



MANAGEMENT BOARD OF DONG VAN KARST PLATEAU GEOPARK



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CÔNG VIÊN ĐỊA CHẤT TOÀN CẦU UNESCO CAO NGUYÊN ĐÁ ĐỒNG VĂN  
DONG VAN KARST PLATEAU UNESCO GLOBAL GEOPARK

VIET NAM

1<sup>ST</sup> NEWSLETTER 2021

DEPARTMENT OF CULTURE, SPORTS AND TOURISM

# Green tourism on the Karst Plateau



World Environment Day

June 5, 2021

Ha Giang tourism  
**A safe destination**

DURING THE COVID EPIDEMIC

# Upstream NAO QUE

Activities to celebrate

## EARTH DAY 2021

**8** WELCOME EVENT FOR  
new UNESCO Global Geoparks

# Nightingale OF THE KARST PLATEAU

MANAGEMENT BOARD OF DONG VAN KARST PLATEAU GEOPARK





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## Small actions of joining hands in response to

# WORLD WATER DAY

Each year, the United Nations chooses a theme to respond to World Water Day for conveying a message about valuing water, solutions for solving hot issues related to global water resources.

World Water Day 2021 with theme of "Valuing Water" aims to emphasize the meaning and importance of water resources; valuing water in economic, cultural and social terms; effective solutions to protect water resources against pressures caused by population growth, industrial development, agriculture and climate change.

Dong Van Karst Plateau is a difficult land, lacking domestic and production water. In particular, due to the tourism development and the increasing number of tourists coming to this place, the pressure on domestic and service water will be a concern of local authority.

For recent years, thanks to the help of many relevant organizations, agencies, ministries and branches, Ha Giang has applied a number of measures to make use of groundwater, water from rivers and streams in the area to serve the needs of local residents and tourists.

However, the water volume for domestic use has still failed to meet all the needs of tourists. Therefore, measures to propagate and mobilize people and tourists to save water for domestic and production use are still very important. In response to World Water Day 2021, the Management Board of Dong Van Karst Plateau UNESCO Global Geopark has designed a water drop-shaped logo to hang in pilot at accommodation establishments and restaurants in the Geopark. The message sent to tourists on each Logo: "Water is gold in our Unesco Global Geopark - Save water". The Management Board of Dong Van Karst Plateau UNESCO Global Geopark encourages agencies and enterprises to respond and spread the message to people and tourists for jointly participating in this meaningful activity. Let's join hands to quench the "thirst" on the Dong Van Karst Plateau UNESCO Global Geopark.

**Management Board of Geopark**



## RECOGNITION AS AN OFFICIAL PARTNER

### Recognition as an official partner of Dong Van Karst Plateau UNESCO Global Geopark

for 2021 - 2023 period

The Official Partner Program of Dong Van Karst Plateau UNESCO Global Geopark for the 2021-2023 period is implemented to connect service businesses with State agencies. Thereby, state agencies will support enterprises to meet the program's criteria in product development and promotion, and trade promotion, promote the enterprises to trade in the direction of professionalization, bringing high efficiency, contributing to the development of tourism and services of Ha Giang province in an effective and sustainable way.

Enterprises and service establishments that are recognized as Official Partners of Dong Van Karst Plateau UNESCO Global Geopark are those that meet the criteria built by UNESCO experts and have qualified services and products that ensure good service for tourists and represent Ha Giang brand.

In 2021, the Department of Culture, Sports and Tourism reviewed and recognized 52 service establishments, agricultural and handicraft production and processing establishments and that met the criteria to become Official Partners of the Dong Van Karst Plateau UNESCO Global Geopark for 2021 – 2023 period. The establishments of the Partners are mainly in Quan Ba district (14 units); Yen Minh district (9 units); Dong Van district (18 units); Meo Vac district (8 units); Bac Quang district (1 unit) and Ha Giang city (2 units).

List of official partners of Dong Van Karst Plateau UNESCO Global Geopark is updated on the website: [dongvangeopark.com](http://dongvangeopark.com)

**Management Board of Geopark**

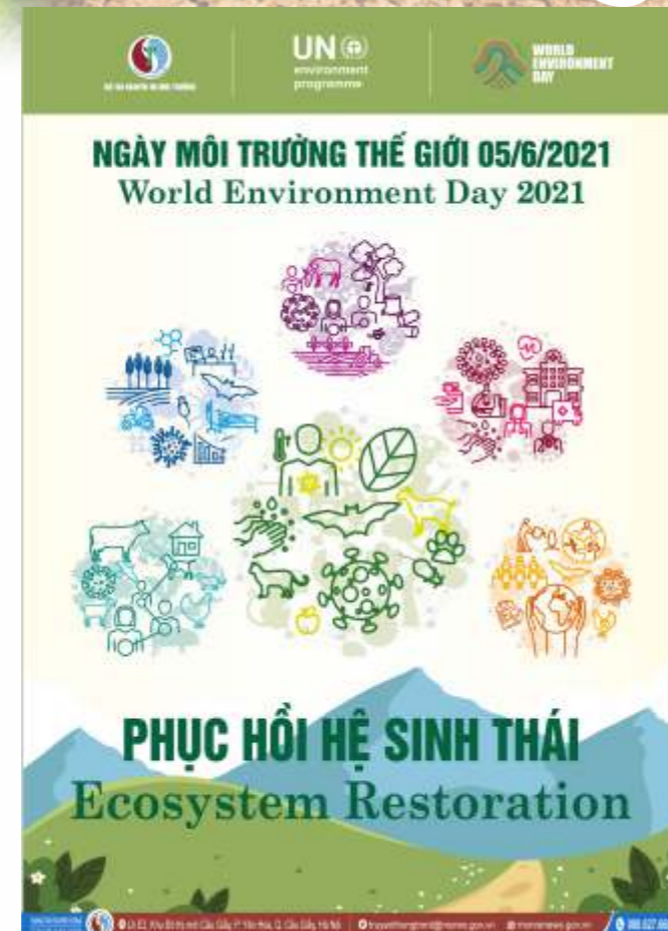




# World Environment Day

June 5, 2021

2021 is the year mobilized by the United Nations for a Decade of Ecosystem Restoration to prevent from and reverse the degradation of ecosystems on any continent and ocean, help reduce poverty, combat climate change and prevent from mass extinction. Therefore, theme selected for World Environment Day this year is "Ecosystem Restoration" with the message of gathering and solidarity to protect and restore ecosystems around the world.



Vietnam Television and Voice of Vietnam also mobilized response programs on channels and radios on June 5, June 6 and June 8.

Accompanying the Program, the Management Board of Dong Van Karst Plateau UNESCO Global Geopark also deployed propaganda banners and posters at the headquarters and at some points in the area, propaganda on the website of Dong Van Karst Plateau UNESCO Global Geopark (dongvangeopark.com).

Management Board of Geopark

Facing the complicated developments of Covid-19 epidemic, based on the actual situation, the Center for Communication on Natural Resources and Environment, the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment has applied technology, implemented online activities and comprehensive propaganda on World Environment Day 2021.

Link to information about identifier and trailer of World Environment Day; <http://monremedia.vn/video-clip/trailer-tuyen-truyen-ngay-mttg-2021.html>

# HA GIANG

## Discovery Marathon 2021



Ha Giang Discovery Marathon (HGDM) 2021, organized by the People's Committee of Ha Giang Province in collaboration with the Race Jungle Joint Stock Company, is an international standard professional domestic marathon competition and this is the consecutive 5th year that the competition has been organized.

