the Ancient City

Required actions:

Since historic remains in the ancient city are underground there is a need for effective interpretation within the site. The following actions are required:

- Provide interpretive panels/signage with the use of maps, drawing or images illustrating the original form of the monuments.
- The need to control visitor access within the ancient city.
- Consult with archaeologists when placing signage in order not to damage underground archaeological remains.
- Need for a security and monitoring system for the ancient city.

Vat Phou Temple Complex

From the ancient city visitors will travel to the Vat Phou temple complex and exhibition hall. Visitors should first visit the exhibition hall to obtain more detailed information on the Vat Phou temple, heritage management plans and visitor guidelines when visiting the temple. Presently there is a small section at the exhibition hall devoted to providing information on the Vat Phou temple complex, other nearby historic sites and cultural landscapes. It is recommended that this exhibition be redesigned to help support the theme on 'Built Heritage in Vat Phou Temple Complex' identified earlier in this plan and have the same/similar design format to the rest of the Champasak area. Information to be presented at the exhibition hall should include:

- Map of overall Champasak cultural landscape and layout of Vat Phou temple complex.
- Description of each site in terms of historical significance, stories or legends and present condition with images or drawings.
- Things that visitors should/should not do when they visit the temple.



The Vat Phou temple comprises several elements which do not have any signs to inform visitors of the names of those buildings in the temple complex. Given that the main goal of the interpretation program is to ensure that people leave the site with a better understanding about Vat Phou and the associated historical settlements, the provision of signage together with a brief description of the site is essential.

Required actions:

- At Vat Phou temple there is a need for a panel at the main temple and small signs for historic buildings. Warning signs (e.g. for unstable buildings or sensitive part of the site) should also be provided.
- During the Vat Phou festival there should be signage providing information in terms of regulations such as the prohibition of overnight camping on the site.
- Regular housekeeping e.g. clearing litter, maintaining vegetation, minor repairs to signs and buildings etc must be implemented.
- Regular monitoring to ensure that the site is safe and has not been damaged.
- The implementation of recommended conservation measures stated in the Champasak Heritage Management Plan.

Phase 2

Champasak town/Ancient City/Vat Phou Temple Complex with the addition of other historic standing ruins (Nang Sida Temple – Thao Tao Temple) – Tomo Temple & Don Deng Island (Figure 19).

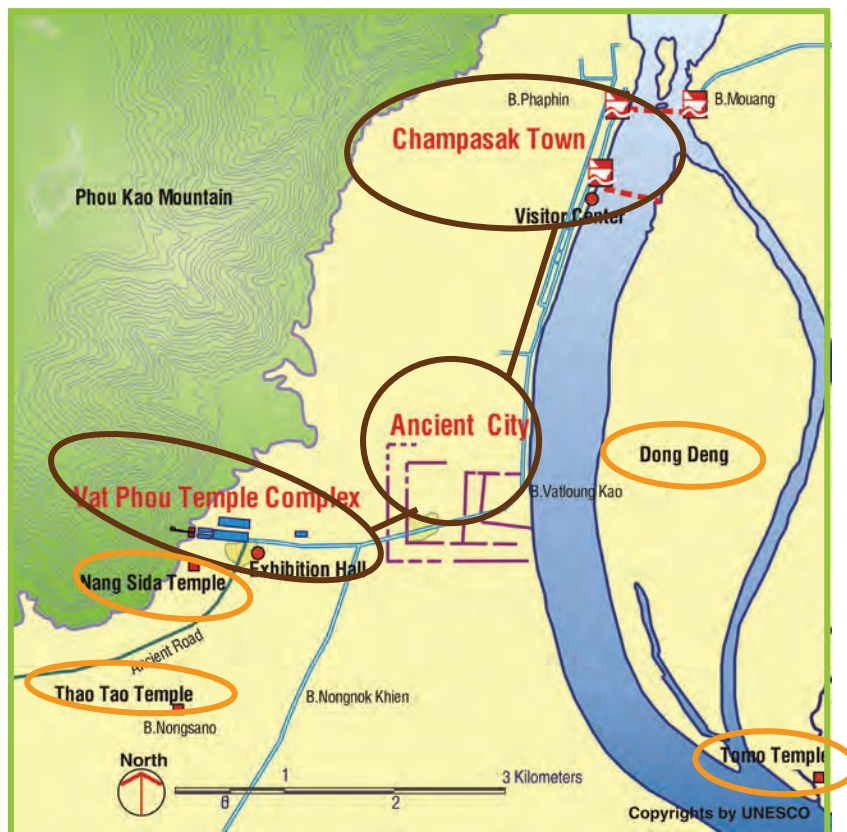


Figure 19: Proposed Heritage Trail – Phase 2



In this phase the sites to be included in the trail are Nang Sida Temple, Thao Tao Temple, Tomo Temple and Don Deng Island.

Nang Sida and Thao Tao Temple

Given the present stage of Nang Sida and Thao Tao Temple, a program of major work is required. Visitor access to these two temples can be managed from Vat Phou, either by local guides or self-guiding leaflets.

Required actions:

The following actions are required before introducing these two sites for tourism.

- Restoration of the sites and provision of safe access to the temples.
- Clearing the vegetation from the buildings and from the site in general.
- Provision of on-site interpretation.
- Provision of visitor safety measures such as barriers, paths and fences.
- Regular monitoring.
- Implementation of the recommended conservation measures stated in the Champasak Heritage Management Plan.

Tomo Temple

From Champasak town visitors can take a boat across the Mekong River to visit Tomo Temple. Compared to Nang Sida and Thao Tao Temple, Tomo is in better condition but still requires some cleaning up of the site, removal of vegetation and restoration works.

Required actions:

- Provision of interpretive signage at the site for the following:
 - Description of historical significance, stories or legends, images and drawings.
 - Signage advising visitors what to do/not do when they visit the temple.
 - Warning signs (e.g. for unstable buildings or sensitive parts of the site) should also be provided.
- Provision of information on the pier where visitors can take a boat to Tomo and Don Deng which includes working hours, fees and the amount of time required to across the river.
- Regularly monitoring of the site.

Don Deng Island

Don Deng has never been exposed to tourism before. To include Don Deng in the trail there will be a need for careful planning on the island and the development of community readiness for tourism. ADB is now working on a community-based tourism project in Don Deng. When this project is completed Don Deng will be prepared for visitors.

Required actions:

Once the plan is in place and the community is ready for tourism the following actions should be implemented.

- Provision of interpretation at Don Deng on what visitors can do and see on the island.
- Provision of information on Don Deng using appreciated interpretive media.



Signage

Interpretive and directional signage has been designed to complement the landscape. The text will be in both Lao and English and will be developed by experts from the national and local governments and the consultant team. Interpretive signs will contain maps, photographs and illustrations as well as text. Specifications for both directional and interpretive signage can be found in Annex E.

There are four types of signage proposed.

- Type 1

Type 1 signage is proposed to be located at the four main areas including:

- Pier at Ban Phaphin – the information to be presented would be a map illustrating the entire area of Champasak district, major tourist attractions and facilities.
- Champasak Town – the information to be presented would be the map of Champasak town indicating specific attractions and facilities within the town.
- Ancient city – the information to be presented would be the map of the ancient city indicating resources, brief information on the city's significance and how visitors should behave at the site.
- Vat Phou Temple Complex – the information to be presented would be a map of the temple complex indicating various elements within the complex, information on the site's significance and how visitors should behave at the site. Given the site is located in a mountainous area, information about unsafe parts of the site, should be provided.

Figure 20 illustrates the proposed design for type 1 signage.

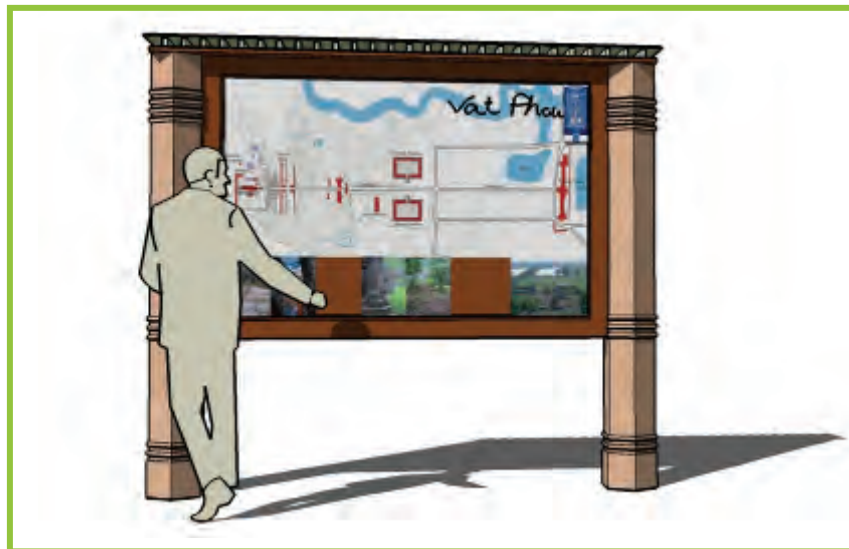


Figure 20: Proposed Design for Type 1 Signage

- Type 2

Type 2 signage is designed to be used for presenting specific information at smaller sites such as local temples in Champasak town, locations in the ancient city (e.g. Vat Luang Kao, Christ church and Phra Non temple) and other historic elements such as Nang Sida Temple, Thao Tao Temple and Tomo Temple. Figure 21 illustrates the proposed design for type 2 signage.





