

Four Thousand Islands New Area – The Sithandone SEZ in Southern Laos

June 28, 2021 By [James Clark](#) — 5 Comments



Four Thousand Islands New Area is a proposed new urban development in Khong district, Champasak province, Laos. This nearest city is Pakse, 140km away.

The Four Thousand Islands (Si Phan Don) is an archipelago of islands in the Mekong River, near the Laos-Cambodia border. Also known as the Sithandone SEZ, this special economic zone will cover an area of more than 9,846 hectares and it will have its own airport.

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This project has also been referred to as the Khonphapheng Special Economic Zone, so named for the [Khone Phapheng Falls](#) (the largest waterfall in Southeast Asia). The area around the waterfall will be developed into a tourism site.

Another name that has been used is Khong City, named after Don Khong (Khong Island) – the largest island in the Si Phan Don archipelago.



News Archive

2021

[Four Thousand Islands New Area aiming to draw 15 million visitors per year by 2050 –](#)

[16/03/21]

A press release at Vientiane Times details some of the plans for the Four Thousand Islands New Area:

Zone A: boutique hotels with restaurants, conference rooms, spas, fitness centers, and swimming pools.

Zone B: residential area, including a lake and other facilities.

Zone C: golf course and villas.

Zone D: commercial area with shops, casino, and hotel.

Zone E: 520 Entertainment World Complex Centre consisting of 5 stars Hotels, shopping malls, movie theaters, restaurants, entertainment venues, places for relaxation and the display of handicrafts, and large buildings.

Zone F: A racecourse for international horse racing.



[First phase of Sithandone SEZ development project underway – \[01/03/21\]](#)

“According to a report by Socio-Economic News, the first phase of the construction of the Sithandone Special Economic Zone project began in 2018 and is scheduled to be completed in 2025.”



[43.5-km road in Champassak opens for public use,built by Sithandone Joint Development Co., Ltd – \[18/02/21\]](#)

43.5-km road in Champassak opens for public use,built by ...



[New concrete road open for use in Don Khong – \[17/02/21\]](#)

“A new concrete road around the popular tourist island of Don Khong has been completed and is ready for use.”



2020

[New railway proposed for Southern Laos – \[20/10/20\]](#)

“The proposed railway line would connect Khammouane, Savannakhet, Salavanh, and Champasack provinces in southern Laos.”

There have been plans over the years to run a railway line through Southern Laos, so this is another consideration for future planning of the Sithandone SEZ.

[Tourism project licences revoked in Laos to make way for economic zone – \[13/01/20\]](#)

“Provincial authorities have revoked licences previously issued for several tourism projects in Laos’ Champasak province so that the land can be used to create the Maha Nathi Sithandone special economic zone.”

2019

[China digs Laos in deeper with flurry of SEZs – \[23/12/19\]](#)

“The largest is in Champasak, a southern province along the border with Cambodia. The blueprint for the 10,000 hectare, \$10 billion project includes plans for over 30 five-star hotels and integrated entertainment resorts intended to draw Chinese tourists to the scenic corner of the country. The area is home to Si Phan Don, or Four Thousand Islands, on the Mekong, Southeast Asia’s largest body of water.

Informed sources say the Champasak SEZ will be built in two stages. “The first phase will focus on clearing the area and building the infrastructure, and is expected to be finished by 2025,” a Laotian political analyst told the Nikkei Asian Review on condition of anonymity. “The main work will start after that on the hotel and tourism components, and also on commercial agriculture.””

[Lao villagers refuse to yield land for SEZ, now contend with access road](#) – [09/05/19]

“At least 140 families from eight villages in the Khong district of southwestern Laos’ Champasak province are refusing to sell their land or relocate to make way for a special economic zone planned for their area.”

2018

[Lao families fear getting cheated by developers of new SEZ in Champasak Province](#) – [25/06/18]

“Nearly 150 families in six villages in Khong district of southwestern Laos’ Champasak province say they do not want to give up their homes and land to a special economic zone planned for their area and that they fear that project developers will not compensate them fairly.”

[Laos – massive development for Khonephapheng proposed in southern Laos](#) – [27/03/18]

“Plans for a massive Chinese development project around the famed Khonephapheng waterfall in Champasack Province are moving forward, as talks between provincial authorities and a Chinese investment firm continue.”



2017

[Chinese investor gears up to develop Khonphapheng SEZ](#) – [05/10/17]

““If construction goes ahead as planned, it will be the largest development in the province and in Laos. The waterfall and surrounding areas will be transformed into a modern town which will incorporate an airport, shopping centre, roads and tourism-related activities and services,” Dr Bounthong said.

“The Chinese company anticipates that 700,000 to 800,000 people will live in the new town and about 1.2 million tourists will visit the zone annually. The project will create a new image and feature for our province among international visitors.””

Lao gov't approve Chinese company to conduct SEZ feasibility study – [02/08/17]

“Lao government has given the green light for a Chinese company to conduct a feasibility study on developing the Khonphapheng Special Economic Zone (SEZ) in southern Laos’ Champassak province, local media reported on Tuesday.”

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About James Clark

James Clark is the editor of Future Southeast Asia and is currently based in Ho Chi Minh City. Follow his travels at nomadicnotes.com and on Twitter at [@nomadicnotes](https://twitter.com/nomadicnotes)

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Comments

Gay Spies says

August 30, 2021 at 2:48 pm



This makes me feel absolutely sick as well as angry. How can the Lao government allow such a monstrosity in such a beautiful area! I guess we all know the answer. They can't leave well enough alone.

I have visited the area several times, the first in 1992, most recently on 2015. It's a beautiful part of Laos and doesn't deserve this sort of treatment. One can only hope it won't come to pass.

[Reply](#)

Greg Goulet says

August 30, 2021 at 3:57 pm



It saddens and also angers me to see what China is doing to this beautiful area. I have travelled and stayed in the area and cannot believe what the Lao Government is allowing to happen. I was planning to return when travel is again permitted but it seems those plans will change as has the attraction of the area. And let's not kid ourselves this is not for the benefit of the Lao people.

[Reply](#)

Betska says

August 30, 2021 at 9:30 pm



Very sad. I am thankful to have travelled here 12 years ago and enjoyed the natural beauty. Makes me sick

[Reply](#)

David Jaggard says

September 2, 2021 at 10:36 pm



And I thought the zip line over the falls was overdoing it...

[Reply](#)

Deb van Riet says

September 5, 2021 at 4:28 am