With theme "Discover the epic rocky mountains", the Organizing Committee hopes that Ha Giang Discovery Marathon will promote the encouragement of physical training and sports, and at the same time have more attractive activities for people and tourists to Dong Van Karst Plateau, contributing to promoting the unique features of the Dong Van Karst Plateau UNESCO Global Geopark.

HGDM is scheduled to be held on October 10, 2021, in Meo Vac district, Ha Giang province. The competition is attended by amateur and professional athletes with race lengths: 6km, 12km, 21km and 42km. The athletes will start at dawn on the top of the pass where you can see very blue Nho Que river, then descend from the pass to Meo Vac, then go deep into the Stone Maze and Khau Vai

Love Market, then return to Meo Vac and finish the competition.

It is a quite special Marathon competition when the athletes will be immersed in the majestic natural scenery on both sides of the track of the land at the border area of the country when October comes with purple pink color of buckwheat flowers. Throughout the competition, the athletes will have a suitable and memorable race while feeling the overwhelming natural scenery and sunny smiles of local residents here.

Leaving behind chaos and pressures, away from the dusty city and the sound of vehicles, come to HGDM 2021 to immerse in the pristine and lyrical beauty of mountains, buy purple buckwheat flowers on the mountains, unique cultural features of indigenous residents, with a healthy and active sports spirit.

Reference link for registration and rules of Ha Giang Discovery Marathon (HGDM) 2021: <https://racejungle.com/pages/ha-giang-discovery-marathon>.

Ngoc Phuong







# Ha Giang tourism

## A safe destination

### DURING THE COVID EPIDEMIC

Covid - 19 has almost brought the tourism industry in Vietnam as well as the world back to the start line, the gaps in the industry growth rate of the past become insignificant. However, the "temporary break" period is a good opportunity for us to recover, look back, strengthen our tourism capacity, infrastructure and technical facilities, and improve the quality of tourism human resources, build new, attractive tourism products to be ready to welcome tourists in a better way after the Covid-19 epidemic is settled.

Chung sống an toàn với dịch COVID-19



Safely co-existing with COVID-19

Children at Tham Ma Slope tourist attraction always follow the recommendations of the Ministry of Health



Safely co-existing with COVID-19



Safely co-existing with COVID-19

In 2020, in response to the complicated development of global Covid-19 epidemic, the global tourism industry as well as Vietnam's tourism industry in general and Ha Giang province in particular must face a new situation. However, Ha Giang as well as some localities, despite being affected by the epidemic, has been still very fortunate because no infections are recorded in the community at some times. At the same time, in response to the complicated development of the epidemic, Ha Giang tourism quickly and flexibly deployed many measures to limit damages in the new situation. Ha Giang determines to promote tourism development in accordance with the "new normal" condition, which are: small-scale tourism, short distance, discovery of locality itself or neighboring areas associated with MICE, ecological, community tourism types.

In 2020, tourists to Ha Giang reached 1.5 million tourist arrivals - reaching 100% of the annual plan. In particular, nearly 90% of tourists to Ha Giang was from the domestic market. To achieve that target, Ha Giang tourism industry implemented many solutions in a synchronous and drastic manner, such as: ensuring the building of safe destination brand for tourists in the context of the Covid-19 epidemic. Specifically, Ha Giang province drastically implemented the assurance of 4 safety criteria, including: Safe passenger transportation vehicles, safe accommodation establishments, safe restaurants and destinations. Create peace of mind for tourists when coming to Ha Giang; Encourage enterprises and private organizations to do business in tourism and service activities in the province to improve service quality, shift and build new and unique tourism products aimed to the domestic and intra-provincial tourists. With the objective of "Vietnamese people go to travel in Vietnam"; proactively prepare tourism promotion scenarios aimed to the domestic tourist market such as: organizing spaces to display culture, tourism and typical products of Ha Giang province in Ho Chi Minh and Hanoi; organize surveys and conferences to stimulate domestic tourism demands in Ha Giang; organize

Food Festivals of 8 Expanded Northwestern Provinces and Ho Chi Minh City; celebrate the 10th anniversary of Dong Van Karst Plateau's joining the Global Geopark Network and the 6th Ha Giang province Buckwheat Flower Festival 2020; hold programs of survey and stimulus of demand of domestic tourism to Ha Giang. And especially, strengthen the application of science and technology 4.0 in promotion and acceleration of linkage with stakeholders from central to local authorities in the promotion and introduction of destination brands in Ha Giang; quickly implement a number of policies to support tourism and service enterprises in accordance with the Government's regulations, such as: extension of tax payment and land rent for agents of travel, accommodation and catering services, museums, amusement parks; electricity discounts for accommodation establishments and enterprises; exemption and reduction of interest rates and fees; access to interest-free preferential loans for enterprises to pay salary to their employees; implement regulations on rates of collection and payment of fees for appraisal of international travel service business license issuance; domestic travel business license issuance; fee for appraisal of tour guide card issuance, of which 50% reduction of fee for appraisal of international travel service business license; domestic travel business license issuance; fee for appraisal of tour guide card issuance.

Ha Giang tourism as well as Vietnam's tourism industry has been facing the challenge of Covid-19 epidemic. However, from another perspective, this is also a good opportunity to restructure the economic growth model in the direction of green growth, in which the important objective is to preserve and protect natural resources and the environment towards the objective of sustainable development. And, Ha Giang tourism industry always believes that overcoming the difficulties the tourism industry is facing are also an opportunity for the tourism industry to develop more sustainably and better in the future.