Figure 21: Proposed Design for Type 2 Signage

- **Type 3**
Type 3 signage is to be used for elements within the temple complex (e.g. palaces, ceremonial road, baray, main shrine, Champa flowers, etc.) and the ancient city (e.g. Nong Duen and Nong Saphang). The signs are designed to be unobtrusive and yet provide basic information. They will be located in such a way so as not to detract from the experience of appreciating the archaeological remains. The design of the signs and an illustration of how they will be located on the site can be found in Figure 22.

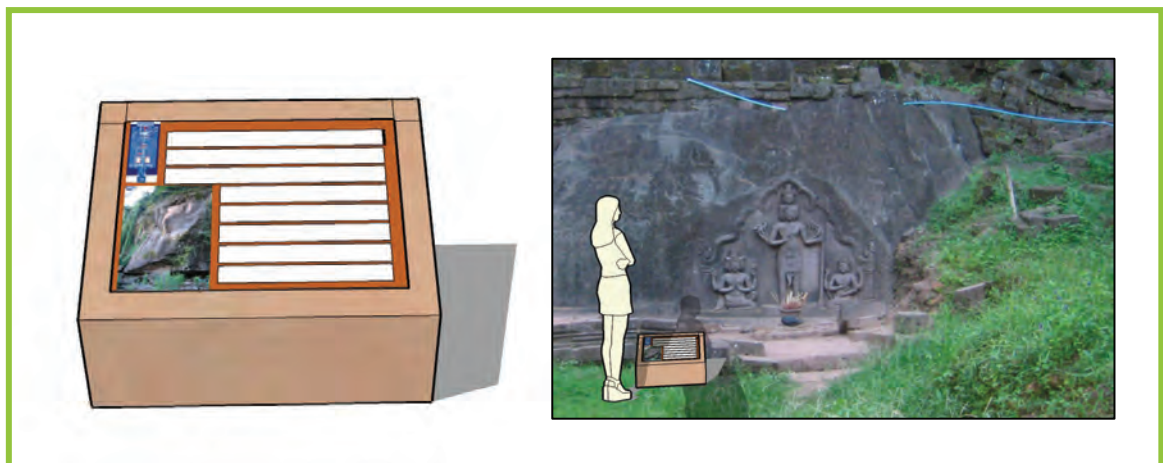


Figure 22: Proposed Design for Type 3 Signage

- **Type 4**
Directional signage is proposed to be located at the following locations.
 - Pier at Ban Phaphin
 - Champasak town
 - Ancient city at Ban Vat Luang Kao
 - Vat Phou temple complex

Figure 23 illustrates the proposed design for directional signage.



Figure 23: Directional Signage



11. WEB SITE

A final element in the present interpretive strategy is a web site. The web site has two objectives. The first is to provide potential visitors and tour operators with a good understanding of the Champasak cultural landscape and its tourism potential. This is done through a series of pages designed to introduce various elements of the site. The second purpose of the web site is to describe the management plan and the interpretive strategy being used. This is done for purposes of allowing site managers at other sites to be introduced to the approach being used at Vat Phou.

The website can be accessed at www.unescobkk.org. The design of the web page can be seen in Figure 24.

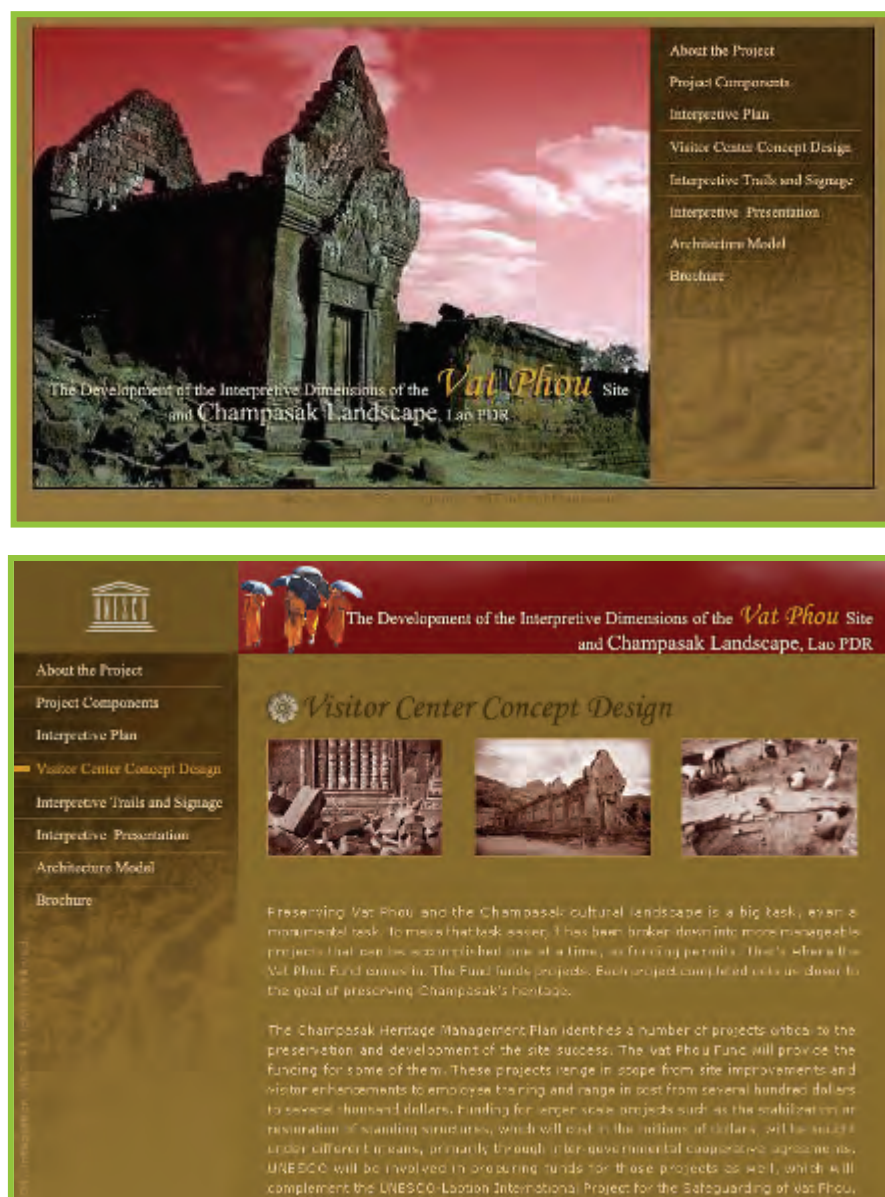


Figure 24: Design for the Web Page





12. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

It is important to evaluate the success of interpretive programs regularly in order to determine if the objectives are being met, determine what elements of the program visitors enjoy, whether people have a better understanding of the site and how effective the visitor center is. In addition, this information will be vital for developing marketing and promotion campaigns for the cultural landscape. The results of this monitoring will be used to adjust the interpretive plan, themes, objectives and programs.

The first step in a monitoring process is to identify what needs to be monitored e.g. themes, visitor center, heritage trail, interpretive panels, signage, brochure, video and website and then to develop indicators. The following are some of the indicators that could be used to assess the effectiveness of the interpretive program.

Visitors

Information on visitors can help shape the direction of the interpretive plan. The following information is needed:

- Number of visitors.
- Type of visitors (family, school children, old people, young people, age, sex).
- Countries visitors are from.
- Attractions that tourists visit within Champasak.
- Length of stay at:
 - Visitor center and Champasak town
 - Vat Phou temple complex and exhibition hall
 - Other historic sites
- Reasons for visiting a particular attraction.
- Visitor satisfaction to the overall interpretation of Vat Phou and Champasak landscape.
- Spending behavior of visitors.

Interpretive objectives and topics

- Visitors' opinion on the main interpretive topics.
- Appropriateness of information presented.
- Amount of time people spend reading the panels at the visitor center.
- Level of understanding of visitors on the Vat Phou World Heritage Site.

Off site interpretation

- Attractiveness of the displays in general.
- The type of information provided (whether it is sufficient and any other information that should be included).
- Effectiveness of interpretive media.
 - Level of satisfaction
 - Usefulness of information provided
 - Accuracy of information
 - Language (whether it is easily understood)
 - Design (size, font, color, pattern, images)
 - Durability of panels and signage
 - Length of interpretive video CD (whether it is too long or short)



On site interpretation

- Impacts of the location of panels and signage.
- Number of panels and signage around the site.
- Type of information provided.
- Effectiveness of interpretive media.
 - Level of satisfaction
 - Usefulness of information provided
 - Accuracy of information
 - Language (whether it is easily to understand)
 - Design (size, font, color, pattern, images)
 - Durability of panels and signage
- Number of local trained guides providing services at the site.

The following techniques can be used to collect the information identified above to assess the interpretive plan.

- Observation
This involves observing visitor behavior to determine how long people spend at the visitor center and exhibition hall, amount of time they spend at Vat Phou temple and other places and where they go within the Vat Phou temple complex.
- Questionnaires
This would involve both qualitative and quantitative information. Questionnaires can be conducted by an interviewer or can be filled in by the visitor. They can contain closed questions that can be coded and treated statistically (i.e. rating 1-5 or very poor – excellent) or open questions that provide insights into opinions, feelings and perceptions.
- Focus group interview and discussion
This would involve gathering information through semi-structured in-depth interviews with a group of people i.e. school children, elderly visitors, domestic visitors, foreigners. The cooperation of hotels, local tour guides, tour operators and ferry operators will be solicited by requesting them to ask their tourists what they learned and felt after visiting Vat Phou and Champasak cultural landscape and what kind of experiences their visitors are having.
- Critical appraisal
There is a need to obtain expert opinion about the existing interpretation from interpretive professionals.

