



Mark Steadman - Lone Buffalo Co-founder/Chief Operating Officer

In 2004 I described Laos as 'Nearly Heaven' in my blog – little did I know that tragedy would lead me to make Laos my home seven years later.

Through my work as a Tour Guide, I got to know a man called Teacher Manophet or 'Lone Buffalo' in Phonsavan, North East Laos. I was impressed by his stamina, selflessness and determination. I introduced my friend Gareth to Manophet, inspiring Gareth's On Safer Ground project. Following Manophet's sudden death in 2010, and lifted by those amazing experience at the Gothia Cup in Sweden I vowed to establish something permanent in Manophet's memory in his home town. I wanted to ensure that young people could continue to study English for free. Along with Gareth (Carter) and Nick (Williamson) we formed Lone Buffalo. In early 2012 Nick and I opened the Lone Buffalo English Development Centre in Phonsavan.

I have overseen the development of Lone Buffalo from a small collection of boxes arriving on the overnight bus into the professional, effective project we are today. I am extremely proud of what we have achieved in a relatively short time with both limited resources and limited funding. Watching the development of our committed local team of teachers and directors has been especially pleasing – as has the amount of western professional people who have volunteered their services after visiting or hearing about our project. I oversee the operations, marketing, funding and development of Lone Buffalo.

Mark still works as a tour leader, specialising in tours in Iran and South-East Asia, and includes visits to Lone Buffalo in his Laos programs. In 2015 Mark was awarded the prestigious Wanderlust World Tour Guide of the year award, partly for his work in the community in Laos.