Vu Huong



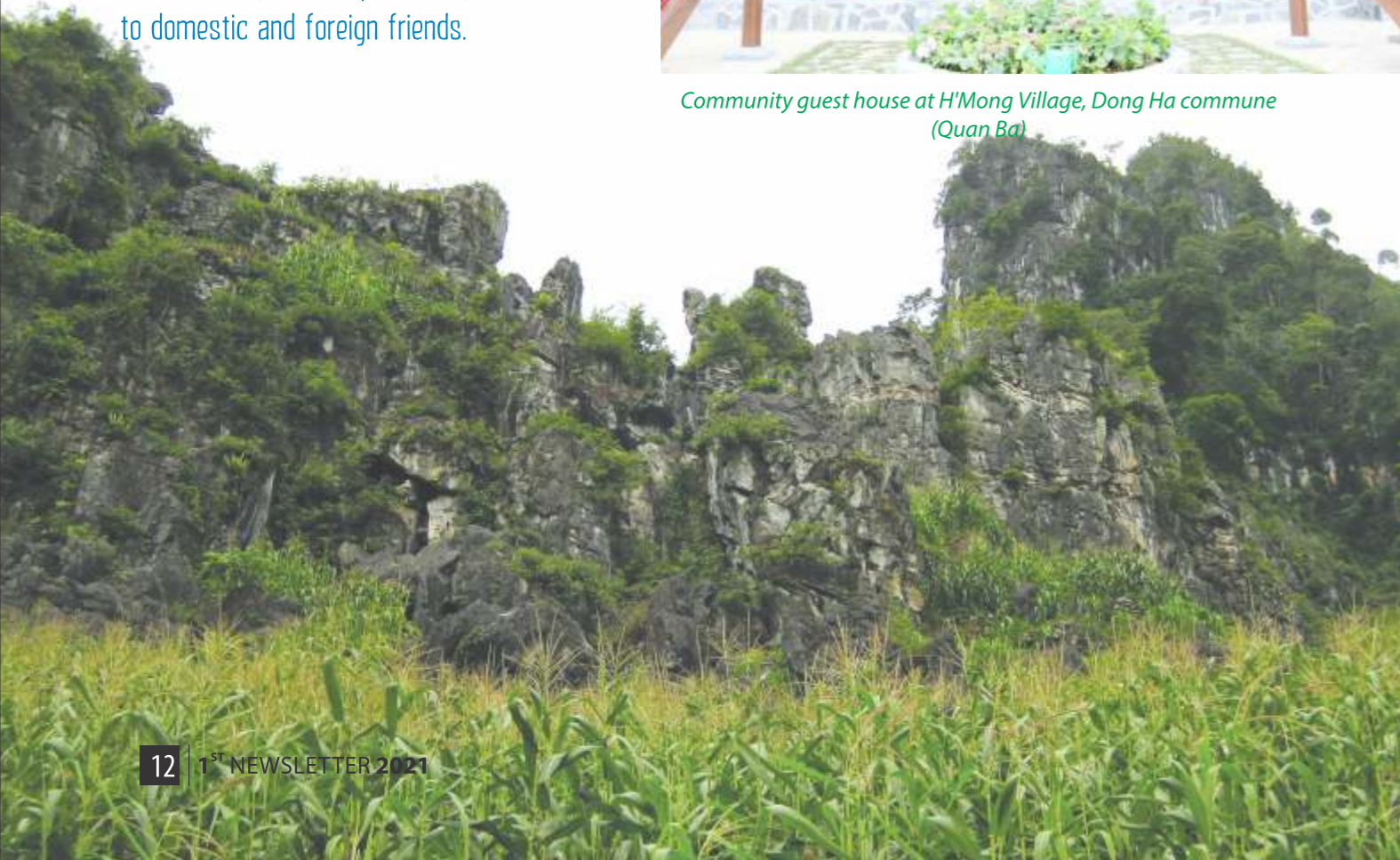
# Green tourism on the Karst Plateau



At the gateway of the Dong Van Karst Plateau UNESCO Global Geopark, there is a unique tourist village, with the idea of preserving the traditional culture of H'Mong ethnic group in association with developing green tourism, promoting the pristine natural beauty of the Karst Plateau, thereby helping bring profits and jobs to residents, contributing to introducing the unique beauty of the locality to domestic and foreign friends.



Community guest house at H'Mong Village, Dong Ha commune (Quan Ba)



More than 60km from Ha Giang city center to the Geopark area, in Dong Ha commune (Quan Ba), H'Mong Ethnic Culture and Tourism Village (H'Mong Village) located on National Highway 4C towards Dong Van is unique tourist destination, is an indispensable place to discover and experience the culture of the land of the Karst Plateau. Mr. Lai Quoc Tinh, owner of H'Mong Village establishment, shared: "As an indigenous resident, I always want to preserve and develop the traditional cultural architecture of H' Mong people in association with development of high-end tourism services. Because I realize that this is the potential and strength of the locality, suitable with the province's sustainable tourism development orientation." Therefore, 2 years ago, Mechanical Construction Joint Stock Company 1, led by Mr. Tinh, invested in the project of restoring and preserving H' Mong village. The project was built on an area of more than 20 hectares with total investment of VND 89 billion, including: 30 soil-made houses (nhà trình tường), roofed with yin and yang tiles, surrounded by fences made of green stone; community guest houses; housing area for performing the production, displaying and selling traditional craft village products; canteen; storehouse; rest houses for employees; infinity pool; outdoor picnic area and stage for traditional cultural and artistic performances of H' Mong ethnic group...

With the viewpoint of developing green tourism, the works at "H'Mong Village" all use environmentally friendly materials. All rooms use simple and close furniture to the nature and culture of H' Mong people, clearly shown through decorative motifs or daily used personal items. Ms. Courtney Roscow, a tourist from South Africa, shared: "I had a great experience in tourism services at H'Mong Village. The architecture here is very environmentally friendly and blends with the beautiful pristine natural landscape. In the future, I want to come back here to hold my wedding".

Tourists to H'Mong Village for visit and rest will be served with all of Ha Giang's specialty dishes such as: Phở Trang Kim (noodle), corn wine, black pig's meat, sour bamboo shoots, hill chicken, mèn mén, lẩu chua, thắng cố... With local clean ingredients, these are definitely new and interesting experiences for tourists.

Besides traditional features, the highlight of H'mong Village is the infinity pool system in the heart of the majestic karst plateau. With the overflow pool design, along with 180 degree outdoor view, it is a favorite check-in place for young people. The tourist village also has a sky bar, a place for Tourists to drink coffee while watching the natural stone

forest landscape in front of them. At the same time, the unique cultural features of highland residents are also flexibly exploited such as acting as H'Mong resident, riding a horse, and selling souvenirs that are OCOP products of the province to tourists.

Mr. Lai Quoc Tinh further shared, after a period of

operation time, many domestic and foreign tourists came to stay here. During the time when the tourism industry is affected by Covid-19 epidemic, we focused on training and improving the skills of our staff. A variety of services such as Massage, foot bath with medicinal leaves was developed. To prepare for the arrival of tourists at the beginning of this spring, H'Mong invested in planting 300 ancient peach trees and more than 100 plum trees to create a landscape for the tourist destinations. In the near future, Zone B with 30 Bungalows viewed from height in the shape of "quẩy tẩu" (a container carried on human back), a familiar items of Mong people and infinity swimming pool would be built. By the middle of the following year, the whole area would be completed, it was promised that this would be an ideal destination for tourists who love to experience and explore Ha Giang tourism.

Le Hai



Tourists experience horse riding at H'Mong Village.



# Upstream NHO QUE

Nho Que - a river that is blue, peaceful, gentle all year round, nestled among myriads of Ha Giang mountain rocks has attracted many tourists to enjoy and check in.

**N**ho Que River starts from Nghiem Son mountain - Yunnan (China), flows in the direction of Northwest - Southeast to Vietnam. Standing on Ma Pi Leng Pass, looking down, tourists will see a gentle beauty like a green thread undulating at the foot of the mountain.

Previously, Nho Que was known as a place to serve indispensable needs of local residents such as fishing. This was also a place to provide domestic and production water for ethnic people residing around this area.

Since the development of hydroelectric reservoir tourism, Nho Que River has become a must-see destination for tourists when coming to Dong Van Karst Plateau. The gentle and peaceful river shows itself in front of admiring eyes of thousands of tourists. To fully enjoy the beauty of Nho Que River, tourists often choose to view from Ma Pi Leng Pass. After going through the turns, passing Ma Pi Leng - one of the "Four Great Peaks" of Vietnam, tourists will be satisfied when viewing the beautiful river. Sitting on the boat, tourists will view steep cliffs, cool air and relax on the blue water.

As for boats on Nho Que River, there are motorboat and self-rowing boat services. However, if you want to go through Tu San Abyss Alley, you should choose a motorboat. There are many boats for rent, but it's noted that tourists should book the boats in advance so that residents here can arrange boats in the most reasonable manner and tourists can avoid waiting for a long time.