The number of people to be interviewed/observed for the monitoring program and the selection of methods will depend on the time and money available as well as accuracy desired. Once information has been collected, the next step is to analyze and to generate the monitoring results and provide feedback that will be used as a basis to revise the interpretive plan for Vat Phou and Champasak cultural landscape.





13. IMPLEMENTATION AND OPERATIONS

It is recognized that the success of implementing the interpretive dimensions described earlier will involve the cooperation of a number of stakeholders. In order to ensure that the various stakeholders are aware of their responsibilities please refer to the following table.

Actions	Responsible Stakeholder
Heritage Trail	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement heritage trail 	UNESCO ADB National and local government bodies
Visitor Center	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Construct visitor center 	ADB
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop text, produce and install panel displays 	ADB and consultant National and local government bodies Vat Phou Champasak Monument Office
On Site Interpretation	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prepare information for panels and signage 	National and local government bodies Vat Phou Champasak Monument Office
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Design and fabricate interpretive signage 	ADB and consultant
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Choose locations for panel/signage installation in consultation with archaeologist to ensure underground archaeological remains are not damaged 	Vat Phou Champasak Monument Office Archaeologist UNESCO Consultant
Monitoring	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collect information and analyze monitoring results 	National and local government bodies Vat Phou Champasak Monument Office





14. RECOMMENDATIONS

Throughout the report there have been a number of recommendations. This project has had a limited mandate to develop a plan and media for the cultural landscape. It is obvious that there are a number of other elements that must be dealt with in order to ensure an integrative and comprehensive approach to the management of this important cultural landscape.

Economic Development Plan

Without a well thought out economic development plan that seeks to both provide additional resources for heritage conservation as well as increasing the well-being of the community the full potential of the site and the investments by various stakeholders will not be achieved.

Tourism Management Plan

There is no doubt that without careful management the number of visitors, especially after the construction of the road connecting Pakse directly to Champasak, it could have serious negative impacts both on the heritage resources as well as the community. Therefore a major recommendation is that a full tourism management plan be developed that seeks to understand the carrying capacity of the landscape itself and its important elements. These capacity figures will then be used to determine overall management approaches as well as those for specific sites. The carrying capacity figures also will very much determine the nature and scale of the promotion campaigns that will be instituted. It is obvious that this is a fragile environment and every precaution must be taken to ensure that promotional campaigns do not attract more tourists than can be accommodated. It is also equally important that tourism campaigns be put into place to attract visitors in the off-season in order to ensure an ongoing level of income for the local residents.

Development of a Site Management and Conservation Strategy

While the overall management plan developed by UNESCO and the national government is extensive in terms of its recommendations regarding the management of this important world heritage and landscape, specific actions to support the interpretive plan developed above include:

- Develop and implement a conservation program for local temples in Champasak town.
- Determine incentives for conserving private traditional Lao, French and Chinese buildings.
- Develop mechanisms for controlling visitor access within the ancient city.
- Develop strict control measures to be implemented during Vat Phou festival
- Restore historic standing ruins before introducing to visitors to Nang Sida and Thao Tao temple.
- Conduct regular house keeping for all historic sites.
- Regularly monitor the sites to ensure that they are safe and that all precautions are being taken to ensure the protection of the heritage resources.



Development of Other Interpretive Media

The interpretive media that have been proposed are seen as the most essential in telling the story of the site. As visitor numbers grow and resources are developed it is recommended that the following initiatives be undertaken to provide a fuller interpretive experience.

- *Audio Interpretation*

Given the present level of language skills of the local population and guides one effective media would be the development of a series of audio cassettes that use a narrative approach to tell a story. It is recognized that it is relatively expensive and there will be a need for an investment possibly by the private sector.

- *A Comprehensive Booklet on the History and Significance of the Landscape*

It is recommended that a booklet providing visitors with comprehensive information on Vat Phou and Champasak cultural landscape, the Champasak Heritage Management Plan, etc. be produced for both the local population and tourists in order to enhance awareness of the project and the significance of the heritage landscape.

- *Guides*

One important method of developing visitors' understanding of the cultural landscape and its present-day use is for local guides to take visitors around the site. This will involve the local communities in interpretation through direct contact with visitors. Local interpreters can provide information on the site and on local uses and traditions which tour agency guides cannot. A guide certification program can ensure that guides are presenting the most interesting and accurate information to visitors and that they are trained in interpretation and how best to engage the people on their tours.

Capacity Building

It is recommended that a capacity building program be implemented to provide the following opportunities for local people as well as officials:

- Training for local people as guides.
- Provide training for local officials on:
 - Interpretation
 - Visitor management
 - Heritage site management
 - Carrying capacity
 - Monitoring



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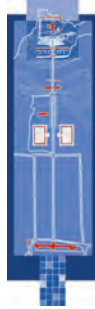
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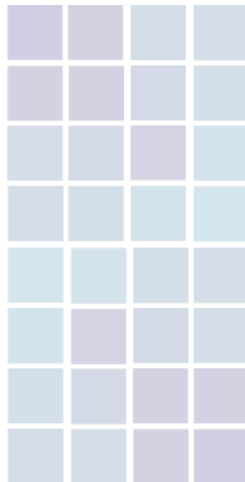
Jamieson, Walter. “Interpretation and Tourism”, Community Tourism Destination Management: Principles and Practices, Walter Jamieson (ed.), Canadian Universities Consortium Urban Environmental Management Project, Bangkok. 2001.





ANNEX

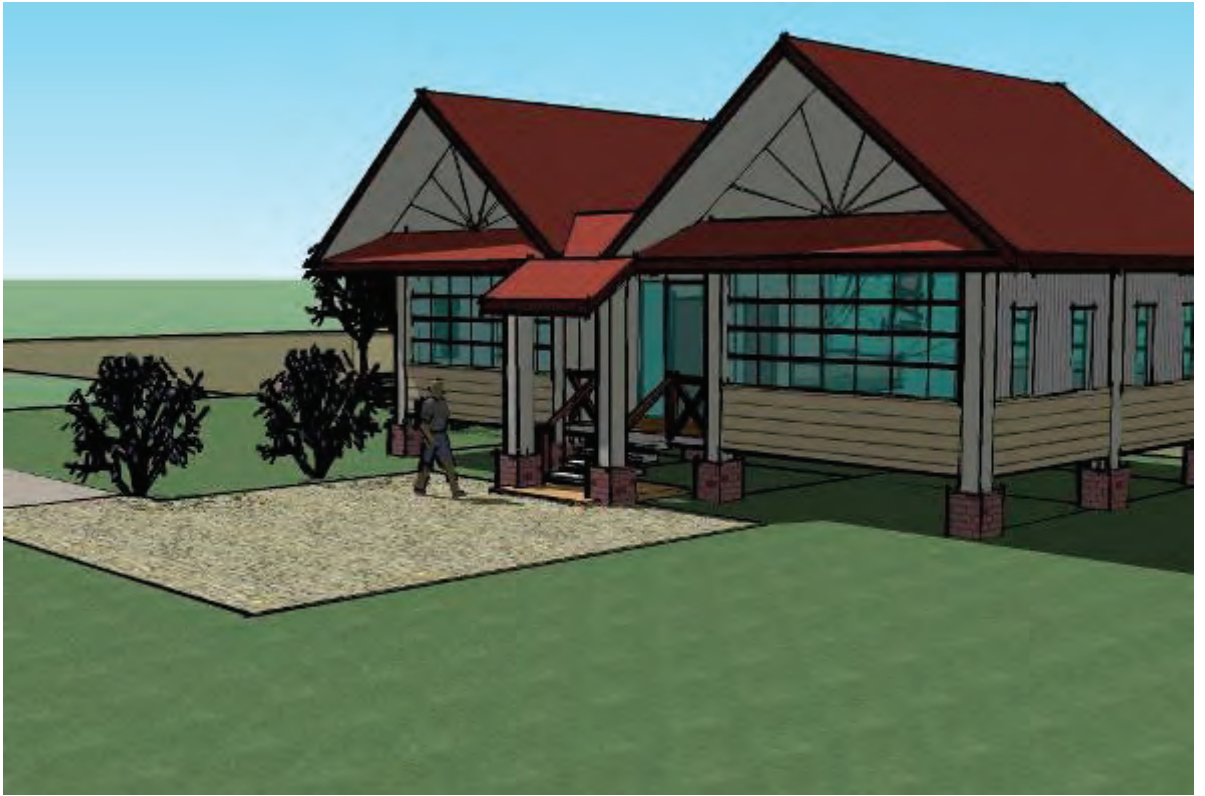
THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE INTERPRETIVE DIMENSIONS OF
THE **VAT PHOU SITE** AND **CHAMPASAK LANDSCAPE**,
LAO PDR



