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Sukhirin: A must-visit city
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Sukhirin is a district in Narathiwat Province. Most of the area is covered by high mountains and dense forests. Some well-known mountain ranges within the area are, Tuwae, Batukator, and Bala. In addition, there are two major rivers, Sai Buri and Su-ngai Kolok Rivers; which are regarded as “The River of Life” by the Sukhirin people.

Visitors should not miss the gold panning activity of the local people. This takes place after they have finished tapping rubber, when they take their children together, to pan gold upstream of the Sai Buri River where the To Mo Gold Mine is located. Although this gold mine has been closed, there is still an accumulation of pure gold on the ground that people can collect for sale as extra income. In addition, the area serves as a checkpoint for tourists visiting the area, who wish to experience the local way of life, as well as those who seek their luck by hoping to take home some gold as an auspicious souvenir. This is due to the belief that the gold found here is pure and hence, of worthy value.

With regard to gold panning, the process starts with using a hoe or a spade to scoop the sediment from the bottom of the creek and placing it in the pan, then gently agitating the water until all the gravel and dust are washed out, leaving the heavier gold dust at the bottom of the pan. At this stage, one needs to look carefully to discover any tiny gold dust buried in the layers of soil. One can repeat this process several times until they obtain the desired amount of gold. Tourists who are unable to find gold may instead purchase gold from the local people. The price of the gold will depend on each individual’s bargaining skills, but this usually ranges from 500 – 1,000 baht per dealing. If there is no tourist to purchase gold, the local people will sell to middlemen, who collect the gold and resell it to gold dealers at Su-ngai Kolok District. The average income from gold panning and selling gold dust is around 300 - 2,000 baht per day. If they are unable to find gold, they simply come back and try their luck again the next day. This is due to the local belief that people can obtain gold, depending on their fortune, and also on their will power.

At Sukhirin, you can enjoy cultural tourism at Phukao Thong Community, visit several natural attractions, view the enchanting morning mist and the grand giant tree, worship the To Mo Goddess, weave Thai silk, visit the gold tunnel route, try out gold panning, and whitewater rafting!

Travelling to Sukhirin is now very convenient. By road, you simply take the Su-ngai Kolok route, a one and a half hours drive to the destination. With its fertile forests and high mountains, the weather at Sukhirin is refreshingly clean and cool throughout most of the year, making this place, the “Switzerland of Thailand.”

Radio Thailand Su-ngai Kolok