### *How to go to Nho Que river boat station?*

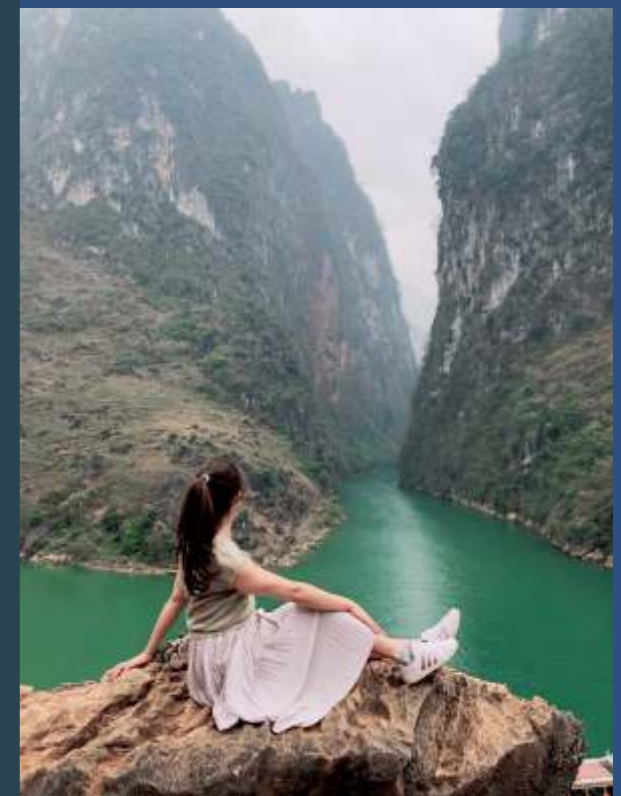
There are 2 ways for tourists to go to boat station in Xin Cai and Pai Lung communes.

When going from Dong Van town, tourists will go about 4km and get off at the boat station in Pai Lung commune. It's noted that the pathway to get off at this boat station will be very steep and quite dangerous.

The boat station in Xin Cai commune will be more convenient for tourists. If going from the direction of Dong Van town, tourists will go to the end of Ma Pi Leng pass, then turn left to Xin Cai, continue to go another 5-7km to the boat station.

Upstream Nho Que promises to be an attractive and unique experience that can't miss when tourists come to Dong Van Karst Plateau UNESCO Global Geopark.

*Management Board of Geopark*





# PEACE PRAYER CEREMONY

## of GIAY ethnic group

Giay people in Ha Giang are one of the long-standing ethnic minorities with a traditional cultural identity still preserved in a quite intact manner. Giay people in Ha Giang live mainly in Meo Vac, Dong Van and Yen Minh districts.

The folklore life of Giay people is quite abundant with customs of worship, marriage, especially festivals. Every year, Giay people organize main festivals such as: Drum dancing festival held on the occasion of Lunar New Year, Going to the Field Festival (Long Tong Festival), New Rice Ceremony, etc. In those festivals, the Peace Prayer Ceremony is a typical culture of Giay people in Meo Vac district, held on many occasions throughout the year.

The Peace Prayer Ceremony is an opportunity for people to pray to the gods for a bumper crop, bloom of rice plants and fullness and happiness of people.

The Peace Prayer Ceremony, also known as the sword dancing ceremony, is a traditional folk ceremony held on the occasions of Giay people such as on Lunar New Year, new house celebration, end of farming season, wedding party... This is a long-standing ritual that has been followed through generations, the offerings in the ceremony are recorded in ancient books of the Giay shamans in Nam Ban commune. Through worshipping ritual with dances modified from postures of traditional self-defense martial arts, props used to simulate rudimentary weapons, it can be deduced that this worshipping ceremony has existed from long time ago, formed during the process of fighting to protect the villages against the harassment of invaders and looters. The worshipping ceremony carries the nuances of folk beliefs, through the worshipping ceremony, Giay people desire to send their aspirations and pray to the gods for

peace, weath, no poverty and diseases of their village. Although it is simply a social custom, it can be also seen that the origin of the worshipping ceremony is the martial spirit, urge and encouragement to the community for combining, determined to fight to protect the village. Currently, the Peace Prayer Ceremony has become one of the most important rituals of the Giay people in Nam Ban. In the day of the village's worshipping ceremony, families send their representative to join in performing the worshipping ceremony. The Giay people hold worshipping ceremony to pray for a peaceful new year, a bumper crop and a healthy family with the belief that the gods and ancestors of the Giay people still live by their side, always follow up and bless the Giay people's descendants with peace, increasingly better and wealthier life.

Like most rituals of the Giay and other ethnic groups living in Ha Giang, the Giay's peace prayer ceremony does not place much emphasis on formalism as well as on offerings to the gods but just expressing the good intention of the prayers, offering trays contain only one boiled chicken, one plate of sticky rice, one plate of fruit, a bottle of wine with a few Joss papers and incense. However, in addition to the offering tray used in the ceremony, depending on the conditions and scale of the worshipping ceremony, a household, a family or all households in the village can slaughter pigs or goats to organize a community party after the ceremony.

The time to hold a Peace Prayer Ceremony is usually at the end of a production cycle or almost in the harvest

time, the head of village will hold a meeting with the participation of a shaman that will represent households to agree on the holding date, venue and contribution of each household. The Peace Prayer Ceremony is usually held in the morning. The space of the Peace Prayer Ceremony is also quite flexible, early harvested field or a large yard, sometimes right in the house of a family in the village, the head of village is the person who prepares and assigns those who will serve and cook.

In the day of the ceremony, from early morning, each family sends someone to the venue to prepare for the ceremony. Those who do not directly participate in the worshipping ceremony take charge of cooking rice and preparing offerings. The shaman and a dance troupe usually consisting of 10 to 14 dancers are required to wear traditional male costumes of the Giay people. The Giay believe that red is the color of the ritual, symbolizing good luck and well-being. Therefore, during the ceremony, the dancers will tie a red cloth strip at the waist, and the props used in the dance are also tied with a red cloth strip. Although the Giay girls do not participate directly in the worshipping ceremony, they also prepare their own traditional costumes, after the main worshipping ceremony finishes, it is time for them to show off their ability to sing and perform traditional dance moves of the Giay ethnic group.

A peace prayer ceremony of Giay ethnic group is divided into 4 stages: holy offering, ceremonial dance, traditional singing and dance, community activity.



Peaceful Giay village in the middle of the mountain (Photo: Quang Chung)



### Holy offering

The day and time of holy offering are chosen by the shaman, all villagers stop working to participate in the worshipping ceremony. The worshipping ceremony includes a boiled chicken, a plate of sticky rice, a plate of fruit, a bottle of wine, Joss papers and incense, 5 cups of wine, 5 pairs of chopsticks, 5 bowls and a bowl of water placed with an aster amellus inside.

At the start of the ceremony, the shaman asks the sword dance troupe to line up behind him, the shaman burns a bunch of incense sticks to the altar to offer the gods from four directions to attend the ceremony. The gods invited to participate in the worshipping ceremony include: God of Village (San Su Ban), God of Water (San Su Puong), God of Earth (San Pa Re), God of Sky (San Pau Pa). The God of Village is the god who is worshiped in the village's shrine. The shaman will invite the god governing the village that hold the worshipping ceremony. The content of the prayers mainly reports to the gods about the labor achievements of the villagers for the past year, reason for conducting the upcoming ritual, the offerings that the villagers have prepared to offer to the gods and invites them to participate in the ceremony and at the same time borrow the place to practice the ritual; Pray to the gods for good things to the members of the sword dance troupe, so that the dance ceremony can take place smoothly; Pray for good health, good luck, no illness to the villagers;...





### Traditional singing and dance

When the sword dance ends, it's time for the members of the village to perform songs praising the gods, thanking ancestors, response singing, giao duyen singing and traditional dances of the Giay. Giay people are known as an ethnic group who loves to sing, they sing anytime, anywhere. The Giay ethnic folk songs are very rich in content, singing about love between couples, singing about flowers, singing about weddings, singing by the side of a wine party, praising the merits of ancestors and parents...The peace prayer ceremony is the time for them to show their singing and dancing talent. In addition to folk songs, the beauty,

flexibility and grace of Giay women are shown through scarf and hat-based dances which contribute significantly to the joyful atmosphere of the ceremony. In the ceremony, there are no mandatory regulations, all participants can sing, but because it is a ritual worshipping ceremony of the Giay ethnic group, those participating in the singing have to sing with Giay language. The singing and dancing only stop when the sun is almost noon, also the time when the men in charge of cooking have prepared the lunch meal. All members participating in the ceremony clean up the offering tray together, and the props are brought back to be stored in the temple or under the altar of the shaman's house, waiting for the next time.