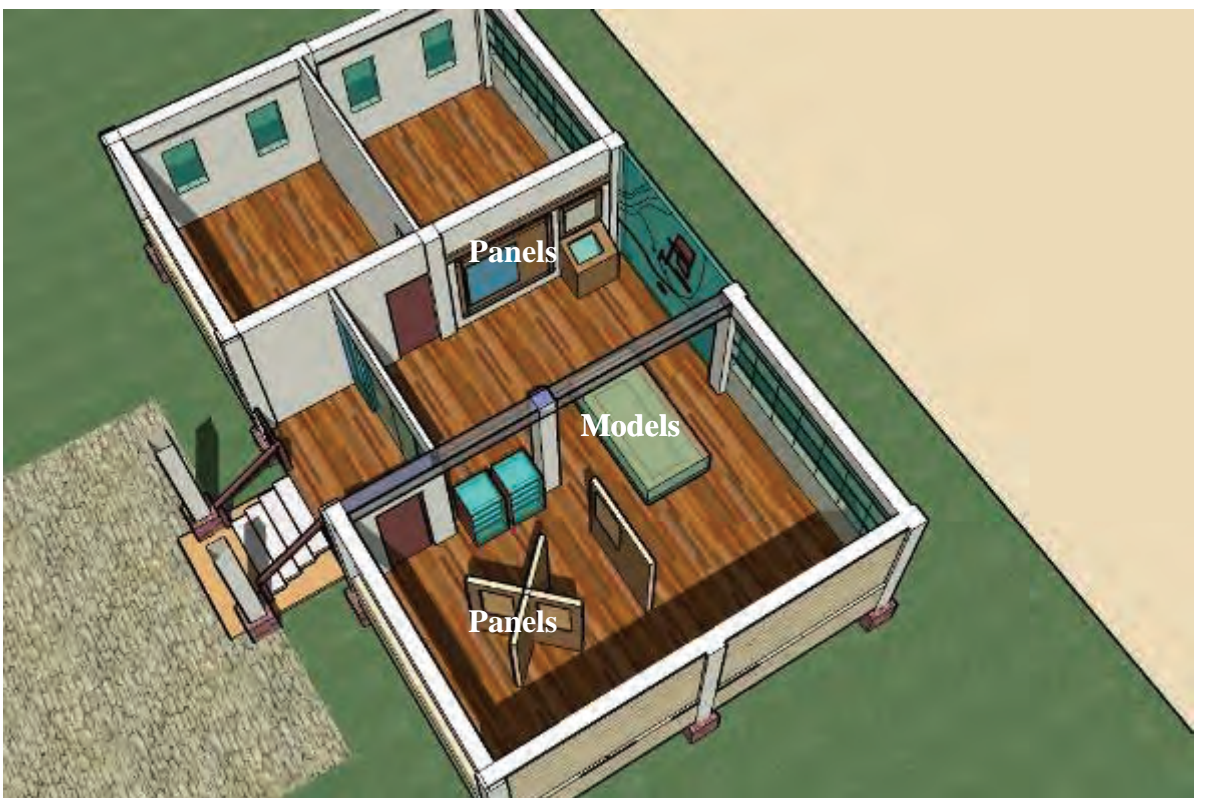


VISITOR CENTER

VISITOR CENTER



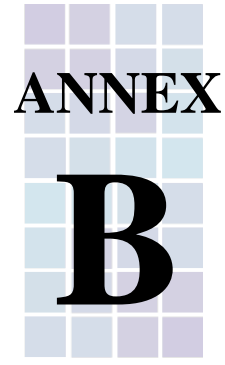
Entrance of Visitor Center



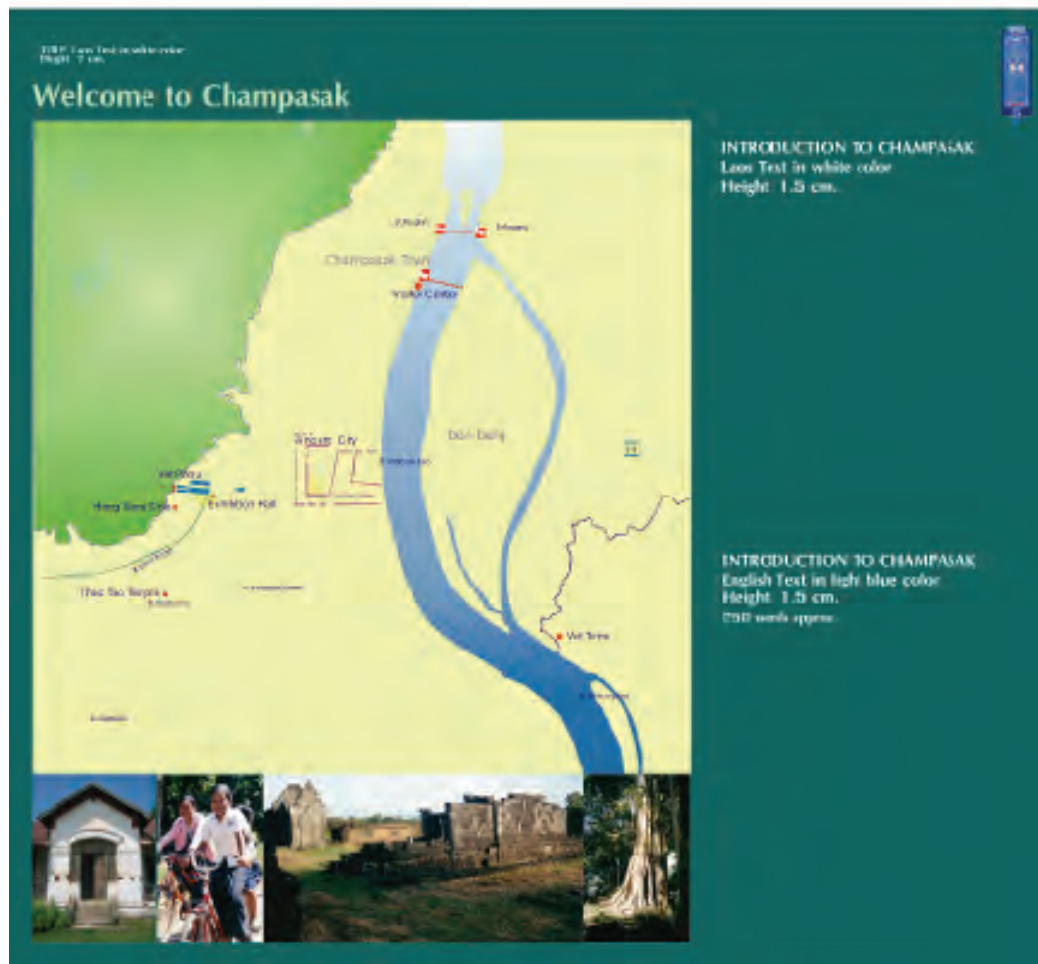
3D perspective view of the experimental setup for the second experiment. The setup is a rectangular room with a wooden floor. A large green rectangular model is placed on the floor. A horizontal beam of light is directed at the model. The room has several windows and a staircase on the right side. Labels 'Panels' and 'Model' are visible.

[illegible]

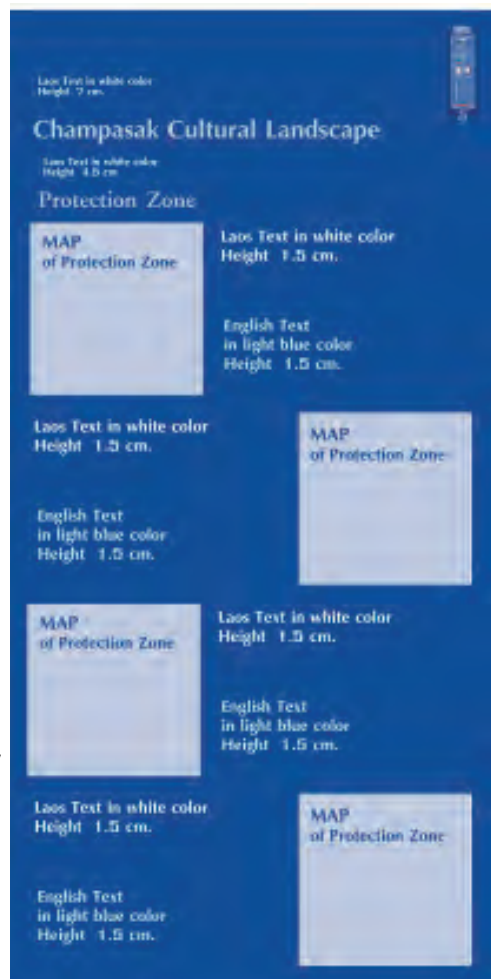
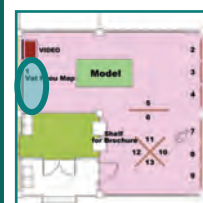
Proposed Locations for Panels