### Ceremonial dance

The ceremonial dance takes place after the end of the holy offering. The props used in the sword dance ceremony are made of wood, imitating the shape of weapons used by the Giay. A full dance troupe will include a shaman; 3 knockers of drum (Drum), Gong (La), Chum Xòe (Tí Xéo); 10 dancers with props: Sword (Giăng), Stick (May chéch), 5-teeth rake (Piao nhi), Cudgel (Trắng má), Sharp knife (Xa ý), Skewer (San xa), Broadsword (Mạ tao) Sickle (Hin), 1 person beating with bare hands; When the dance troupe does not have enough people, the shaman will both beat the drum and practice an offering while other members dance. This is a collective dance, simulating the traditional martial arts of the Giay people in the past, each member uses a type of props made to simulate different weapon types. The dance is to show the strength and majesty of the Giay people so that evil spirits

will fear and and stay away, dare not to disturb the lives of villagers. That's why the Giay people often call it the sword dance ceremony.

At the end of the dance, the shaman strikes a long drum, the members of the dance troupe in turn bring the props to place next to the altar, then retreat to line up in a horizontal row in front of the altar. The shaman approaches to the altar to burn incense and Joss paper to dry the props in a fast manner. The shaman takes a bowl of water with an aster amellus twig, use the twig to sprinkle the water around and sprinkle on the members of ceremonial dance troupe with the meaning of cleansing and banishing evil spirits and bad lucks around them. After that, the shaman holds the drum and strikes a long drum, the members of the dance troupe kowtow and pray, thank the gods. That is all for the main ceremony in the Peace Prayer Ceremony.



Traditional dance performance of Giay girls



A ceremonial sword dance in the Peace Prayer Ceremony (Photo: Quang Chung)

### Community activities

Although it is considered a meal after a successful ceremony, according to the shamans, it is an important part of the ceremony. Depending on the circumstances, the ceremony can be in a large or small scale, but the meal usually consists of bamboo shoots taken from the forest, grilled carp caught in the field, chicken or pigs raised by families in the village, sticky rice or rice cooked from rice of just harvested crop. The meal may be held at the house of the shaman or the head of village or at a family near the place of the ceremony if the house is large enough. It is always an honor for the host to be chosen as a place to hold a meal for the whole village after the ceremony because not all houses can meet, the chosen house must be large enough for the members to attend, so the chosen

house are usually large, beautiful and well-equipped in the village, which is the pride of the owner.

The Peace Prayer Ceremony is a social custom with a long history, despite of going through many ups and downs, has been still preserved by the Giay ethnic community. Currently, the Peace Prayer Ceremony has become one of the typical and unique rituals of the community. This is a social practice with rich humanity, demonstrating the morality. When you drink water, think of the source, being a spiritual bridge between heaven and earth and people, expressing the gratitude and respect to ancestors, origin, showing the determination in preserving the peace of the village, aspiration for a better life.

*Nguyen Nhung - Quang Chung*



# Nightingale

## OF THE KARST PLATEAU



The settlement associated with their lives with rocks of ethnic minorities in the border of the country on the karst plateau has made them become witnesses of history and milestones in the border of the country. More than an ordinary life - they live a spiritual life!



*Vitality on Meo Vac Plateau.  
Photo: Photography artist Ngo Chi Thanh*



I have had chance to return to Dong Van Karst Plateau for many times. Most of my trips are on almost New Year occasion. That is we go to wish the people and soldiers at the border of the country a happy new year. At that time, peach blossoms, plum blossoms and all wild flower kinds are in full bloom, preparing to welcome the spring. People's hearts also begin to feel excited and passionate. But it's still very cold. The cold of rocky mountains is both profound and persistent.

In Hanoi, many agencies choose themselves emotional addresses in that remote border place. Choose a place to return. Due to a predestined tie, my workplace chose the High Command of Border Guard and Ha Giang. And, in the Dong Van Karst Plateau at the border area, there are poor people, ethnic minorities and soldiers of the Border Guard. Every year, on the Tet occasion, my workplace prepares some Tet gifts to wish the people and soldiers at the border areas of the country a happy new year.

I have taken almost every trip. Truthfully, they were not really tourist trips because we went in the harsh winter condition with cold rains on the high mountains,

so every trip was all arduous. Most of the gifts were in kind, so they had to be transported and carried. Wherever we went, we were in a hurry to give gifts, communicate and then move again. Do not dare to stay for fear of causing trouble to agencies, mass organizations, local residents and soldiers. Therefore, those trips were often short, busy with schedules and constantly moved. Those who participated in that mission would be very discouraged if they did not have a good health and enthusiasm.

I could not forget the times of giving gifts to ethnic minorities in Meo Vac district. The eyes of local residents looking at me were both extremely friendly and distantly deep. It's hard to realize their thoughts and feelings. People lived on rocks, on high mountains and in deep forests, in pristine and poor places, the places with harshness of the nature. They were the people of highland ethnic groups. Who they were. Each ethnic group had a unique origin, a cultural identity, a way of life, and a distinct sense of humanity. Understanding an ethnic group, a community is not easy. After each gift giving, I am always obsessed by those thoughts.



Those who came to receive gifts were selected really poor people. Despite of being poor, mothers, men and women all wear extremely splendid and bright ethnic costumes. They were poor but their faces always shined with joy and life love. We gave them clothes, shoes and blankets, Tet confectionery. I



*Joy of children in Lao Xa, Dong Van.*  
Photo: PHOTOGRAPHY ARTIST BUI HOA TIEN

honestly didn't know if they used them but everyone was happy to receive gifts. Seeing the people happy made me feel warm, find that my efforts were not in vain but seemed to be beneficial to the people at the border mountainous and forest area.

I could not forget the trips to give gifts and interact with Meo Vac and Dong Van border guards. I have had gone to Pho Bang Border Guard Station - at the foot of Lung Cu Flagpole for many times. I had chance to meet the soldiers who haven't been gone home for the past ear. They patrolled on the deserted steep mountain slopes without people all year round. But it's been a long time since I drank wine with the soldiers. After that trip, I wrote a poem named "Border bombax ceiba" - a poem that was loved by many readers and included as a document in the school. In that poem, there were two sentences: "Under the bombax ceiba foot, the border guards and I drank/ People away from home with corn wine was like fire in a winter night". That fire was not from wine but from the affection of those who were in the rear and border guards.

Gift giving and visit occasions were always just meetings and exchanges. They were all just happy h a n d s h a k e moments. Giving gifts to the poor, especially ethnic minorities in the high mountains every Tet holiday is a beautiful cultural identity. It is never simply support but benevolent hearts of people to people in the ethnic

community. There were so many people who were excited about these journeys of love despite of being very hard. However, I has still felt uneasy that if there is any way of organization that will help me really understand more about the lives of the people and soldiers here.

This time, I returned to Dong Van Karst Plateau UNESCO Global Geopark on Tet occasion. It's cold. Wind shivered everywhere. The winter mountain flowers glowed with red flames on scarped rock slopes. The roads clung to the vaporous cliffs in the mist. Very high mountain peaks in smoke clouds. Dark green valleys fancifully loomed. Arches of peach and plum with bare branches dotted with flower buds that were anxiously waiting for the spring. Vague human shadows in the midst of the majestic nature...

As a researcher of some aspects of the lives of ethnic minorities in the Global Geopark, this time I had the opportunity to visit villages, markets, houses, streets to meet people, soldiers to talk about life, economy, culture,

society and many aspects of daily life. Everywhere we were warmly welcomed and enthusiastically helped by local residents and soldiers.

Living with the people, we had the opportunity to have a broader approach to the lives of people associated with this boundless spectacular mountain range. They not only faced the harshness and isolation of the terrain, not only experienced poverty and hardship but also faced many problems that profoundly affected the sustainable development in the ethnic minority areas. Those were the issues of poverty, food security, market access, job, income, transport and irrigation; issues of disease, malnutrition, access to health services, education, domestic violence, life safety, cross-border trafficking of women and children; issues of information security, informal communication, ethnic division, secession, religious conflicts, illegal evangelism, opposition activities of hostile forces; issues of social division, social equality, community discrimination, national cultural identity, tourism consequences, drug addiction, cross-border crime, transnational drug trafficking; issues of climate change, water security, deforestation, drought, landslides, flash floods, environmental pollution, depletion of energy sources, fuel disputes; issues of residence, free migration, inbreeding and child marriage, cross-border marriage... The impact of these non-traditional security challenges is often silent but if failing to be recognized and managed in a good manner always tends to be transformed into essential issues of traditional security and national security.

Although the lives of the people here still faced many difficulties and hardships, although some social problems arising distracted and worried, there were still green cornfields, fields of yellow canola flowers, endless fields of buckwheat and peaches, plums and forest flowers that bloom splendidly on the plateau every spring at the scarped cliffs or remote deep valley. And, we could see splendid people with dresses and clothes, faces that

always shined along with the rocky mountain. A love with rocks, with homeland could only be felt with the hearts. The vitality of people in the Dong Van karst plateau is so wonderful.

During my days in the Dong Van Karst Plateau, I always heard the singing sound of nightingales from the high, steep mountains. Local residents said that it's unknown when every high mountain peak was a kingdom of a male nightingale. The nightingale of the Global Geopark always sang loudly along with endless rocky mountains.

It's true that: "the singing sound of nightingale resounds in the highland/ the blue sky / sharp steep rocks upon looking up/ deep in Nho Que like silver thread in the vaporous mist... the nightingale sings for love with the sky/ the nightingale sings for love with the rocks/ the nightingale sings for love with the mist/ the nightingale sings for love with the people/ infinite high heaven gate and door of man of Dong Van with shaggy rocks of the plateau".

*Commentary of Nguyen Linh Khieu*





# QUAN HOANG TEMPLE

## Spiritual tourist spot on Dong Van Karst Plateau

Quan Hoang Temple, also known as Cong Hoang Temple, is in Dong Luc village, Dong Van town, Dong Van district. The temple has an area of 87.90m<sup>2</sup>, was built in the late 18th century by the Lo Lo people to worship Ong Cong Hoang - a hero of the Lo Lo ethnic group. He was worshiped as a blessed god who built and protected the village, brought a peaceful and prosperous life to a large region and was the head of the Lo Lo ethnic group in Dong Van.



Previously, there were many Lo Lo people residing in current Dong Van town. The head of Lo Lo people in this area was called Cong Hoang under Lo Lo Hoa people, also called the King of Lo Lo people. He had a great reputation among the indigenous people and had merit of reclaiming land and building villages and residential areas in current Dong Van town. At the time of chaos, black flag troops went to invade Dong Van area, they killed people, robbed assets and burned people's houses. Nguyen dynasties sent him to lead the army to fight against the black flag troops and protect the village. To commemorate his merit, after his death, the Lo Lo people built a temple to worship him called Ong Cong Hoang temple. In 1960, a tourist to the temple drew two pictures of a man and a woman in black ink and painted with bright pink, representing Cong Hoang god and goddess.

The ancient relics of the temple include: altars under the ancient architecture, worshiping statue, bell, cloud-shaped gong,... but after the border war in 1979, up to now, these artifacts have been no longer available.

With a small scale and area but bearing the imprint and history of a large area, the temple was recognized as a provincial relic in 2013.

Every year, in the Horse's days of February of lunar calendar, a large number of people come to Cong Hoang Temple to pray because this day, according to the elderly, is the birthday of Cong Hoang Goddess. The temple is very sacred, families who want to ask for child often go to the temple to pray for in February and the Goat's days of lunar calendar, after that, all will be satisfied, since then, Cong Hoang Temple is a spiritual attraction. Many people in the area and tourists from all over the world come to pray for child and good fortune.

*Management Board of Geopark*





# GOING UP TO THE MOUNTAIN TO LISTEN TO H'MONG PAN PIPE (KHÈN)

**A** H'mong friend told me that the reason why their house often lay in the middle of mountains or the sky is that the Mong people would be like the wind, like clouds, like the wings of a bird in the open space, the higher they are, the more they were, the higher their pride and self-esteem seem to increase, it's like proof of courage and fortitude... And so, when the Kinh people approached the foot of the mountain, H'Mong people resettled up to the mountain, a higher place.

Going up to the mountain, not only to the fairs or festivals, even if it's just a pass by chance, and of course with a little luck, you will have the opportunity to listen and "see" the melody of pan pipe. The ancient pan pipe is associated with H'Mong young men, are inherently their inseparable object. When happy, when sad, when playing Sái Sán, Gấu Tào, when wedding, funeral, when going up to the fields, going down to the market,... the pan pipe always follows them, more than a piece of jewelry, it is like a friend so that they convey their love through humming melodies.

One afternoon by chance, when climbing from Sam Pun to the foot of Ma Pi Leng pass, he and I were dumbfounded when hearing gentle sound of the pan pipe. In the middle of the mountain, the forest, the sound of the pan pipe echoed, passed, faded away,... just in time to realize a couple on their way back to the village... My heart suddenly felt dazed with longing in response to the charming and passionate scenery... At that time, the sunset was falling on Nho Que river, the scenery was real and vague...

Like a morning by chance, when I was wandering through Sung La, suddenly I heard a fervent pan pipe sound from a soil house, behind a thin bamboo fence with full of dry grass. I stood still while he hurriedly turned his head... The sound of the pan pipe attracted my



*The pan pipe has always been with H'Mong young man since he was a child (Photo: Collected)*

steps... in the dim morning, in the early morning sun rising behind the ravine... A H'mong melody, with its separate flickering sounds, half attracting, half parting, sometimes bursting with joy, sometimes endlessly sad...

At present, life is changing, the Mong people also know how to use many modern items. Sometimes I met Hmong boys and girls in the mountains swinging with cassette radios on the shoulder or holding Chinese mobile phone in their hand, I don't know if I should be happy or sad... Only know that when I met a pub on the road from Dong Van to Meo Vac where the junction has a winding road down to Sam Pun, I found myself a lucky person to be able to participate in a wine party after the fair, to swing in the melody of pan pipe on the way to the village of a H'mong young man...



The young man took a long drag on his pipe before getting up and grabbing the pan pipe. He lifted up the bamboo-made pan pipe, his hand gently stroked round pipes, and said something in H'mong language to the wine-selling girl. Only see her pouring out an overflow bowl of white wine, spilling all over the table, falling on the grass at the roadside, and then gently handing it to the young man.