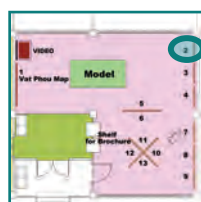
PANELS



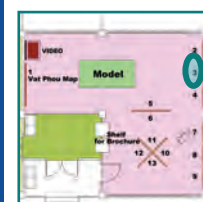
Panel 1



Panel 2



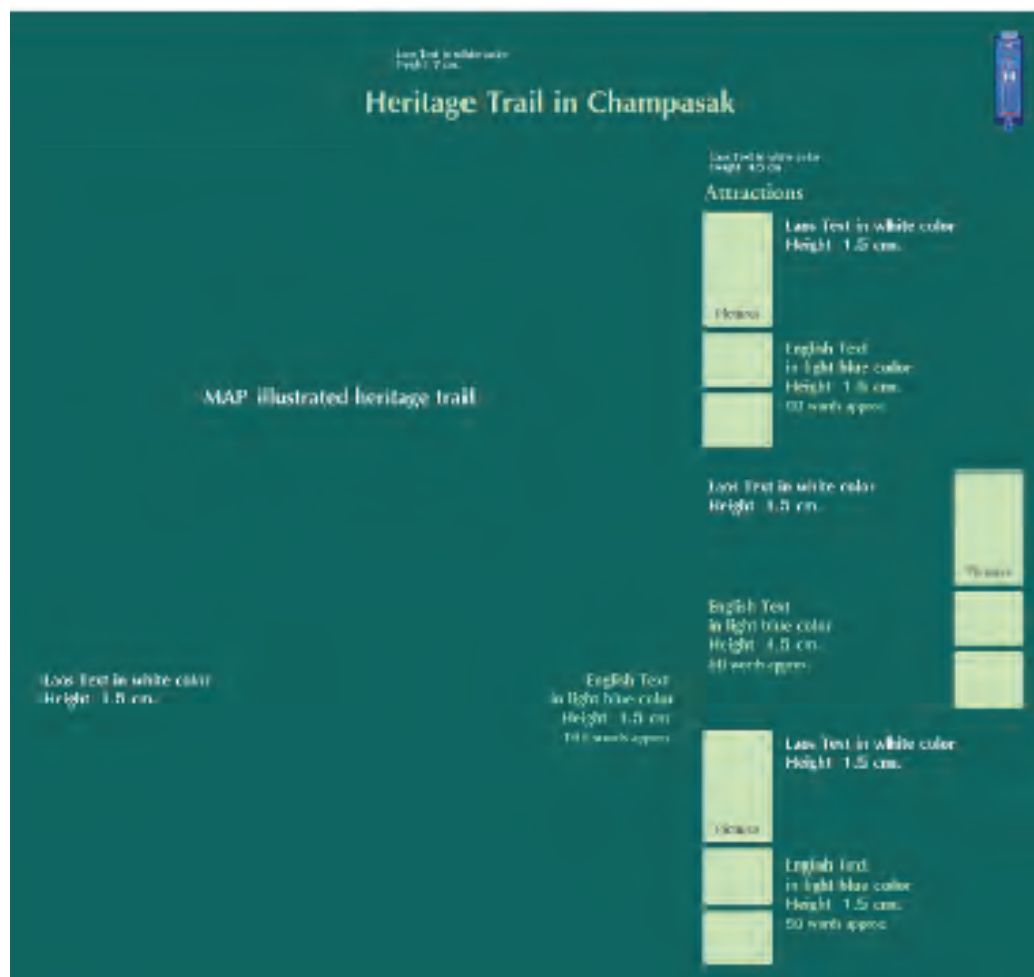
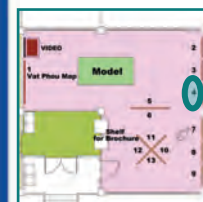
Panel 3



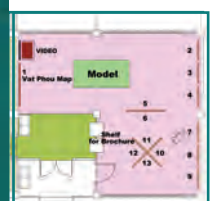
PANELS



Panel 4



Panel 5




PANELS

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Vat Phou Temple Complex Build Heritage

Laos Text in white color
Height: 4.5 cm.

Historic and Architectural Significance of Vat Phou



Laos Text in white color
Height: 1.5 cm.


English Text in light green color
Height: 1.5 cm.
120 words approx.

Laos Text in white color
Height: 4.5 cm.

Ancient Road Connecting Vat Phou to Angkor Wat in Cambodia

Laos Text in white color
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English Text in light green color
Height: 1.5 cm.
120 words approx.

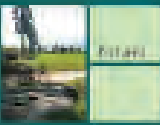
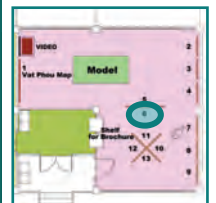


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Ancient Life and Festivals

Laos Text in white color
Height: 1.5 cm.

English Text in light green color
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120 words approx.

Panel 6

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Champasak Town



Laos Text in white color
Height: 1.5 cm.

English Text in light blue color
Height: 1.5 cm.
50 words approx.

Laos Text in white color
Height: 1.5 cm.

English Text in light blue color
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50 words approx.

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English Text in light blue color
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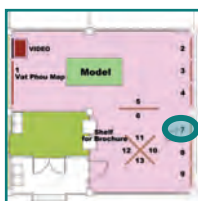
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English Text in light blue color
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50 words approx.

Laos Text in white color
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Height: 1.5 cm.
50 words approx.

Panel 7



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Built Heritage of the Ancient City

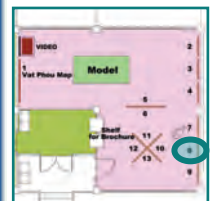
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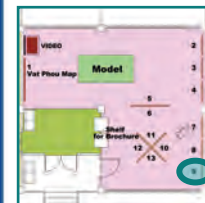
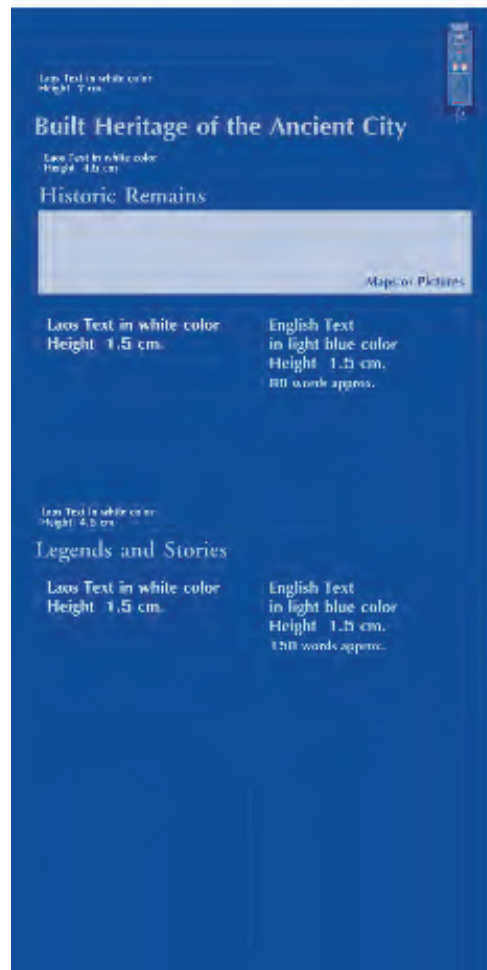
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English Text in light blue color
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120 words approx.

Panel 8



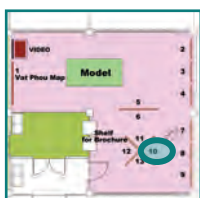
PANELS



Panel 9



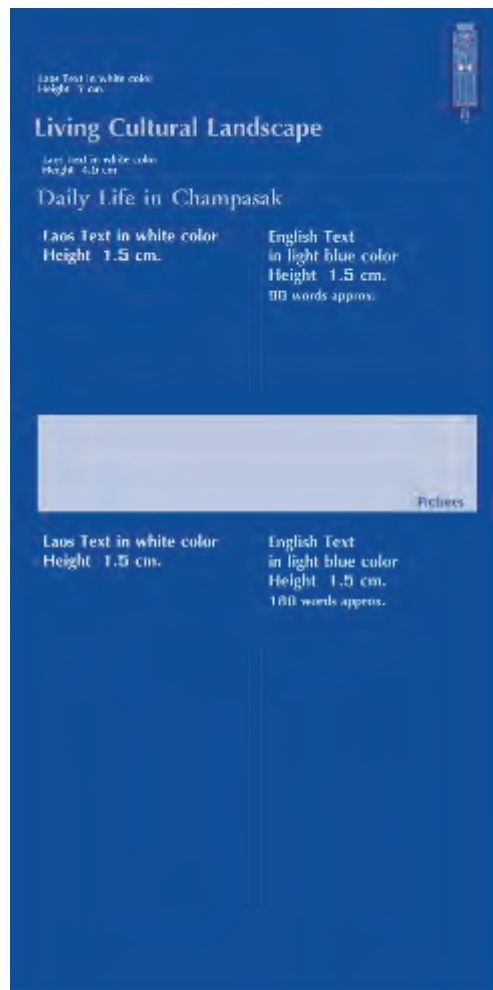
Panel 10Left



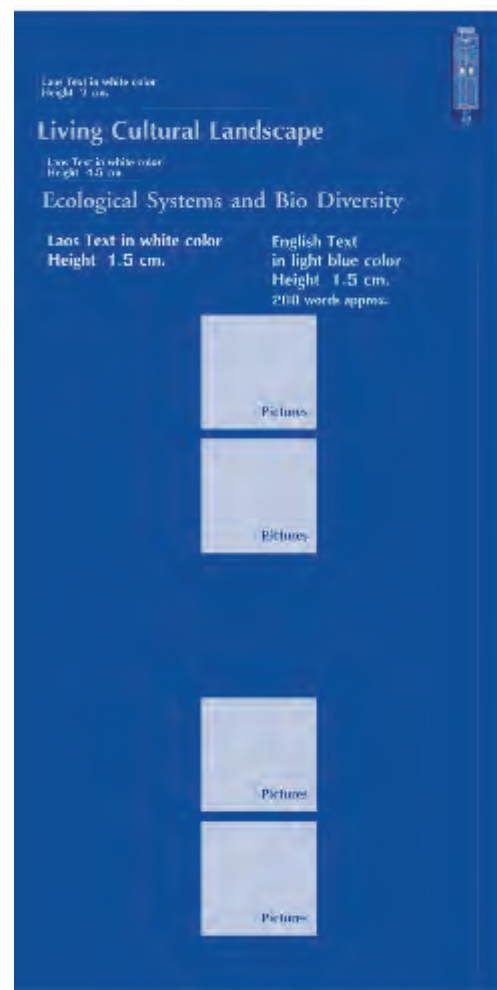
Panel 10Right



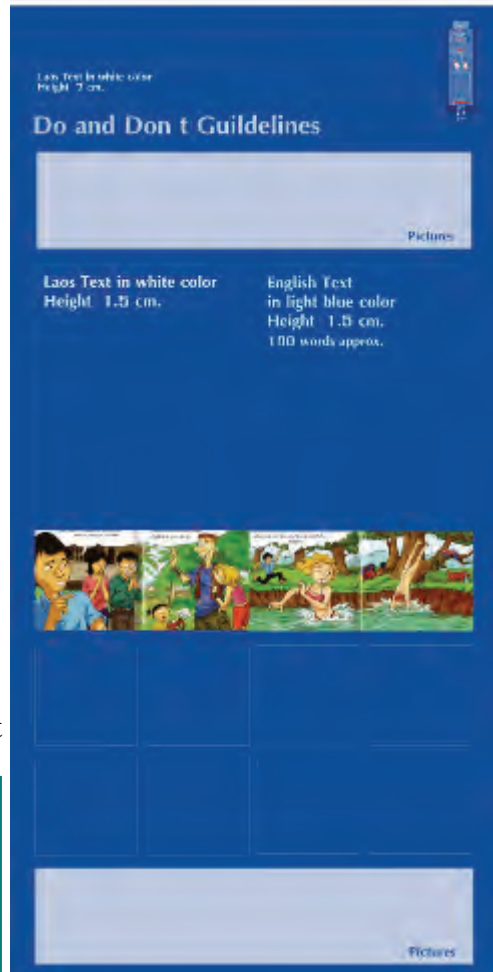
PANELS



Panel 11Left



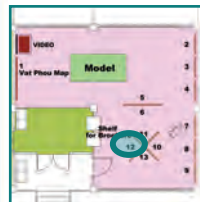
Panel 11Right



Panel 12Left



Panel 12Right



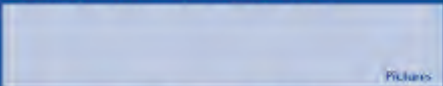
PANELS

Laos Text in white color
Height: 1 cm.

Vat Phou Conservation and Management Plans and Policies

Laos Text in white color
Height: 4.0 cm.

Excavation Activities in Vat Phou



Laos Text in white color
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English Text in light blue color
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100 words approx.

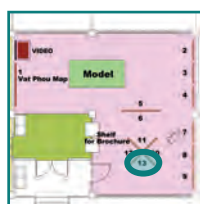
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Control Guidelines

Laos Text in white color
Height: 1.5 cm.

English Text in light blue color
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70 words approx.

Panel 13Left



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Vat Phou Conservation and Management Plans and Policies

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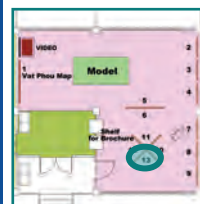
UNESCO Champasak Management Plan

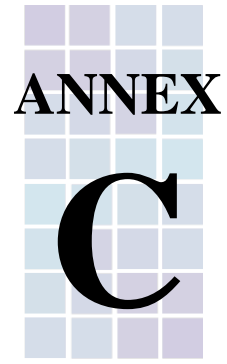
Laos Text in white color
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English Text in light blue color
Height: 1.5 cm.
200 words approx.

Panel 13Right





INTERPRETIVE VIDEO

SCRIPT FOR THE INTERPRETIVE VIDEO

‘Vat Phou and Associated Ancient Settlements within the Champasak Cultural Landscape’

Many people know that the Vat Phou temple complex is a very special place, but few are aware that it is only one part of a very large ancient settlement in Champasak. The historic significance of Champasak lies not in the individual parts but in the whole cultural landscape.

This video is intended to give you a glimpse of the Vat Phou and Champasak cultural landscape, which was inscribed by UNESCO as a World Heritage site in 2001.

The Champasak plain, located in southern Lao PDR, covers an area of 390 square kilometres, and is centered on the Khmer Empire-period Vat Phou Temple Complex, which is located on the west bank of the Mekong River.

Its setting is of the highest importance in understanding its integrity as a planned landscape, since the natural topographic elements of Phou Kao Mountain and the Mekong River are the basic building blocks around which the ancient Khmer people physically expressed their spiritual understanding of the world.

On top of Phou Kao Mountain there is a large sandstone formation, 10 meters high, which can be seen from a fair distance away. Shaped in the form of a linga, it had a special, sacred meaning for people who lived here long ago.

Over 1000 years old, the Champasak cultural landscape demonstrates the long history of interaction between humans and their environment and testifies to the spiritual vitality of humanity.

The various elements of the cultural landscape include:

- The ancient city
- Tomo temple
- Nang Sida temple
- Thao Tao temple
- Vat Phou temple complex

The ancient city, covers 400 hectares of Champasak and is located 6.5 kilometres east of Vat Phou, on the bank of the Mekong River. It is a unique example of ancient urban settlement in the region.

Currently the area is mainly used for cultivation of rice paddy. While some of the historic remains can be seen, most have not yet been excavated. Unfortunately, due to the development of villages and the expansion of roads and infrastructure, many of the remains have been destroyed.

Tomo temple is another massive complex located east of the Mekong River, approximately 11 kilometres south-east of Vat Phou. This site was identified as the female counterpart and balance to the temple of Shiva at Vat Phou and an essential part of the symbolic planning of the landscape.

Along the ancient road approximately 1.5 km to the south of Vat Phou, is Nang Sida temple. This site has been tentatively identified as the Angkorian city of Lingapura, which succeeded the pre-Angkorian ancient city.

One kilometre south of Nang Sida temple lies Thao Tao temple which is built largely of re-used stone. It has tentatively been identified as a 'hospital' or 'rest house for travelers'.

Vat Phou temple complex is an important example of both early and classical Khmer architecture, dating from between the 7th and 12th centuries. It is a rare form of hilltop Khmer temple, developed to take full advantage of the topography of the site on which it is built and is the focal point of this vast cultural landscape.

The temple complex is laid out on a linear plan stretching 1,400 metres along an east-west axis and was built on the slopes of Phou Khao Mountain. The mountain and the temple were very important to the local people. When they ploughed fields, and built irrigation systems, roads and settlements, these were aligned with the temple and the mountain. The alignment and placement of these features was intended to replicate their version of heaven. The ancient Khmer believed that living in a place that looked like their heaven would guarantee harmony in their lives.

The entrance-way to the temple is flanked by water ponds, called *baray*. A *baray* is a man-made water reservoir used by worshippers to wash themselves before entering the temple. This cleansing is meant to purify one's mind before worship. The construction of *baray* is evidence of the ability and organization of the agricultural society to produce surpluses in order to support the temples and the urban elite.

Proceeding into the temple area, there are six different levels or terraces, connected by steps and a central walkway. On the first terrace there are two large rectangular stone buildings which archaeologists describe as 'palaces'. It is believed that these two buildings were used for ceremonial purposes, for example praying for good fortune or hosting of monks during special ceremonial periods.

Following the "palace", on the left is a smaller elevated building, referred to as Nandi Hall, which is a place for the vehicle of the god which Shiva called *Nandi*, or bull. Archaeological evidence suggests that the Nandi Hall may have been connected to the ancient road.

From the third terrace onward there is the natural slope with 77 steps. Each platform has 11 steps. The stairs end at a sixth and final terrace located about 75 metres above the *baray* and commanding an impressive view over the whole complex and plain to the Mekong River and beyond.

Reaching the upper terrace one first sees the main shrine - which was dedicated to the god Shiva. During the 13th century Vat Phou was converted from the Khmer religion, Hinduism, to Buddhism. Therefore, inside the main shrine today there is a statue of the Lord Buddha, but there would have been a Shiva linga during the time of the Khmer.

The main shrine has intricate carvings adorning its exterior. These carvings reveal the skill of builders of the past. The evidence of ongoing maintenance and reconstruction indicates that the temple continued to be important for many centuries, even though the centre of power of the Khmer Kingdom had shifted to Angkor (in what is now known as Cambodia) by the 9th century.

Although a partial ruin, the main shrine holds great significance for local devotees, who continue a 1500-year old religious tradition of devotion to the ‘god who is the mountain’. The main shrine retains an important local religious function to the present day.

Today, Vat Phou is used as a Buddhist temple and every February the Vat Phou Festival is held on the temple grounds, with a Buddhist ceremony as its main event.

This indicates how much significance the temple still holds for the people of Champasak and of Lao PDR.

The Champasak cultural landscape provides unique opportunities for the holistic understanding of the development of Khmer civilization as well as the roots of urban life in Southeast Asia.