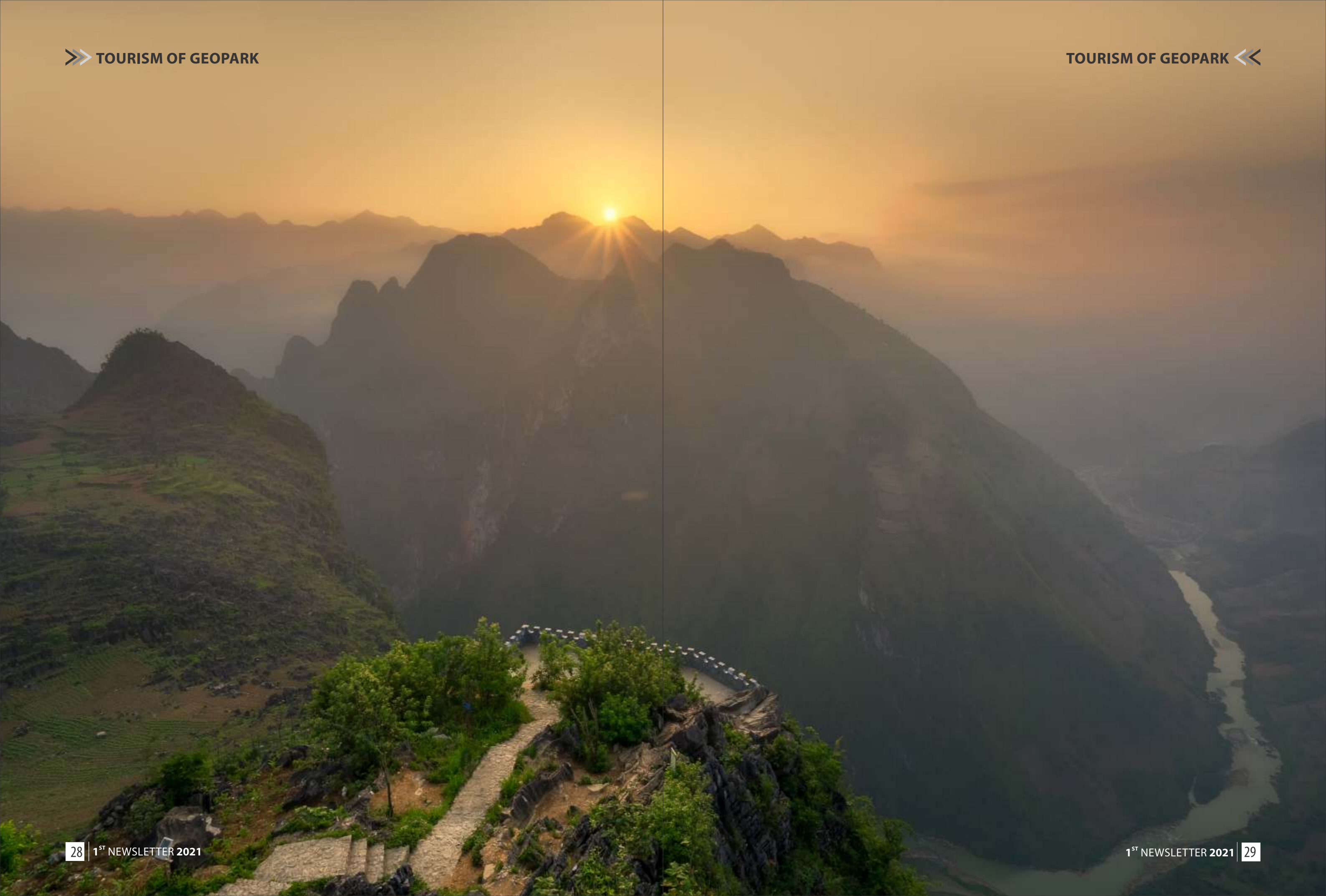
I stood still in response to a very unique H'mong ritual before starting the playing. They told me, it's like a request for permission, a mandatory ritual to call the "pan pipe's soul" to appear, then, the pan pipe's sound would be sweet, passionate, earnest, strong, generous and vast enough to contain the emotions that the Mong people want to convey.

The young man took a big sip of wine, and sprayed it on the pan pipe that was lying quietly, a few more sips so that the whole body of the pan pipe was wet with wine. Next was pouring wine to wet hands, then went find a pair of plastic sandals to put on feet, and spray the last remaining wine on those feet. He said he had to do that so that he could resound the good pan pipe melodies to call his lover, flexible enough to dance around and call his girl who was in the room to wake up at mid-night, even though the sound of the pan pipe may not outside the stone fence, outside the heavy wooden gate that was being bolted...

I stood dumbfounded... the slope here was so high, how many times a year have I gone up here? Crave to be like the wind, like a dry tree, like the sound of the H'mong pan pipe on the top of the pass, like the pure laughter of my brother...

**Thuy Tran**







# Activities to celebrate **EARTH DAY 2021**

# 8 WELCOME EVENT FOR new UNESCO Global Geoparks



The UNESCO Global Geoparks celebrated International Earth Day and organized Welcome Digital Event for new UNESCO Global Geoparks on April 22.

Earth Day is mobilized and organized by the United Nations on April 22 every year, to encourage environmental protection movements and activities around the world, to prevent from disasters that are happening more often due to climate change and environmental destruction. Every year, the UNESCO Global Geopark celebrates this day and calls on local residents and their tourists to work together to preserve the Earth heritage.

For Earth Day 2021, the Global Geoparks Network (GGN) celebrated and integrated the welcome digital event for new members with the participation of more than 1,000 and 7,000 viewers via youtube organized by GGN and UNESCO's Geohazard Mitigation and Earth Science Division.

The event closed with a speech by the President of Global Geoparks Network Nickolas Zouros.

*Management Board of Geopark*

The Welcome Event was successfully organized with the participation of representatives of 8 new UNESCO Global Geoparks and local authorities, stakeholders and local residents, Permanent Delegations to UNESCO of the respective Member States, the National UNESCO Committees of the respective Member States, and 161 representatives of UNESCO Global Geoparks from 44 countries around the world.

The new UNESCO Global Geoparks that were welcomed in this event were: Vestjylland (Denmark), Saimaa (Finland), Thuringia Inselsberg-Drei Gleichen (Germany), Grevena Kozani (Greece), Belitong (Indonesia), Aspromonte (Italy), Majella (Italy), Holy Cross

Mountains (Poland).

The new Global Geoparks make efforts to engage directly in the protection and promotion of geological, natural and cultural heritages. Through participation in the Global Network, Geoparks have the opportunity to collaborate in projects, programs and apply best practices towards sustainable development.

The network currently includes 169 Geoparks in 44 countries distributed as follows: 88 in Europe, 66 in Asia and the Pacific, 8 in Latin America and the Caribbean, 5 in North America (Canada) and 2 in Africa.

*Management Board of Geopark*



# DIGITAL COURSE

## about UNESCO Global Geopark

During the course, the UNESCO Global Geoparks introduced themselves and their contributions to sustainable development. The main goals focus on sustainable development to reduce poverty, protect the planet and ensure the prosperity for all countries in the world.

Currently, the UNESCO Global Geoparks have been facing challenges and

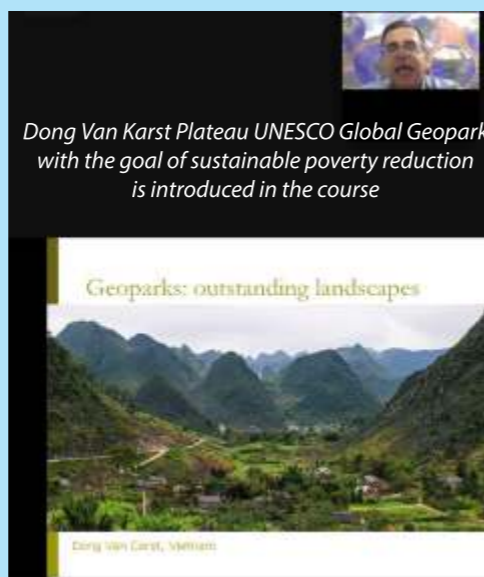
*The digital course with the theme "UNESCO Global Geoparks and Sustainability" will take place from June 7-20, 2021 co-organized by UNESCO Committee of Natural Sciences and the Global Geoparks Network (GGN).*



many difficulties. So, how can each individual in UNESCO Global Geoparks contribute to building and developing a sustainable, safe and equitable world?