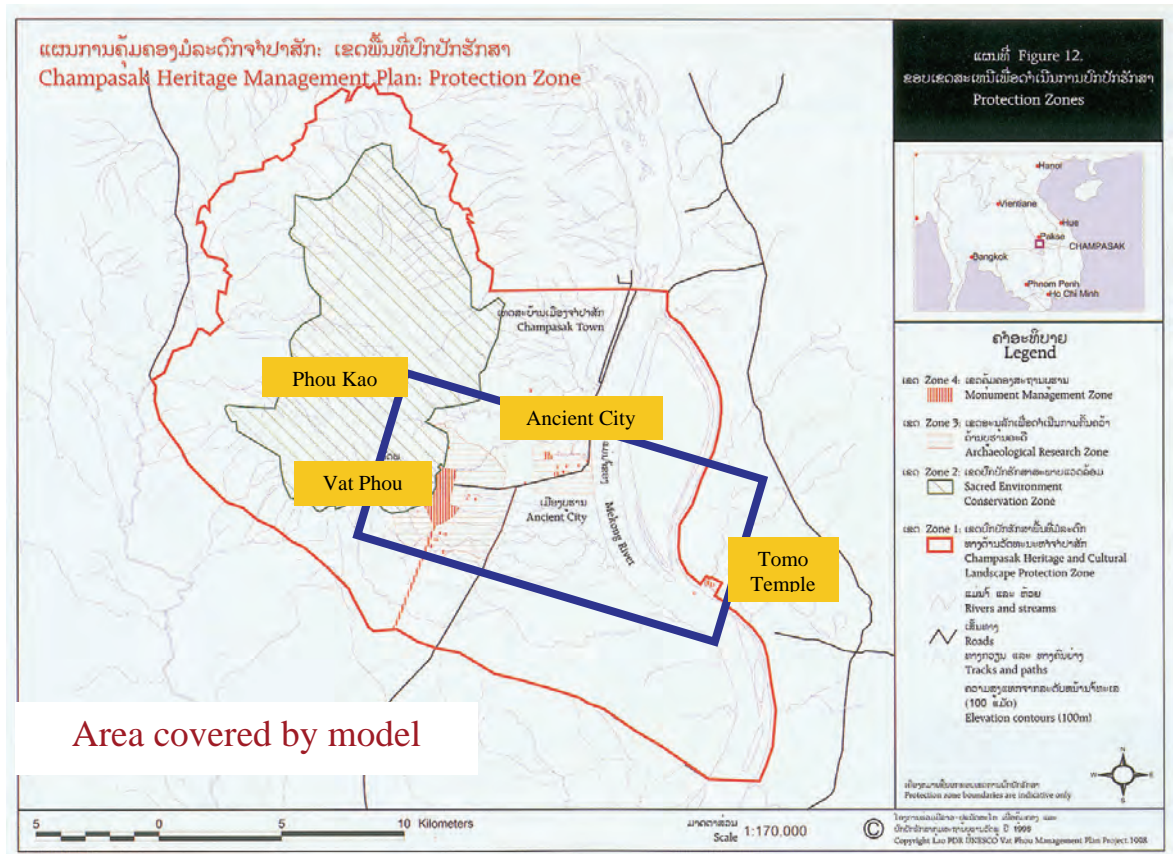
It is therefore important for us to preserve and conserve this site for future generations. To ensure that this site is preserved please do not litter, do not take or remove anything from the site, do not touch the carvings and do not climb on the monuments. A simple way that you can assist in maintaining this site is through making a donation to the conservation fund for the site.

We hope you enjoy visiting Vat Phou Champasak.

Sabaai-dii



ARCHITECTURAL MODEL



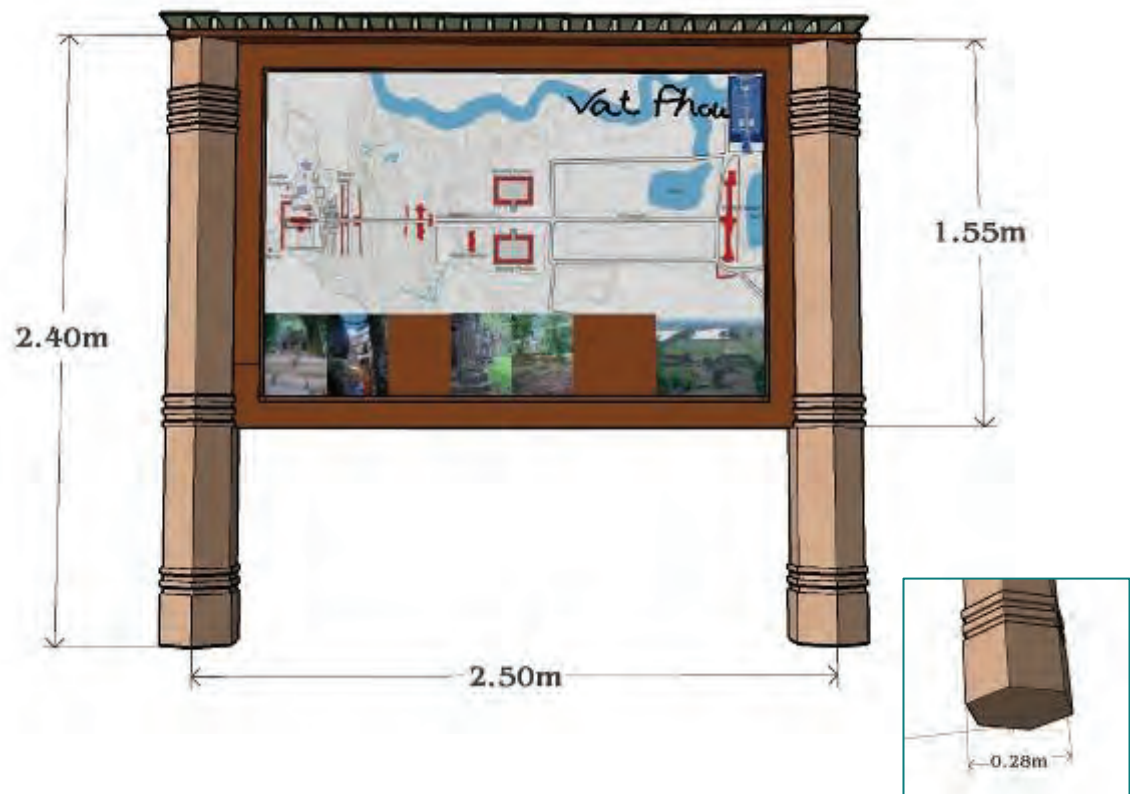
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- Size of the model 1.2 x 2.4 m.
- Located at the visitor center (above the ground for at least 60 cm.)

ARCHITECTURAL MODEL

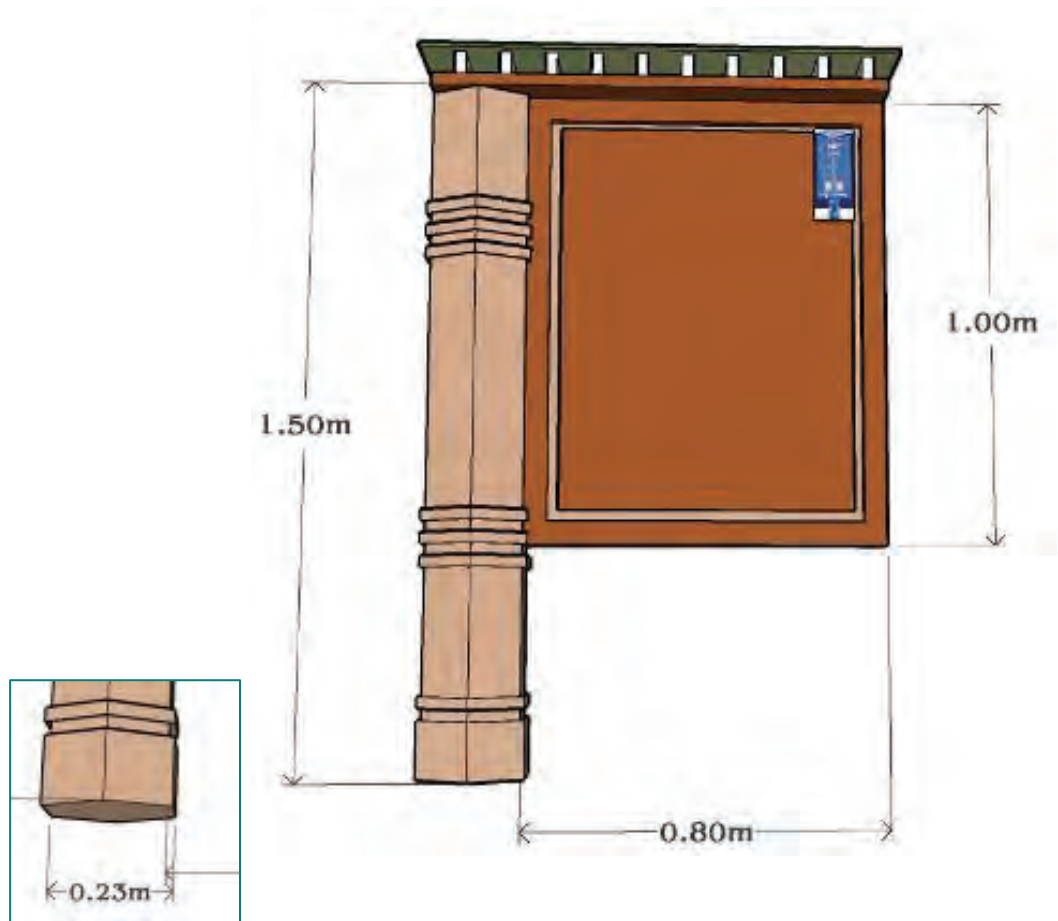




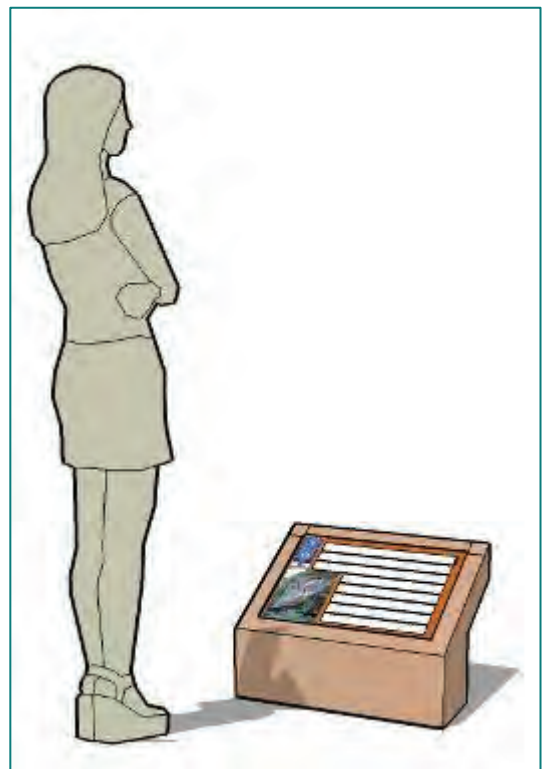
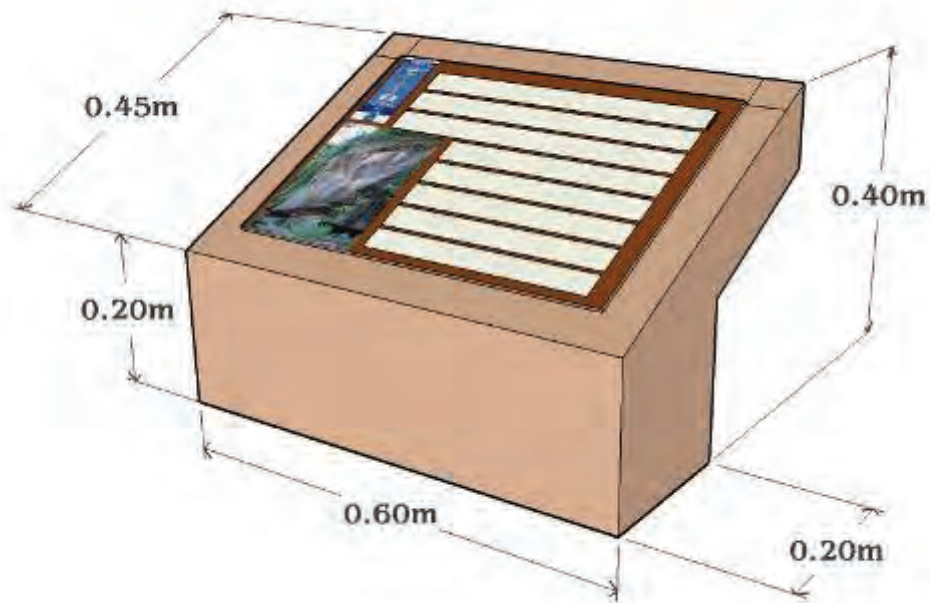
SIGNAGE



Signage Type 2

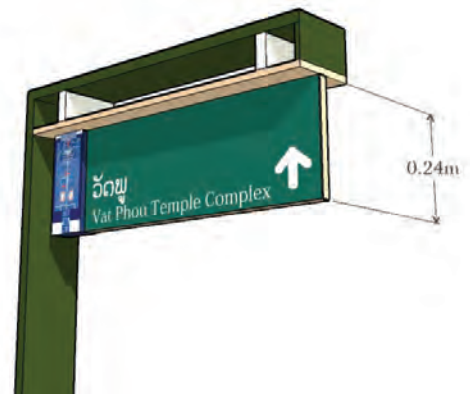
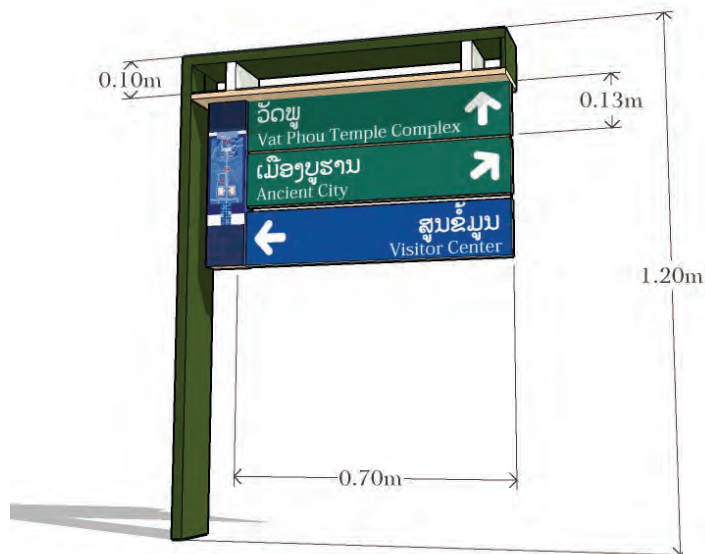


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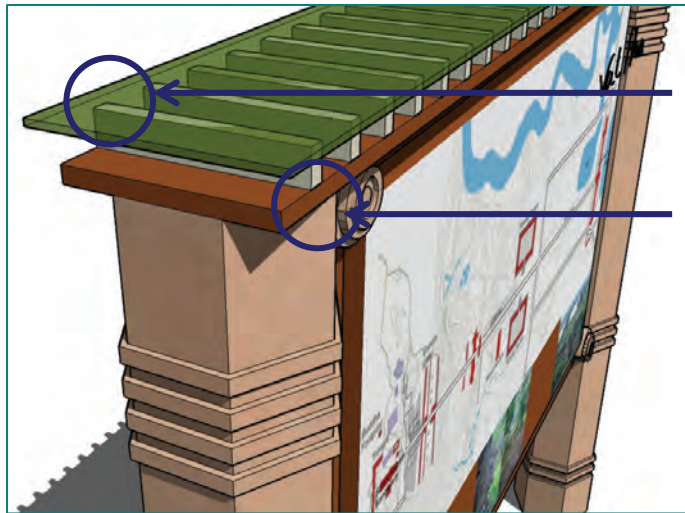


DIRECTIONAL SIGNAGE

Signage Type 4



SIGNAGE MATERIALS



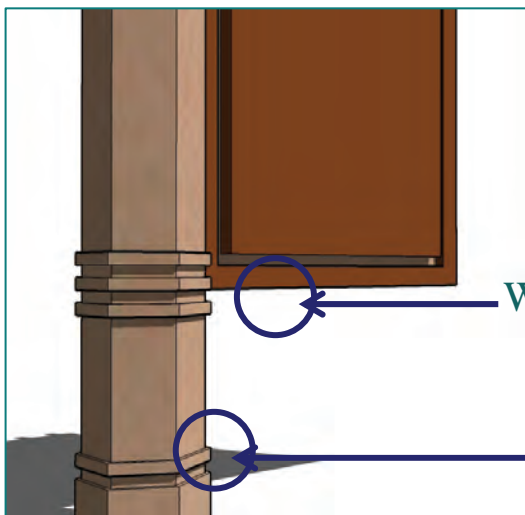
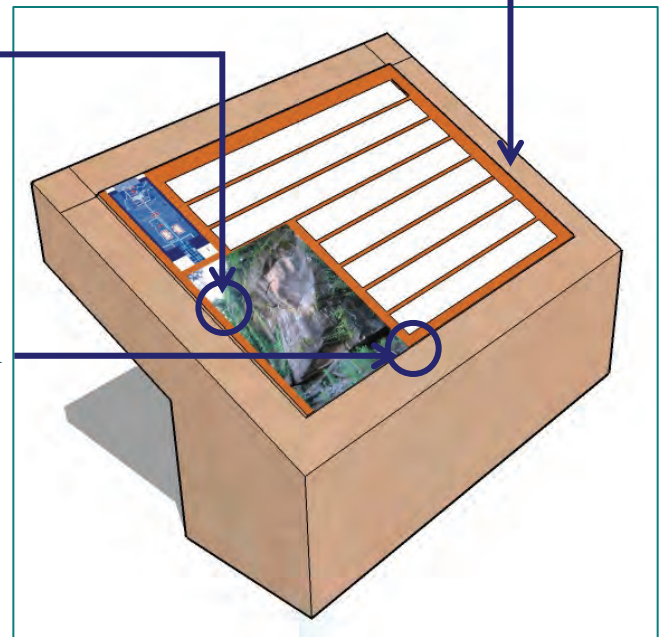
Polycarbonate

Steel/Steel Plate

RFC/ Sandwash Finish

Pictures and Maps on PVC Plate

Copper Black Finish



Wood/Fiber Cement

RFC/ Sandwash Finish

The Asian Center for Tourism Planning and Poverty Reduction (ACTPPR)
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