The course helps Global Geoparks to share experiences and learn from each other on how to implement the work to achieve the common goal of sustainable development of the earth. Thereby, the Geoparks will find resources, methods and inspiration to accomplish this goal.

**Management Board of Geopark**



Lecture content via zoom is vivid and intuitive



# LESVOS ISLAND

## UNESCO GLOBAL GEOPARK

Lesvos Island is located in the Northeast of Aegean Sea. It has an area of 1,632 square kilometers with 320 kilometers of coastline, the third largest island of Greece. It is separated from Asia Minor coast of Turkey by narrow Mytilini Strait and, until the late Paleolithic Age, connected to the Anatolian mainland before the end of the last Ice Age.

The population of Lesvos Island is about 90,000, a third of whom live in Mytilene capital, in the southeast of the island. The rest of the population is distributed in small towns and villages. The largest are in Kalloni, Plomari, Agiassos, Polichnitos, Eresos, Petra, Molyvos (ancient Mythimna).

Lesvos Island possesses countless geological heritages including famous Lesvos Petrified Forest, areas with natural beauty, rich ecosystems and a wide range of cultural monuments. All these factors contribute to make the island be recognized as UNESCO Global Geopark, the third place name of UNESCO.







Lesvos Island Global Geopark was recognized by UNESCO as a member of the Global Geoparks Network and the European Geoparks Network.

The Western peninsula of Lesvos Island is the majestic Petrified Forest area, was recognized as Protected Natural Monument of Greece in 1985.



Lesvos has many important geological monuments and topography is an important witness to the geological history of the Aegean basin for the past 300 years, such as volcanoes, hot springs, important fossil sites, impressive tectonic structures and active faults, waterfalls and coastal geology.

The ecological value of Lesvos is evidenced by three areas that have been included in the Europe's Natura 2000 Network: "Petrified Forest of the Western Peninsula", "The Wetland of Kallonis Gulf" and "Gulf of Yera and Olympus Mountain".



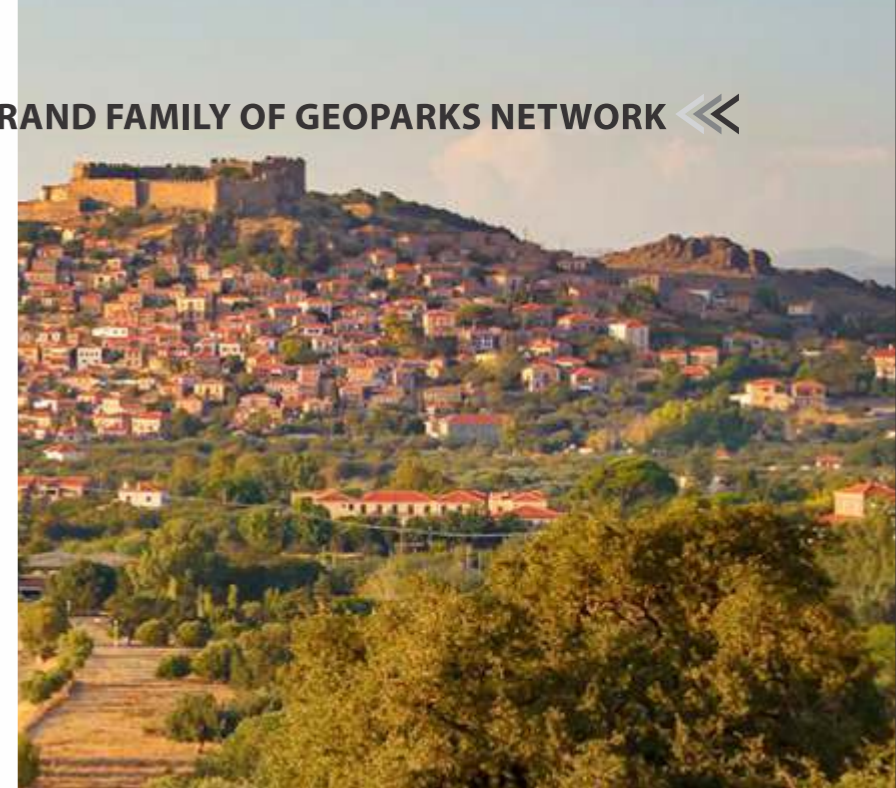
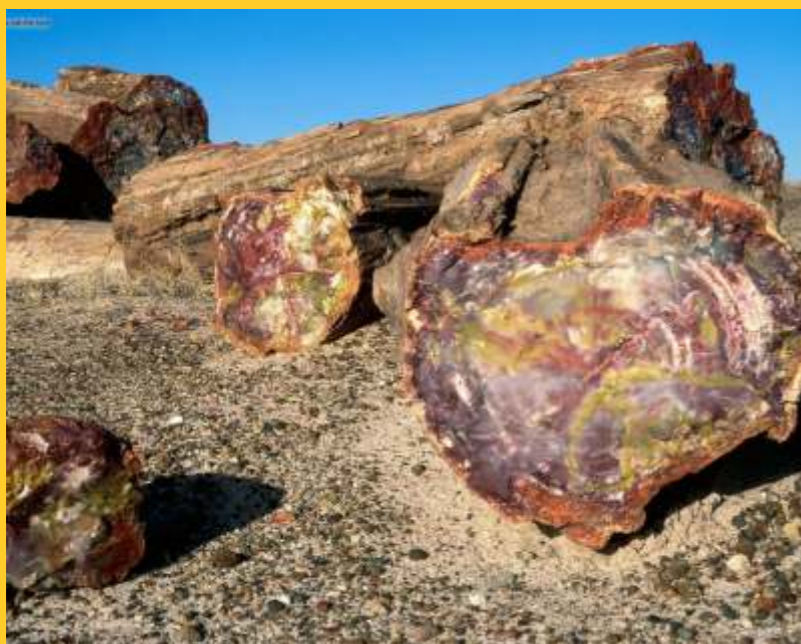




In Lesvos, prehistoric and historic archeological sites, medieval castles, Byzantine monasteries and traditional villages. Its architectural heritages are rich based on the use of local building materials that reflect the geological heritage and the natural environment.

Lesvos is the birthplace of many famous and important figures in art and literature such as poetess Sappho, philosopher Theophrastus, philosopher Pittacus, poet Alkaios, lyricist Terpanndros and most recently G. Jakobides and non-Aegean poet Odysseas Elytis.

The Lesvos Island Unesco Global Geopark is an outstanding testimony to its natural and cultural heritage, and create a premise for tourists to acquaint with the rich network of geological and ecological heritages, archaeological sites and and monuments as well as many fascinating museums and galleries.



Tourists can participate in various ecotourism activities, unique educational programs, marine and agricultural tourism events, cultural festivals as well as hiking in the unique natural environment ever given by Aristotle and Theophrastus, hiking, cycling, rowing, surfing, guided boating, diving, mountain climbing and a series of activities to uncover hidden natural treasures.

**Management Board of Geopark**



